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WHO WILL WIN THE RACE?

A study of coverage of the 2015 U.K. General Election

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Abstract

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Nyckelord:	<i>Election coverage, framing, semiotic, UK, personalisation, signs, bias, broadsheet, westminster model, game-framing</i>

Syfte:	Syftet med denna studie är att ta reda på hur tre brittiska dagstidningar beskrev 2015 års valkampanj och vad det kan tänkas beror på.
Teori:	Den teoretiska basen för den här studien består av framing teorin som ska undersöka hur ämnen, händelser och aktörer beskrivs. Sedan kommer storytelling att användas för att kunna peka ut olika narrativa mönster i datan samt de undersökta texterna.
Metod:	Kvantitativ innehållsanalys kombinerat med kvalitativ semiotisk analys
Resultat:	Resultatet visade att i alla nyhetsartiklar, totalt 570, i de undersökta tidningarna dominerade ämnen och händelser som behandlade själva kampanj processen, så kallad game-framing. Policy-framing, alltså att rapporteringen fokuseras på sakfrågor var det desto mindre av. Dessutom visade resultatet att politiska aktörer nämndes mest frekvent överlag och partiledarna för de två största partierna nämndes mest i synnerhet. Sättet på vilket partiledarna var i fokus tydde starkt på en överordnad game-frame. Hur de och deras andra partiledarkollegor beskrevs visade på tydliga tecken av personifiering. De båda analyserna kunde också visa på en viss skevhet i rapporteringen. De olika tidningarna lät sina politiska sympatier skina igenom deras bevakning mer eller mindre. Förutom en viss politisk bias visade det sig tidningarnas respektive stil och hur det påverkade rapporteringen.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study is to find out how the examined newspapers described the political campaign leading up to the 2015 General election and why this might be. The Newspapers examined in this study are The Daily Telegraph, The Independent and The Guardian.

On the 7th of May last year the general election took place. 2015 was a year of great political commentary; there was no getting away from spectacle. As soon as you logged onto twitter the bacon-sandwich-eating face of Ed Miliband stare back at you, or flick on your TV and the Prime Minister sternly warn you that you will effectively run the country in to the ground if you do not vote for his party.

There are several factors, which make this study interesting. Firstly; the British electoral system has traditionally centred on the two main parties. This election was set apart by surge in smaller parties and the great Success of the Scottish National Party. The traditional media coverage has, like the electoral system, been focused on the two main parties, hence looking at whether the success of the smaller parties was reflected in the coverage. There is also the matter of bias and unreliable media. People need news to make informed judgments about their life and society, at least in a democratic context. News and more specifically political news hold an important democratic role, this makes it both an important and interesting matter to study.

This study is built on four main issues. What type of topics and events receives the most coverage? Which targets the framing of topics and events. What actor or actors are given the most focus and if there is a greater focus on actors as a collective or is most attention given to single actors? Should show how the actors are framed. The last two issues focus are revolve around; how the jargon and the narrative styles are constructed and what denotations, connotations and meanings the signs in the texts contained.

These questions will be answered through a combination of a quantitative content analysis of all political news stories regarding the general election in the three newspapers during week leading up to the election campaign. Based on the results of this first quantitative analysis the selection of test for the semiotic analysis were chosen. The semiotic approach examines all elements of the texts and can reveal the more in-depth patterns and the more subtle nuances in the text. The theoretical tools that will be used are framing and storytelling.

The result showed that the most mentioned topics were those that concerned the campaign itself. The same pattern was evident among the covered events. There was no major difference in the frequency of mentions in between the newspapers. Topics and events that are focused on the campaign itself, rather than political policies, are framed within the game-framework.

The results showed that political actors were stood for a majority of mentions. Furthermore the two main parties and in particular their party leaders, David Cameron and Ed Miliband, were very well covered. The most covered actors were also the most framed, with the two main party leaders at the top. The favoured framing techniques appeared to be within game-framing in general or in the lines of personalisation. For example the Prime minister was covered more statesmanlike than his counterpart.

The quantitative results above were supported by the semiotic analysis, which looked specifically at three articles, which addressed game-frame-matters and personalisation. Furthermore the semiotic analysis set apart the different narrative styles and underlying meanings. This in turn showed more or less intentional bias with all the papers. As well as further evidence of the game-frame and personalisation.

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1. Introduction

This study aims to examine the general framing of the election coverage by looking at the separate parts that make up the political stories reported on during the 2015 General Election Campaign. The factors that will be examined in order to establish the narrative frameworks are for instance; personalization, the frequency and formative descriptions of events and topics- In order to locate pattern on several levels a wider quantitative approach will be used and to complement it with a more in-depth analysis, a qualitative semiotic analysis which will be applied to a smaller number of texts.

Scholars such as Baudrillard claim that the saturation of media texts we are surrounded by makes it impossible for us to separate the image of reality we receive from the media to the reality that we are physically able to examine ourselves. However extreme is this reading of the impact that media texts have on our understanding of the world, one cannot deny the very real effect that media texts have on our understanding of complex matters. Particularly those matters which many of us have no personal experience of ourselves, issues such as public affairs and politics (Hodkinson, 2011; 269). We need the media to gather enough information to understand and take part in society, which is why it is interesting and important from a democratic standpoint to find out what framework we adopt in the media texts we read.

By studying the frequency and use of words, the particular events we choose to report on, and the stylistic spectacles through which we view these events in various media one is better able to distinguish any ideological backdrop in the reportage (Hodkinson, 2011; 112 + 269). This study proceeds on the hypothesis that indicators of ideological framing are present in the selected texts from which definitive conclusions may be drawn regarding the impact of one paper's reportage upon another, on their readership, and what this might mean for the relationship between politics and the media more broadly.

1.1 Disposition

The disposition of this study starts with the background, which goes through the background of election coverage in the UK. Then comes the societal and academic contextualisation where the academic and societal motives for this study are explained. Thereafter follows the aims and purposes of the study and closely behind the literary review, which maps the academic field.

The next chapter is the "theoretical frameworks" where the theories that will be used in this study are presented. Then comes the methodology where the two approaches are presented and defined. The selection of the objects of study is then presented succeeded by the limitations of the study. The different papers to be examined are then displayed under the section "Objects of study".

The operationalisation of the quantitative analysis is then explained before its results is presented and analysed. Thereafter follows operationalisation of the semiotic analysis, which is rightly followed by the presentation of semiotic results and

analysis. Lastly the conclusion and discussion ties the quantitative and semiotic analysis together in pithy conclusion before suggesting some ideas for future research.

1.1 Background

On the 7th of May this year the general election took place in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland (www.parliament.uk, n.d). Unsurprisingly the election was widely reported and scrutinized in the media, everything from policies to the table manners of candidates.

Formally known as the Westminster model, the UK's parliamentary system is more commonly referred to as 'first past the post'. This electoral system means that instead of the parties and/or their candidates receiving power proportionate to the vote, as it would in a representative democratic system such as Swedish one, the winning candidate "takes it all". A candidate thus wins his or her right to represent a single constituency as its MP. This is the reason why a minority party such as the SNP is able to secure such a large number of seats in parliament despite commanding a fairly small share of the overall votes (Scammell & Semetko, 2008; 73).

The Westminster system is also employed in parts of the old British Empire such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand as well as in some African and Asian nations. The strength of the system is considered to be its unambiguity, which in turn tends to assure more stable governments as a result (Scammell & Semetko, 2008, Ch.5)..

Another aspect of the model is that it increases the probability of a two party race. Since the UK general election of 1945, this race has been between the Conservative and the Labour party. While the Liberal Democrats have gained in power over the last decade, the Westminster model still clearly disadvantages smaller parties, one of the first striking exceptions being the SNP surge in the latest 2015 general election. It would be interesting to see if the two party race is replicated in the coverage of the election campaign as suggested by the literature (Scammell & Semetko, 2008, Ch.5).

The UK media is a mixture of a north Atlantic (north American) free market media climate and the Nordic media market, with its history of a diverse self-regulating press and a strong publicly funded public broadcaster (Scammell and Semetko in Scammell & Semetko, 2008; 74). A major difference in the nature of the Nordic and the British press' is the intrusiveness of the British press, as seen in *cause célèbres* of the last two decades such as phone hacking, the papparazi and publication of the identity of alleged offenders or victims. However, printing the names of suspected perpetrators has become more common also in Swedish newspapers, something that often is critiqued as a cheap tabloid tactic deployed for the sole purpose of selling more copies. The British press is also known to be much more openly biased than its Swedish counterpart, which has traditionally sought to downplay its political affiliations in an effort to prove its neutrality (Jackson and Thorsen, 2015 & Asp and Bjerling, 2014).

Public broadcasters are strictly forbidden from displaying any form of bias in both the UK and Sweden, with similar guidelines and regulatory bodies operating in both countries. Yet the British press is said to be more intrusive and ruthless in its reporting style than its Swedish equivalent. The more harsh reporting style has been

widely acknowledged amongst media scholars, some have also said that this style has been increasingly prevalent over the last years. (Scammell & Semetko, 2008; 86-87).

The UK press market has traditionally consisted of a diverse selection of newspapers, with a press categorised into lower, middle and upper market groups publishing a range of low to high quality content. There is also a tendency toward a class indication, particularly in England, with papers on either side of the scale targeting its own “social group” (Bell, 1991).

The emphasis on person-centered reporting in recent political debate that has become more common in Sweden is also prevalent in current and historical coverage of UK politics. (Scammell & Semetko, 2008; 86-87). A notable example is the image of the former Labour leader Ed Miliband sloppily eating a bacon sandwich, which, for a short time, dominated the headlines to the expense of Labour party policy proposals. The story demonstrates the power of the suggestion; that sloppy handling of a porky sandwich is an unmistakable trait of a sloppy prime minister *manqué*, whatever may be the true causal relationships at work between table manners and statesmanship (Withnall, 2015 and Jackson & Thorsen, 2015)

Porkies or not, this style of reporting is a particularly interesting subject to study as it is likely that raw emotion and personal preference are as significant as notional ‘facts’ in the coverage of politics today. To conclude if this is indeed so, and to what degree is the aim of this study.

1.3 Societal and scientific contextualisation

My literary review will make reference to some of the many studies that are conducted in the field of political communication and/or (as in this case) political coverage of election campaigns. This will include some of the shorter papers published on the area during the recent UK general election. These are mainly conducted in a quantitative manner to cover the vast mass of media texts produced, and this dissertation will adopt elements of this approach.

In addition to a quantitative study this paper contains a semiotic analysis that will allow a deeper look into the meanings encountered in media texts. This will set this study apart from previous studies as well as enable a more in-depth exploration of the material. The semiotic approach as a theoretical tool is not very common in studies of political news coverage but is for that reason no less valid as a theoretical instrument (Mancini, 1988). Its rarity also justifies the importance of a study of election coverage that uses a semiotic approach, if it is able to reveal more subtle nuances in the examined texts than what may be appreciated through a quantitative treatment alone.

Politics has weighed more heavily on the collective conscience this year due to the general election coinciding with the dramatic events of the Labour leadership election. Among several surprising effects of the latter is the apparent increase in the number of young people becoming involved in party politics and this is a source of particular interest to me. Next year will also see the London mayoral election and it could be interesting to have this study when examining coverage of that election in

both the national and local press to find out if the patterns revealed in this paper will repeat themselves.

Undoubtedly election coverage is an important democratic tool that has occupied the close attention of high profile political communication strategists, such as Conservative's Alistair Campbell or Labour's Peter Mandelson. It is as relevant as ever to examine how stories about politics and current affairs are framed, and how they shape the general public's idea of politics and politicians. It has been shown that a certain framing of election coverage feeds into a more cynical view amongst the public towards both politicians and the political process as a whole (Aalberg et al, 2011). Research has also shown that the public is to a great degree aware of a pronounced influence, with almost a fifth of the electorate claiming that election coverage in the press or on television had affected the way they voted (Scammel & Semetko, 2008; 85). Following an election such as the last where opinion polls suggested the race was extremely close.

Besides looking at how the election process is framed, this study will examine how the main actors within this process are framed and described. Studies have shown that an emphasis on personalisation in election coverage has led to an increasing amount of decisions being taken by fewer people, thus concentrating the power within political parties (Bjerling, 2012; 74-75). Personalisation is the notion of the media coverage more focused on the actors involved in politics than on the policies themselves or the political struggle of the collective (Bjerling, 2012; ch 1).

This study is not only interesting from a British point of view but could possibly be applicable or at least of comparative benefit in studies on the media coverage elsewhere, such as in Sweden. The Swedish media has in many ways followed the British, from the early days of Public Service to the introduction of commercial interests on the media market, the current regulations concerning online content, the difficulties facing the Public Service Cooperations, and the decline of the printed press. Although the differences are clearer across the political landscape, it would be interesting to explore the coverage of the Swedish general election for the purposes of a cross-cultural comparison. I will also use similar Swedish studies (Asp & Bjerling 2014) when discussing my results and consider my conclusion.

Hopefully this study can also be of good use for other future studies focusing on other aspects of the election such as mediatisation (Hjarvard, 2008) of British politics or media effects on the public during election times.

1.4 Purpose and issues

The purpose of this study is to find out how the examined newspapers described the political campaign leading up to the 2015 General election and why this might be.

-What type of topics and events receives the most coverage? - Does this imply anything about the framing of the election?

-What actor or actors are given the most focus? -Is there a greater focus on actors as a collective or is most attention given to single actors? What does this mean for the framing of actors?

-How are the jargon and the narrative styles constructed in the texts? -
Does the framing and narrative style differs between the papers?

-What denotations, connotations and meanings do the texts and the signs that they make up imply? What are the stories between the lines and in the images?

1.5 Literary Review

The history of Election studies is very extensive both in the UK and globally. Due to the sheer size of the body of research, only a few selected studies will be featured in this chapter. The selection below is chosen in accordance with the methodology of this study, which consists of a quantitative content analysis as well as a qualitative semiotic analysis; the studies that I will review in more depth have either topical or methodological similarities to this study.

1.5.1 The framing of politics as strategy and game: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings by Toril Aalberg, Jesper Strömbäck, Claes H. de Vreese (2011)

In Aalberg, Strömbäck and de Vreese's review of the current and past research trends within framing theory the idea of game framing as opposed to policy framing. The first being the framing of a political issue such as an election campaign as a game where parties are contestants competing to win or lose power often leading to a decrease in focus on specific policies. The policy framing on the other hand is, as mentioned, when the focus of the political coverage is placed on the political policies presented by the political actors and on encouraging a debate surrounding these policies rather than their trustworthiness or the result of the latest polls.

According to the review, it has become increasingly popular to research the game framing of politics, most often with the incentive that a loss in policy focused news reporting is a loss for democracy, as game focused reporting contains less actual policy information as well as being more difficult for the audience to absorb due to the focus on intrigue and drama.

This paper will be very helpful in the analysis of the results of this study, especially when answering the first issue of how topics and events are described and how. The categorisation of game frame and policy frame will ensure a scientifically sound division of the examined variables for a better overview of the result as well as a clearer basis for the data analysis.

1.5.2 Mediokratin – Mediernas makt I Svenska val by Kent Asp & Johannes Bjerling (2014)

In the 2014 book Mediokratin; Kent Asp and Johannes Bjerling present an overview of the Swedish media coverage on all Swedish general elections from 1979 to 2010. They have looked at different parts of the coverage; most interesting for this study is the chapter on framing, bias and news values, and it will be reviewed for the purposes of a cross-cultural comparison.

For instance, the book explains how the Swedish coverage of politics was in the late nineties to the early noughties focused on the rise and fall of the party leaders. Politically Sweden has followed the UK, being influenced by the neo-liberal model; the same may be said for this time in the coverage of the election campaigns. In the UK 1997 election there was unprecedented focus on Tony Blair as the leader of New Labour, which did also lead the way for the Swedish Social Democrat government.

A similar quantitative methodology will be used in this study, which besides its proven efficiency also will further simplify a comparison and ensure greater generalizability and validity (Esaiasson, 2012; Ch. 4).

1.5.3 General Election 2015: the media campaign report published by Deacon, Downey, Stayner & Wring (2015)

Loughborough University has long since published reports on the coverage of the UK general elections by both the press and broadcasters. They have already compiled data from this year's election coverage that I will use to compare my results to as well as draw on inspiration for my quantitative section. This paper will benefit from being compared to the media campaign report results in the analysis, as it will for one pinpoint whether the results are correct and valid, secondly it will ensure that the results of the quantitative research can be generalised along with similar data.

Roughly Deacon's et al, (2015) report concluded that the Conservative party got more positive coverage throughout the campaign period even though it declined somewhat the last couple of weeks leading up to the general election. The Labour party on the other hand was generally covered more negatively throughout the campaign, this however eased off slightly over the last couple of weeks before the election.

Not surprisingly, the political actor who got the most coverage was Prime Minister David Cameron followed by Labour leader David Milliband. Of the top 20 most reported on political actors 16 were men. The topic that according to the report received the most coverage by far was "the election process". As mentioned it will be interesting to look at how these results compare to the ones in this study. It can also support the validity of the results of this study (Esaiasson, 2012, Ch. 4)

1.5.4 UK Election Analysis 2015: Media, voters and the campaign. Edited by Daniel Jackson and Einar Thorsen (2015).

This electronic research is filled with interesting early reflections on this year's general election. An array of professors and analysts from UK universities reflect on different issues within their specialist field. As this study focuses on media content the most useful parts of the compendium were the ones on "Media Reporting" & "Media influence and interventions". Firstly, these chapters support empirical inspiration and comparison and secondly the study constitutes a great body of data useful to my study and there are a number of areas of relevance for the discussion and analysis of my own results. The methodologies from the election analysis report will, besides the medieval studies and the General election report from Loughborough University, constitute a good foundation to construct the quantitative code table and

inspire the operationalisation of this thesis. It will also be a great mean for comparison and to corroborate the result of this study with.

1.5.5 The Personalisation of Swedish Politics doctoral dissertation by

Johannes Bjerling (2012).

In his Doctorial dissertation from 2012 Bjerling has examined the personalisation of Swedish politics, particularly concerning the party leaders, between 1979-2010. In the book Bjerling presents a model made up of the three dimensions of personalisation; personification, orientation towards personae and intimisation.

Personification as defined by Bjerling means that a person somehow represents or embodies something else. David Cameron for instance is not synonymous with the Conservative party even though he might be the most well known representative of the party. The two latter sections of the model, orientation towards personae and intimisation both focus on the more general notion of “personality politics”. The dimension that Bjerling calls orientation towards personae addresses the attention on politician’s inner traits in the political coverage. The dimension of intimisation on the other hand looks at the outer attributes, meaning traits that are in the politicians sphere or general environment rather than the inner traits that are within the actor’s emotional world.

The idea of personalisation in politics will in this study mainly be used to look at the framing of actors and how an actor is portrayed to represent his or her party or group. This will be the focus of the quantitative analysis. The semiotic analysis will then go on to show how an actor is being described for instance if a certain set of emotive words are being used and if this leads to the actor being perceived in a certain light as a person rather than a politician.

1.5.6 Introduction to A Special Issue on the Analysis of News Texts by Paolo Mancini (1988)

In this journal contribution Mancini asserts that both the quantitative sociological approach (where a quantitative content analysis is included) and a qualitative sociological approach (textual analysis including the the semiotic approach) can be combined with a positive result. Applying a semiotic approach on news texts have been a lot rarer than using a quantitative approach but the differences between the two are what makes them so compatible and this premise will be the theoretical foundation of the study I am about to undertake.

In his paper Mancini goes on to focus on the qualitative elements and in particular the semiotic and the social contexts of texts. According to Mancini the modern semiotic in media studies focuses less on textual structures and more on social context and underlying structures behind the texts. Some scholars takes this further and delve deeper in to the texts to look more closely at the actual physical mechanisms and the social interaction that are included in the creation and deliverance of the text.

The latter part of the paper, which is almost a medical approach to semiology in a series of news texts that Mancini presents, will not be useful to the methodology and objects of study adopted in this paper. However, it is clear that the societal context

shapes news texts and thus needs to be taken in to consideration. Besides the fact that the society is naturally at the centre of political coverage and thus is important to examine, taking a step back and looking at the greater picture within which meaning is manufactured will lift the media research increasing the abstraction in the result.

1.6 Theoretical framework

This study will use three main theoretical frameworks to analyse the results. Firstly there is the framing. The framing approach in this study will focus on explaining the narrative components, i.e. on the people, topics and events that are the most favored by each of the selected newspapers and in general over all the press (Chandler, 2007; 27). In the semiotic analysis the framing will be even more visible, as each of the articles studied will be presented in a certain context that will in turn say something about the general patterns of framing of political news coverage (Ekström, 2008; 28).

The last theoretical stance in this study is storytelling, which is quite similar to that of framing, as it is also focused on the manner in which a story is told and what parts that makes up the story. This approach is mostly useful for looking into the different parts of the texts to ascertain similarities across the various papers or topics. Is a certain actor, topic or event described in a different light, with another set of words or tone? The storytelling approach, like the framing approach, also aims at answering how the stories constructed in news texts reinforce an understanding of reality in a story-like way. Is politics described, as a game between two sides, are stories built around a main character, like a film around its protagonist? Are different sides polarised in the stories through a use of opposing words and emotively charged jargon? What might this lead to in terms of how the political debate viewed and made sense of by the public (Davies, 2013; 19-25)?

Storytelling and framing are theoretical frameworks, which can successfully be used to explain the play with fantasy and reality that is central in creating the stories that tickle our imagination and makes us want to read the newspapers (Ekström, 2008; 29). The theoretical framework consisting of framing, new values and storytelling, which will be explained in more detail below, are all applicable to the semiotic qualitative as well as to the quantitative approach of this study.

1.6.1 Framing

Framing constitutes the packaging of a message into a framework of known social knowledge and cultural experience to create a more tangible narrative (O' Sullivan et al, 1994; 122-123). As Goffman (1974) states in his book "Frame Analysis –An Essay on the organization of the experience", these frameworks differ between different social groups. The efficiency of framing comes from the fact that human beings are actually quite simplistic and interpret events according to conventional, socialised patterns. A story that goes against these patterns ingrained in a culturally collective conscience appears less believable. Sometimes this is due to the unlikeliness of the story as with UFO:s and other such supernatural phenomena but a lot of the time this dissonance only comes down to cultural customs and what is, excepted of the text.

Framing in a news context often comes from a choice, sometimes intentional but most often not, of using a certain framework over another, shifting focus or angle. For

instance American ABC News decided to shift focus in their reporting on the Vietnam War from covering combat to more interpretive reports which placed more focus on the possibility of an eventual pullout of American forces. This example shows a very intentional manner of framing however; most instances of skewed or biased news reporting are carried out involuntarily. Not only do all human beings carry their own life story and with this their own personal framework of mind but there are societal norms and priorities as well as values and priorities within every media organisation (Schudson, 2011; 27).

Basically all of this makes up the cognitive patterns that are at the core of news framing. As I have mentioned above news framing is acknowledging that it is impossible to refrain from framing. Every story about reality presents certain things over others. This is done not out of malice but out of pure necessity, to get to grips with a story there needs to be cognitive cohesion. Telling a story from several different angles and through different frameworks at the same time will create a dissonance and neither makes sense nor is compelling enough to draw the audience in. (Schudson, 2011; 28).

Storytelling and framing theory are frequently used in media studies and are often combined, with good result. For this study it will be used to investigate how the texts are framed and if the words used and their frequency can give anything away about the motive behind the texts. For instance if there is a thought behind an article that is not explicitly mentioned this might come through in the framing of the event covered.

Another aspect of framing that will be applied within this study is that of personalisation, thoroughly presented in Johannes Bjerling's doctoral thesis "The personalization of Swedish Politics" from 2012, as mentioned in the chapter on previous research. Based on Bjerling's model of the three dimensions of personalisation in politics I will categorise how the framing in the newspapers may differ or coincide when it comes to how actors are being presented. I will seek to establish if the individual is favoured over the collective and if actors are made to represent their parties or groups as suggested in Bjerling's book and other previous studies on personalisation (Bjerling, 2012). The results on personalisation will answer the second of my issues regarding the framing of the mentioned actors.

Asp and Bjerling's (2014) book on the Swedish general elections explains how political campaigns are often framed by a certain predetermined narrative, for instance the 2015 UK election was said to be the first proper "social media election". This prediction didn't quite come true, however this has also been suggested to be down to the great power possessed by the traditional press in the UK (Jackson and Thorsen, 2015) which in turn emphasises the relevance of examining newspapers that evidently hold great descriptive power both in the online sphere and more traditional arenas such as broadcasting or conversations around the water cooler.

Asp and Bjerling's (2014) book focuses on the presentation and framing of actors and topics during the history of election coverage in Sweden. This study will also look at what actors are described and how, which topics and events that are featured most frequently. The frequency of actors, events and topics will be established through the quantitative part of the study. The qualitative semiotic approach will then be used to further look into how the narrative framing is conducted in each of the papers.

The main categories of framing as presented in Aalberg, Strömbäck and de Vreese's review "The framing of politics as strategy and game" (2012) game frame and policy frame will make out the basis for the analysis of topics and events covered by the examined papers. Dividing all the topics and events into those of a game frame nature and those of a policy nature will make it possible to see if one newspaper or one actor is more prevalent than another in either of the categories and how this compares to other studies on political framing.

It will also become clear if the general coverage in the examined broadsheets is set within a game frame or a policy frame. Having this clear distinction based on the solid theoretical background that the extensive body of work on framing constitutes will support the validity and generalisability of the quantitative study. It will also enable the results to be compared with the results of previous election coverage studies for instance those presented in Jesper Strömbäck and Lynda Lee Kaid's book *The Handbook of Election News Coverage Around the World* (2008).

1.6.2 Story telling

Besides being gatekeepers journalists are also storytellers, who after selecting what to report on will angle and frame a story with illustrative pictures and a captivating headline. A narrative is created not only to look better on the pages of your morning paper but also to simplify difficult matters. Sometimes the news values-factors are blown up somewhat in order to create a clearer narrative (Hodkinson, 2011; 135). There is also the matter of sticking to the genre in terms of the way a story is told and what words and expressions are used, where news and journalistic texts about political events are a genre of its own with a certain set of expectations on the structure of the story and the language used (Hellspång, 2001; 74).

A news story more often than not follows the traditional themes of storytelling, with an abstract to summaries the scene, an orientation to set the scene followed by a complicating action that shakes up the story then goes on to an evaluation of the events leading up to the resolution and lastly ending on a coda which wraps up the story (Bell, 1991; 147-155).

Clearly there are differences between a news story and childhood fairytales even though they might be constructed in a similar way, news stories seek to recount the reality. Journalists also don't like to consider themselves merely storytellers but gatherers of facts. However, in a piece of news, facts are not just presented at random, it would be confusing and quite impossible to make sense of, thus, the journalist has to construct a story with those facts. As in any story its creator might have used certain narrative tools, such as exaggeration, simplification or particular jargon (Schudson, 2011; 171-174). The qualitative semiotic content analysis should be able to decipher these components of the text and through the help of previous socio-linguistic research the motives behind those narrative choices could possibly be revealed.

In the book "Opposition and ideology in news discourse" (2013; 19-25). Davies argues that in all aspects of human cultures we try to distinguish opposites in order to

understand the world around us more clearly. News reporting frequently uses the notion of opposition as a mean to explain complex issues. The oppositional stance goes along the lines of the news values mentioned above, however, it completely goes against an unbiased approach to reporting as it per se creates a polarisation, because it puts one thing against another. Polarisation is an effective narrative tool but will compromise any claims of impartiality or neutral reporting of an issue.

How a story is told and what motives might lay behind it, is preferably investigated through a semiotic or critical analysis, which will also be the case in this study. Through a paradigmatic and syntagmatic semiotic approach one can also find out the extent of the polarisation, as certain synonyms are “further out” on the oppositional scale (Davies, 2013; 30-31).

2 Methodology

This study will be conducted through a quantitative content analysis as well as a semiotic qualitative content analysis. The quantitative content analysis is used in order to categorise words and establish if certain categories of words or expressions are more frequently used then other comparing ones. (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 197-200).

2.1 Quantitative content analysis

In quantitative research there are generally said to be three types of methodologies used for three types of purposes; the descriptive purpose and methodology which is used to study the content itself and the possible differences or similarities between how newspapers describes events like election campaigns. Then there is the second type, which focuses on how the content interacts in relation to the current normative discourse. Studies like this can for instance deal with bias and representation in media content. The third and last type of quantitative methodology is the one, which is used to answer explanatory purposes, such as studies on media effects (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 199-200).

To answer to the purpose and issues of this paper the quantitative analysis mainly focuses on the descriptive aspects as well as normative descriptive access as in this instance they will be entwined, as the content naturally will be affected by societal norms (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 199-200).

This quantitative approach should prove helpful in finding possible semiotic patterns in the analysed texts as well as pointing at interesting phenomena, which ought to be examined further in the semiotic analysis. In semiotic studies the signs used in a text and their relations to the signs around them weave together the understood meaning of the text. Therefore it is of utmost interest to find out if certain signs are more commonly used than others throughout the text. To fully answer the issues of this paper the later part of the semiotic analysis will be devoted to the connotations of the words and phrases used. The connotations could reveal similarities between the papers that could indicate a general societal jargon or normative discourse. It would be just as interesting if the result proved a great difference between the papers which

could indicate a general tone in either one of the papers or a certain stance for or against a certain actor, topic or event from one or two of the papers (Sebeok, 2001).

The quantitative research is to some extent based on a previously used model, which was used to look at Swedish election campaigns (Asp & Bjerling). The fact that it has been tested before ensures a greater reliability and validity. Furthermore inspiration for the quantitative part of this study will be drawn from the reports by Deacon et al (2015) and Jackson & Thorsen (2015) (Essaiasson et al, 2012; 60-61)

2.2 The qualitative approach - Semiotics

A qualitative and quantitative analysis will be more comprehensive since the quantitative analysis in a clear way shows which words and categories are most commonly used. This alone can show patterns that could be applicable on other texts in a similar genre (a completely different genre would be pointless as it would most likely contain a different set of categories due to stylistic reasons). However, the semiotic analysis will reveal the more subtle nuances of the text (Essaiasson et al, 2012; 197-200). It also serves better for understanding the meaning of a certain word in the case specific context by mapping what type of signs there are and what connotations and denotations these hold (Sebeok, 2001; Ch1).

Semiotics came about as early as the 18th century, constructed by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried. The approach later evolved and refined through scholars such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce and Roland Barthes (Ekström, 2008; 17-24). This study will make use of the modern structuralist semiotics and media analysis designed by Barthes. It is also this approach that was popularized by Hall and others at the Birmingham Centre of Cultural Studies thus having a vital role in the British media and cultural studies movement. Considering this as a contextual factor this also makes it even more suitable for the study object at hand (Bell, 1991; 214-215).

Critique against semiotics often consists of claims that the approach is not completely objective and that the results rather are subjective interpretations than objective truths. However, this is true to most of the various types of qualitative approaches and as long as this fact is addressed with transparency and openness it should not pose a problem. Particularly seeing as the semiotic analysis is not searching for the objective truth since one will never find a completely objective truth within language because it is simply a man-made construction (Ekström, 2008; 27).

In this case the subjectivity of the approach is an asset that enables a closer study of the underlying structures along with the social context (Ekström, 2008; 27-28). Especially considering the semiotic approach with its more subjective nature will in this study be combined with the more objectively empirical methodology of a quantitative content analysis, which will give more relevant answers to questions regarding frequency (Essaiasson, 2012; 197). The combination of the two approaches should result in a more general understanding of nature of the coverage during the time-frame examined and also allow both scholar and reader a more detailed look into a phenomenon that has proven to be time-honoured in the modern British general election.

The central notions of semiotics that will be considered in this study are:

2.2.1 Signs

Signs are what signify meaning in a text. Seobeok (2001) explains how there are six main species of signs, which are most commonly examined, in semiotic research. Firstly all signs are bifacial with one aistheton, a sensible side and one noeton, the rational and intelligible side. Then there are zero signs, in which the absence of a sign is actually the signifier. An example of a zero sign can be when the present tense is being used or a text being written in a passive voice. This can be a more or less frequent manner of expression depending on which genre one is looking at, thus the unmarking of words tells us something about the motives of the author. For instance, academic writing is often dominated by unmarked language, for example by using a passive voice (Chandler, 2007; 94-95).

According to the Saussurean semiotics, signs can be categorised under of three modes. Firstly there is the **symbolic mode** in which the sign does not resemble the signified but is purely conventional and has to be learned by its interpreter. This is the most common mode of sign and can be anything from the word 'cat' to a comma sign. Then there is the **iconic mode** in which the signifier resembles the signified. This can for example be an onomatopoeic word or an image. Lastly is the **indexical mode**, here the signifier is not arbitrary but physically or causally connected to the signified. Footprints for instance signify walking and smoke signifies fire (Chandler, 2007; 36-37).

2.2.2 Denotations and connotations

An important type and attribute of sign is the way a sign can keep its meaning and value. The meaning of a word is nothing natural and nor is it constant, Saussure himself stated how there is never a given connection between the signifier and the signified (Chandler, 2007; 22-24). A common understanding of a word makes up the meaning of the same. One could say there are two ways of understanding the meaning of words, the denotative and the connotative meaning. The denotation of a word is its literal meaning, whereas the connotation of a word is its "second level" meaning is a culturally agreed more figurative meaning of a word (Ekström, 2008; 24).

The connotations of words are more culturally dependent and can possess several meanings all of them more ambiguous than the denotation which signifies its meaning in a concrete rather than abstract way. For instance a cat in the meaning of a furry feline pet is less likely to change and has also remained consistent over a substantial period of time. The word cat meaning a cool or handsome man was coined during the beginning of the jazz era within that particular sub-cultural circuit and has not exactly aged well in general language which is also often the case with niche connotations. Another example can be found in figures of speech where connotation is not the actual thing the word signifies but rather a commonly understood figurative meaning of certain signs following one another (Seobeok, 2001; 41-42).

When trying to decipher the meaning, the tone and the narrative angle of a story it is very helpful to take the denotations and connotations of the chosen word into consideration. Particularly the connotations as these will not only give away the

sentiment of how it is signifying something as well as tell us something about the thoughts and considerations of the creator of the text. The semiotic approach generally and the question of meanings, denotations and connotations, in the text will be of utmost importance in replying to my fourth issue “*What denotations, connotations and meanings do the texts and the words that make them up impose, would the text have another meaning if another set of signs were used?*”.

2.2.3 Contextual meaning

In analysing the description of the different events chosen, one will have to consider the context of the texts. The description may and probably will differ between the newspapers in question. The general background of each of the events will be briefly explained thus being put into a general context. The interesting matter is then to also look at what contextualisation is drawn up in each of the examined texts and then discuss what could have caused the possible differences in contextualisation. This will in turn distinguish the framework used in the portrayal of each event. One may then go onto examining differences and similarities in the manner of framing used and one might also be able to see more general societal conventions as well as more niched conventions depending on the norms of certain social groups (Chandler, 2007; 27).

The result of this contextual element in the analysis could with great benefit be compared with the results of the quantitative analysis in order to see if patterns from the quantitative research can be successfully applied to the context and framing discovered through the semiotic approach.

2.2.4 Myths or mythologies

Myths were central to Barthes take on semiotics and have nothing to do with the ancient Greek myths or the Grimm brother’s fables. According to Barthes definition they are the meaning provided by a text purely on the connotative and cultural level. Myths as Barthes and other semiotics explain them are as common in everyday texts as well as big epic sagas. Everything has a place in the chronological creation of meaning. No text can disconnect itself from the ideological and cultural connotations of the time and place where it was manufactured or where it is deciphered. The myth itself maintains the hierarchies of society and the power of interpretation belong to those who see things in a similar way (Ekström, 2008; 24-25).

Just like connotations, myths are a more abstract type of signifier, which of course does not make it any less important as a component of language. Myths help us make sense of the world we live in and the cultural context that make up our identity and cultural personae. It is pre-eminently a framework that defines ideological and cultural framing (Chandler, 2007; 143-144). The aspect of myths will help in finding out the underlying cultural meanings of the texts examined in the semiotic analysis. Furthermore it will indicate the ideological and cultural currents of our time.

2.2.5 Metaphors

Metaphor is widely used as a semiotic idea. It can often but not always include other figurative notions such as that of metonyms. Simply put, metaphors are used in order to explain one thing through the use of another. In linguistic terms this is expressed through a tenor which is the primary subject being expressed through vehicle, the

secondary subject which is used figuratively to signify the tenor (Chandler, 2007; 126-127). Metaphors are very common in all storytelling as they are very efficient as a narrative tool. Metaphors can in a text paint a picture and can in a picture create a narrative.

2.2.6 Irony

Irony in semiotics has the same meaning as it does outside the semiotic sphere. It is simply a sign that means the opposite of what it says it signifies or denotes. Irony as a semiotic trope is, just like an ironic joke, in need of being understood as just irony for actual meaning not to get lost. Just like the ironic jokes the more blatant the irony the easier it will be perceived. Irony requires a cultural finesse and understanding to differentiate between what is being said and what it actually means (Chandler, 2007; 134-136).

The use of irony itself can signify a myriad of underlying objectives; teenagers are known to use irony to come across as more experienced and urbane. Jokes are another common usage for the odd stroke of irony, some more cynical than others. Irony is like all tropes contextually bound but can be one of the trickier to decipher in written text as body language can often hint of an ironic undertone (Chandler, 2007; 134-136). However, there should not be too much trouble in finding some irony in the examined texts, the British press are rather prone to bad puns and the odd ironical or sarcastically jokey headline.

2.2.7 Semiotic resources

Semiotic resources are central to the notion of social semiotics, which means that the semiotic meanings of words or signs aren't constant, but ever changing along with the collective conscience. Both Barthes and Saussure stated that not one single individual can ever alter a system of signs but that such a change has to take place within the collective understanding of an entire society or within another type of social group with its own social framework (Ekström, 2008; 28).

The fact that the conventions that make up the value of words, their signifiers are not laws of nature but creations of the humankind does not mean that we all have the ability to change meaning or value of the words we speak. It is only human nature to try to define the world around us and one way to do this is to examine the words which we use to describe this world. Even in this time of modernity in language one cannot ignore that the power to interpret and impose meaning in language does belong to the few rather than the many (Ekström, 2008; 28).

2.2.8 Framing in a semiotic context

Framing is a crucial part of semiotics, more specifically social semiotics, which is the central focus of the qualitative methodology of this study. The notion of framing in semiotics is the connections and disconnections made linguistically and through multimodal elements. Like the hierarchies that define and divide the power of meaning, framing in semiotics draw the lines and weaves the connection which makes up the fabric of collective meanings and the communal understanding of the world around us (Ekström, 2008; 28-29).

2.3 Selection

It is particularly interesting to study the press as they are not controlled by any rules of impartiality (BBC) or regulation authority (Ofcom) but are instead meant to impose some kind of self-regulation. A study like this one will to some extent find out how and whether this actually works. The Press and the jargon and narrative used to describe political events often set the tone in broadcasting and put a certain amount of pressure on broadcasters, the BBC in particular, in applying the same dramatic ferocity in its political coverage (Jackson & Thorsen, 2015; 91).

Why choose broadsheets over other types of papers? Firstly broadsheets are generally more open about their ideological foundation, this is important as this study aims to establish how the political discourse is constructed in the content of the newspapers. Secondly broadsheet newspapers often claim to be above the tush in the tabloids and that they stay true to the idea of unbiased, neutral journalism.

Research (Fraylor & Ivengar, 2014) has shown that broadsheet newspapers are better at distributing political knowledge to its readers than other news-outlets, hence it will have the most impact on how the general public view the political and is therefore more interesting to study. Research has also shown that issues addressed in the press are more likely to come up in political broadcasts.

There is also research (Bell, 1991) that has shown that the linguistic style used by partisan and broadsheets respectively differs a lot. For instance the deletion of a determiner, for example Spanish painter Salvador Dalí instead of *the* Spanish painter Salvador Dalí, which proved to be more frequently occurring in the lower-middle market partisan press than in the upmarket broadsheets. By selecting objects of study that use a similar linguistic style this will prevent camouflage of other differences in the text, and increase the validity of the result.

According to Bell (1991), Britons often read papers that are traditionally tied to their own social class. By choosing broadsheets, which Bell states are the newspapers of the upper middle-to-middle classes. It is established that the papers all have a fairly similar audience in socio-economical terms hence the audience will encounter fewer differentiating educational and financial factors that might mean a difference in vocabulary.

2.4 Limitations

In recent years the online press is updated more and more frequently, almost constantly. Stories of great interest from the morning papers are taken up by television news that same evening, or in real time on news channels. Had I more time allocated for data gathering I would have perhaps looked at a wider range of papers.

Due to the time constraint I found it crucial to narrow down the texts to a manageable quantity. I will choose the newspapers from across the political spectra, as this will enable the result to be compared on a political scale in order to see if certain categories of words or patterns are more prolific with a paper that avows a certain ideology, which, to an extent, would be expected. If this is not the case it will perhaps

say something about general values imposed upon the “news language” used by the UK press (Bell, 1991; 160). Narrowing it down further the quantitative part of the study will analyse news articles concerning the general election, during each day of the week leading up to the May general election.

Furthermore, I have chosen only to include articles written by journalists or collaborating journalists at the newspapers hence no content produced by news agencies will be included. This study aims to look at how the newspapers respectively reported on the political events leading up to the election. If texts from news agencies were included on the same terms it would compromise the results as it is highly likely that the same texts with the same wording would appear in several of the papers and would not display the framework and potential bias of each paper. Some of the selected texts will have been accompanied by images, these will not be analysed in the quantitative part of the study. Whether articles are followed by pictures or not will be declared in the quantitative coding scheme.

The semiotic part of the study aims to uncover the nuances that will not be revealed through a quantitative analysis. For this part of the study I will select texts that concern one key event, which is chosen as an illustrative example of the results of quantitative analysis. The semiotic analysis allows a comparison in the way the events are covered, the words being used and the meaning of them as well as the visual elements and what they aim to convey. The semiotics analysis is particularly suitable when examining multimodal elements and underlying connotative meanings (Ekström & Larsson, 2010).

Previous semiotic studies on news texts and particularly of news texts of a political nature are scarce. However, this is not to say that a semiotic approach is not suitable for this type of text, due to the texts’ public nature and the quantity of data available which makes up a great body of information to approach in this manner (Bell, 1991;ch 2).

2.5 Objects of Study

2.5.1 The Daily Telegraph and The Telegraph on Sundays

The Daily Telegraph was founded in 1855 and became London’s first penny paper, which in turn provided the Telegraph with a great and widespread readership. Along with The Times and The Guardian it is one of the old traditional high quality papers. It has always held a conservative middle-class viewpoint and has consistently supported the Conservative Party in all elections from 1945 to 2010, this record also makes the Times the only of the examined newspapers to maintain a consistent and consecutive support for one and the same political party throughout the last 70 years. (www.theguardian.com 1, 04/05/2010).

The ownership changed quite a few times during the latter part of the last century mainly due to financial trouble and scandals. In 2004 the Barclays brothers, who also owned the Scottish national newspaper the Scotsman, acquired the newspaper making them the latest and current owners. The Barclays brothers has since sold the Scotsman and the Scotsman group which also had a few local Scottish publications and the company officially owning The Daily Telegraph is now called The Telegraph Media

Group (global.britannica.com, n.d). When the Barclay brothers purchased the paper Sir David Barclay stated that The Daily Telegraph might not maintain its position as a “conservative house paper”.

The Daily Telegraph has always endorsed the conservative party. However, in the 2015 election their support took on controversial proportions when the newspaper sent out emails to everyone on their mail list urging them to vote for the conservatives. Following the controversy the Telegraph received a lot of critique for interfering to aggressively with the campaign and even landed them a 30000 pound fine (theguardian.com , 21/12/2015).

2.5.2 Independent and the independent on Sundays

The Independent is the newest paper among the chosen broadsheets and just like the other papers it is published in London with a national angle. Founded in 1986 by previous Daily Telegraph staff members Andreas Whittam Smith, Matthew Symonds and Stephen Glover in an attempt of creating a new daily news source for the educated and affluent members of society without the strong political bias of the established older newspapers with a more traditionally known political bias. (Global.Britannica.com, 22/10/2015).

The Independent has a great online presence with an online edition as well as the new Independent 100 initiative, which lists viral news stories in a short “clickbaity” format (i100.independent.co.uk). The Independent 100 also allows the readers to up-vote a certain article in order for the most popular article to “trend”. Having both the more traditional online edition and the independent 100 generates different types of Internet traffic such as social media, thus leading more traffic onto the traditional online edition and creating revenue in terms of advertising opportunities.

The Independent stands out from the other examined broadsheets. Firstly it is a younger publication and might not be as burdened by traditions and history as its older counterparts. Secondly seeing as the Independent uses a shorter more online-adapted way of presenting its content it will be interesting to see if there are any obvious differences in the style and presentation of news in the Independent.

2.5.3 The Guardian and The Observer

The Guardian newspaper can be traced all the way back to 1821 when it was first published as the Manchester Guardian on the 5th of May. After having gone through several changes in owners and editors throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century the papers editor moved down to London in 1964. Now on the national news market, the Guardian finds itself in financial difficulties. The main source of competition has always been with their fellow broadsheets the Times and The Telegraph. Throughout the beginning of the latter half of the twentieth century, financial issues and a need to distinguish itself from its competitors continued to affect the Newspaper (guardian.com, 02/06/2002).

Through a bold redesign in the late eighties, the Guardian reasserted its position amongst the Fleet Street newspaper corporations. In the nineteen-nineties the paper

revealed controversial affairs involving high profile Tory politicians such as former minister Jonathan Aitken, who tried, unsuccessfully, to bring a libel case against the newspaper. The Guardian went on to win the prestigious Newspaper of the Year award and the whole affair is said to have contributed to the Conservative government downfall in 1997 (guardian.com, 02/06/2002). However, The Guardian cannot be said to be the only member of the press who tried to affect the outcome of the 1997 election. A few of the other broadsheets as well as parts of the partisan press, for instance The Sun, were in no way discreet in their support of the Blair campaign. (McNair, 2011)

In the last fifteen years the paper have made new groundbreaking design choices being the first UK magazine in a smaller mid-size format with full colour. Like most newspapers, the guardian had to make significant changes when it was moved onto the Internet. The Guardian Online has been a rather successful change and to increase revenue they have launched additional services such as dating sites and job search sites. The biggest story of these last fifteen years of Internet journalism has to be the Wikileaks and Edward Snowden scope, which placed The Guardian Newspaper on the forefront of daring modern investigative journalism.

2.6 Operationalisation of the quantitative content analysis

2.6.1 Code Table

As most quantitative studies the quantitative content analysis will mainly focus on frequency of the different categories. The table is made up by several different variables with different values to signify general control variables such as newspapers date and also format variables such as size of the article and whether or not a picture accompanies the article in question. These are more general variables and will give a better overall understanding of potential surrounding factors like time of the week and format. After this the analysis goes on to the content variables, these are variables like actors, statements, events and negative or positive words used to describe them (Esaiason et al, 2012; 202-205).

Medievalsstudierna, that were the foundation of the research in Asp and Bjerlings book *Mediekratin* (2014) have been an inspiration to the methodology of this study. Not only are some of the variables similar but also the guidelines when interpreting the texts have been influenced by the medieval-studies.

Another study that is of great importance not only for the analysis but also acting as an inspiration in the construction of the code table and the definitions applied during the coding process is the Deeacon's et al (2015) reports on the 2015 general election news coverage. The Media Campaign report (Deeacon et al, 2015) has looked at main actors (political actors), topics and quotation. As I will be looking at similar variables but in a more general rather than political sense the result should be somewhat comparable.

Reliance on major previous studies is not just practically useful but also ensures a greater measure of validity and reliability as well as allowing the results to be more

easily generalised. However, it is important that the manner of coding in this study is also thoroughly explained and stated to ensure reliability and validity as well as improve the generalisability of the result (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 60-61).

However, it should be mentioned that one could never ensure absolute impartiality even when undertaking a quantitative study with a clearly defined code table because the coder will have to interoperate the data. Due to the similarity to previous studies the reliability of this study can be indicated by a correspondent result in the related variables (Esaiasson et al, 2012; Ch. 11).

2.6.2 The coding defined and explained

The first variables are control variables and do not need any further definition in the manner of coding as they are really rather straightforward. The general coding interpretation used in this study is a majority principle. This means that if for instance there is a majority of mentions of one actor even though there are several actors involved, the majority actor will be coded as the main actor (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 207). For the code table and the full definition and explanation of the variables, please see annex.

2.6.3 Validity and reliability of the Quantitative content analysis

To ensure validity and reliability in the quantitative content analysis all the categories used in the methodology need to be explained and defined properly (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 58), which has been done in the code table above. In a further attempt to ensure validity and reliability another student, is required to test the code in order to check that the results match up with those of mine, the main coder (Esaiasson, 2012; 201). Thus reassuring that the codebook and its instruction were clear enough (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 58-59). Another way of ensuring greater validity and reliability is to take inspiration and copy the operationalisation of previously successful research (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 60-61). This study has drawn inspiration from three previous studies, “mediavalsstudien” conducted by Kent Asp and Johannes Bjerling (2014) at Gothenburg University, the 2015 election coverage report conducted by Deacon et al (2015).

2.6.4 Generalisation of the Quantitative content analysis

A quantitative text analysis consists of the measuring of frequency, hence it is more easily generalised than qualitative approaches which are, by their nature, more societal and contextually depending (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 197). To ensure that the result of the study can be generalised it is important that there is enough analytical units to reach saturation in the result. More extensive studies of course have a more extensive selection of units to analyse but even a smaller study like this one needs to reach saturation (Esaiasson et al, 2012; 156-157).

2.7 Operationalisation of the Semiotic Analysis

The semiotic analysis aims to go deeper into the findings of the qualitative analysis. The operationalisation of the semiotic analysis involves going through all the different

parts that make up the selected news articles and decipher the tonality and jargon to establish the nature of the framing of the stories. For the reader to have the same provenance, history of the texts, the event described and the context of the event are described prior to analysis and the presentation of the results. The semiotic tropes and tools that have previously been presented are then used to analyse the text. This analysis will reveal the overall semiotic framing of each text (Ekström, 2008, Ch. 2). The selection of the semiotic analysis is chosen in order to highlight and go into further detail on phenomena discovered through the quantitative part of the study.

2.7.1 Objects of the semiotic study

The selections of texts that will be examined in the semiotic analysis are chosen because of their relevance to one or several of the issues of this essay. They consist of one article each from all three of the examined newspapers. The articles all focus on the same event; the uncovering of Ed Miliband's pledge stone. They vary in length and amount of visual elements. These articles are chosen because they treat the matter of personalisation of political coverage and the most common type of event (Bjerling, 2012; Ch. 1), which appears to be symptomatic with the modern election campaign and the game-framing schema. Moreover, by looking at how the same event is described in the different newspapers the differences in the narrative frames in each of the papers will be revealed (Aalberg et al, 2011). It also thought to point towards how the framing appears in the British press in general.

2.7.2 Validity and reliability of the semiotic analysis

The validity and reliability of a semiotic analysis is just like the analytical method itself bound by societal and contextual factors. This means that the highest degree of validity and reliability would be ensured if the scholar conducting the research had similar cultural background and experiences. The time and place is also important it is possible that no one in fifty years time will not interpret texts in the same way (Ekström, 2008; Ch. 2).

2.7.3 Generalisation of the Semiotic analysis

The aim of this semiotic analysis, as well as most semiotic analysis, is not for it to be generalised on a grater scale but to show the more subtle nuances that will not come across through the quantitative approach. The nature of the semiotic analysis is such that its premises of it changes over time and vary with the current state of societal norms and conventions (Ekström, 2008; 27).

2.8 Result and analysis quantitative approach

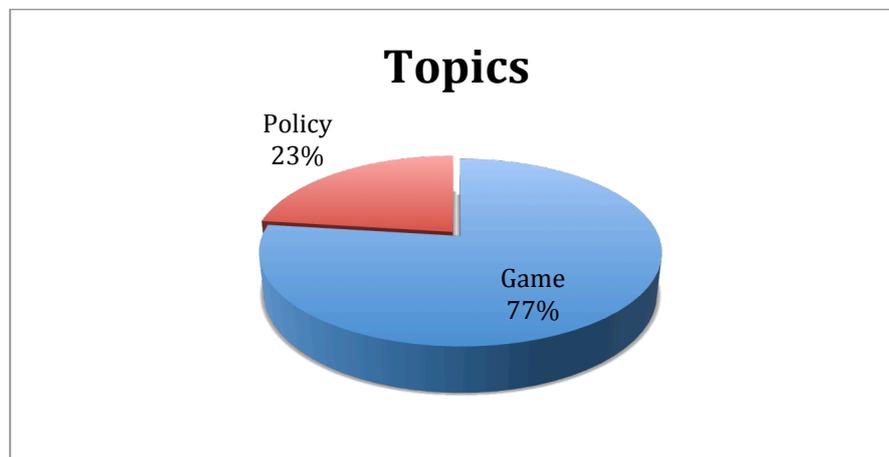
The results indicate an overall similarity in the coverage of the three examined newspapers. A majority of the coverage is focused on the two main party leaders and events and topics that are typical for a game style framing. This result is also supported by the previous studies conducted by Deacon et al, (2015) and the election

analysis report edited by Jacksson and Thorsen (2015). Those studies came to similar conclusions concerning the frequency of actors and topics.

2.8.1 Policy Schema vs Game Schema - topics and events

The general UK trend of game framing of UK politics, which has been prevalent, both historically and present is proven to be consistent also in this study with game framing topics taking up over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the overall topics covered (Scammel & Semetko, 2008).

All policy issues, such as foreign affairs and benefits were coded as one. The topics of a game nature are then also coded together. When comparing the frequency of the policy topics it stood absolutely clear that an extensive majority, 77% of the coverage goes along the lines of game framing (Aalberg et al, 2011). Given that the issues, which revolve around the election itself appear to be most frequently covered it is also the general narrative focus and at the heart of the story. Thus creating a game-framing discourse where a certain competitive jargon is favored (Hellspong, 2001; 74).



Total = 570

Table 1 Pie Chart showing the overall distribution of topics

The concentration in game related topics was high in all three of the examined newspapers; however, The Guardian had slightly fewer game topics and the Independent slightly more. This result could be interpreted to connect to the history and the image of the papers. The Guardian has an older heritage and is known to have longer articles, which conduces to a more in-depth commentary policies need (Aalberg et al, 2011). The Independent is a younger paper and with its i100 online edition it has gone more into viral news, which was also made evident through the semiotic analysis where most of the articles were made up of tweets. A game jargon is usually a simplified version of politics where opposites are created hence it suits the fast-paced environment of viral news (Schudson, 2011; 171-174). The Telegraph also had a lot of game topics but judging by the semiotic analysis this once again comes from a frame of polarisation and exaggeration (Davies, 2013; 30-31).

Topic	The Telegraph	The Guardian	The Independent
Game	78%	71%	84%
Policy	22%	29%	16%
Total	156= 100%	216=100%	198=100%

Table 2 Topic distribution across News paper

The most frequent type of event was “matters to do with voting”, at 15.4%, which was most often used in relation to election polls or the electoral system. The second and third most frequently covered type of event was “campaign move from an actor” (14.2%) closely followed by general political commentary (14%). Both of these events are game framing topics because they are focused on the general image of the election process as a game. Furthermore all of the five most covered events were of a more “game-like” nature, focusing on campaign events rather than policies (Aalberg et al, 2011). For instance events like “comparison of policies” only had 0.9% out of the total number of covered event.

Matters to do with voting (events around opinion polls etc.)	Campaign move from political actor	General election commentary	Attack on opponent’s policies or ability to lead.	Regional Campaign events
15%	14%	14%	9%	5%
570= 100%	570= 100%	570= 100%	570= 100%	570= 100%

Table 3 Top 5 covered events

When the frequency of the coverage of events was compared among the three broadsheets the results once again suggested a clear game frame across the board. Once again the Guardian’s reporting was slightly less game oriented than the other two. The frequency of game events are not as definitive in showing game frames as game topics are because an election campaign is by its nature focused on campaign events. However, the game nature of the events in election campaigns has become more frequent along with the longer election campaigns. However, combined with the topic variable there is no doubt that the game events are most common.

Event	The Telegraph	The Guardian	The Independent
Game	83%	79%	84%
Policy	17%	21%	16%
Total	156 = 100	210 = 100	192 = 100

Table 4 Percentage of event coverage in game respectively policy style

2.8.2 Personalisation vs. collectivism- the actor vs. the actors

In concurrence with previous studies, the main party leaders are quite significantly more frequently featured as the main actors. This study found that the Labour leader was the single most mentioned actor at 10% whilst his Conservative counterpart was close behind with 7%.

The main party, when including, leader, party and representatives, were the Conservative party with 14% coverage. Labour were close behind with 13% of the overall coverage. When looking at the coverage for all the parties it is even clearer how the two parties hold the majority of the coverage, making up 27% of the 46% of the total that the political parties together made up.

Interestingly the single actor to receive the most coverage is the Labour party leader Ed Milliband who received 10% of the overall coverage. The fact that the two main

parties received such a big majority of the coverage compared to any other type of actor shows how they become representatives not only for their own party but the current political discourse in general (Bjerling, 2012).

Labour	Conservative	Lib-Dem	Green	UKIP	SNP	All other actors
13%	14%	5%	0,9%	6%	6,3%	54%
570 = 100%	570 = 100%	570= 100%	570= 100%	570= 100%	570= 100%	570= 100%

Total 570=100

Table 5 Percentage of coverage of political parties across all papers

2.8.3 Outer vs. inner attributes in the presentation of actors

Ed Milliband and Nick Clegg were the only party leaders with personal stories, with three stories each. Which suggests that they are framed more as “ordinary people” compared to David Cameron. Especially considering that David Cameron and Ed Milliband are the main actors in a fairly even number of articles the different personae they are framed with became quite clear. There are more articles concerning David Cameron’s ability to lead the country (with 41% mentioning for Cameron against 32,8% for Miliband) thus presenting him in a more statesman-like/professional way than his Labour opponent.

Topics	Cameron	Miliband	Clegg	Lucas & Bennet	Farrage	Sturgeon
Ability to lead	42%	33%	27%	0%	6%	23%
Election progress	24%	24%	15%	0%	45%	28%
Personal story, emotive	0%	4%	11%	0%	0%	9%
N of Valid Cases	58=100%	41=100%	27=100%	4=100%	18=100%	22=100%

Table 6 Percentage of of attributes connected to each Political party leader

The table above sets out three very illustrative examples of topics and demonstrates how the connection with actors shows how the actor is being framed. Cameron is, as mentioned above, framed as very statesmanlike, often being featured in relation to the “ability to lead” topic. The Prime Minister is never featured in connection with personal stories thus portraying him as rather cold and rational. The fact that both Miliband and Cameron are featured equally in connection to the election progress further tells the story of the two-party-race (Scammel & Semetko, 2008; Ch. 5).

In spite of Nick Clegg’s position as Deputy Prime Minister the coverage doesn’t deem him a suitable leader. Not only does he receive less of the overall coverage, he also seems to be considered less important when it comes to ability to lead and holds a smaller position in the election progress. With more personal stories to his name he is

framed as a bit sensitive and not sufficiently stern, more heart than brain perhaps (Bjerling, 2012).

The examples clearly show that the personalisation of David Cameron is more centred on the outer attributes as well as framing him as a statesman-like figure currently occupying the role of Prime Minister. Through this he is made into a symbol not only for his own party but for the entire country (Bjerling, 2012). Bjerling's study showed that this pattern was also prevalent in the Swedish election coverage where former Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt was the equivalent to both his party, and the nation itself. Reinfeldt was also surrounded by more outer than inner attributes in the media coverage.

Nicola Sturgeon, the first minister of Scotland was mentioned often under the topic of "election progress". The reason for this is most likely that however the election would go, it was clear the SNP would win a huge share of the vote north of the border.

The fact that Mr Farrage, the UKIP party leader, is mainly mentioned along the topic of "election progress" is down to Farrage's popular image as a bit of a jokey chap. Farrage's personae is ultimately made up of him drinking pints in different pubs with different people and complaining about Europe and the smoking ban.

The Green party leaders were left out all together in relation to these three topics. In fact the only topics under which they were mentioned were "immigration", "policies on several topics" and "LGBTQ issues", ironically they didn't even get a say on the environment.

It is also interesting to find out, that when looking at all the examined actors the proportion of emotive personal stories are proportionally much greater with female actors than compared to the overall male actors. There is a great majority of male actors in general, with female actors only making up 11.1% of the total while male actors make up a staggering 48.1% of the total. The rest is made up by the 32.6% of cases where the gender of the main actor is not disclosed or there was no main actor involved. 8.2% of the cases had several equally important actors where both the male and the female actors featured equally.

2.8.4 Endorsements and bias, where lies the sympathies of the British press

It has been concluded many times before that the right-wing press has quite loudly promoted the Tory party and its candidates. On the other hand there was a lot of support for Blair both in lead up to him being elected PM as well as during his government. It has however, not been as evident in the more highbrow broadsheets before but in the paper edited by Jackson and Thorsens (2015) Professor Steven Barnett explains how The Telegraph ran messages straight out of the Tory HQ and directly sent letters to the Newspapers marketing database asking the recipients to vote Conservative. Interestingly but perhaps not surprisingly The Telegraph were also in general more positive towards the Conservative party.

Furthermore, there was a quite clear bias in the description of the actors along the respective newspapers endorsed party. As previously mentioned the two main parties received a great majority of the overall coverage and they were also the parties that

were endorsed by the papers during the campaign (Guardian endorsing Labour, Independent endorsing a continuation of a liberal/conservative coalition and The Telegraph endorsing the conservatives). This is not particularly odd seeing as one of the two were always likely either to be the biggest part even if of a coalition government, or to try to carry of a minority government with support from the “smaller” parties.

On the issue of bias it is interesting to look at whether a papers endorsement of a certain party made it prone to describe that party in a better light. When studying the table below it is apparent that amongst the three papers the Telegraph seems to keep to more of a two party framing mentioning the main party leaders proportionally a lot more than any of the other parties or actors (Aalberg et al, 2011). The same pattern is however, also visible when looking at the Guardian and Independent but not as significant.

	The Telegraph	The Guardian	The Independent
Conservative Party	21%	12%	11%
Labour Party	20%	10%	10%
Liberal Democrats	5%	5%	7%
N of Valid Cases	156=100%	216=100%	198=100%

Table 7 Percentage of the newspaper’s coverage focused on each party repectively (the numbers include all mentions of the political party in connection with party leaders, member, mps and so on.)

When it comes to the sentiment with which each of the parties were described the Conservatives were reported on in the most positive terms across all the papers. That the party in power is reported as more suitable is a pattern that is supported by previous research such as that of Asp and Bjerling (2014).

Another interesting aspect when it comes to bias towards either actors by the papers is that, with reference to he Party leaders, the Telegraph were mostly negative towards Mr Miliband (24% negative mentionings) and more generally positive towards David Cameron with a steady 19% of the positive coverage.

The Guardian’s coverage of the party leaders revealed more positive sentiment towards Mr Miliband, whilst the Conservative leader only received 5% positive coverage from the Guardian at a par with Mr Clegg. The Independent was overall more positive in its descriptions with Miliband and Cameron neck and neck at 12% and 11% respectively. Nick Clegg however has 16% percent of the Independents positive coverage. Perhaps Clegg’s previously proved connection with emotive stories also present him in a more sympathetic, positive light.

+ Positive	The Telegraph	The Guardian	The Independent
Miliband	6%	9%	12%
Cameron	19%	5%	11%
Clegg	4%	5%	16%
Total	52=100%	75=100%	56=100%

Table 8 Percentage of positive coverage each of the party leadders received from each of the papers respectively.

This means over all three papers Mr Miliband was the most negatively covered in all the papers. The description of Cameron vs. Miliband as a less suitable leader probably

plays in to the negative attitude towards the Labour leader. On the other hand negative coverage could in turn lead to the impression of Miliband as an incapable leader being cemented in the public's eyes.

The Prime Minister is not nearly as negatively covered as the Labour leader; again the framing of the actor's personae is thrown in the mix. Cameron is more thought of as a reliable leader perhaps not nice and chirpy but in control, unquestionably so. Clegg is not particularly negatively described in any of the papers most likely for the same reason that he was positively described, he appears to be a nice guy, is not intimidating and probably too nice to be a leader.

- Negative	The Telegraph	The Guardian	The Independent
Miliband	24%	12%	15%
Cameron	3%	7%	8%
Clegg	0%	4%	4%
N of Valid Cases	58=100%	68=100	52=100

Table 9 Percentage of negative coverage each of the party leaders received from each of the papers respectively.

The Telegraph, which endorsed the Conservative party, was clearly more positive in its description of the party and/or its representatives. The paper was more negative in their descriptions of the Labour party and its representatives and even more negative when it came to the description of the Scottish National Party.

The SNP received a fair amount of negative coverage especially from the Telegraph, which is probably explained by a unionist bias being stronger with the Conservative paper. They also appear to view the SNP with distrust especially concerning its intentions on the future of the union and cooperation with the rest of the Kingdoms political actors.

In the Guardian and The Independent the SNP was not as negatively portrayed a reason for this could be the leftist policies of the SNP as well as its "underdog" status. Also Nicola Sturgeon receiving a lot of positive coverage due to being a very capable female political leader enjoying popularity ratings in Scotland Miliband and Cameron could only dream of.

UKIP received negative coverage with twice as many negative mentions as positive. However, UKIP was clearly the party with most negative coverage which isn't uncommon for parties on the far right, looking for instance at the Swedish Democrats and their many political faux pas. A lot of the negative coverage was lined with inappropriate comments or behaviors mainly from the party's local representatives.

	The Telegraph		The Guardian		The Independent	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
Labour	6%	45%	17%	10%	13%	14%
Conservative	46%	5%	11%	22%	11%	8%
Lib-Dem	8%	2%	7%	5%	20%	2%
Green Party	0%	2%	0%	0%	4%	0%
UKIP	8%	7%	1%	4%	7%	21%
SNP	6%	16%	4%	3%	9%	12%
	52=100%	58=100%	75=100%	68=100%	56=100%	52=100%

Table 10 Positive and negative coverage in relation to each of the main parties presented news paper wise.

2.8.5 The Westminster Model and the case of polarization and the two party model

The Conservatives and Labour were covered in a massive majority across all papers together making up more than a fourth of the total of mentioned actors (Labour and Conservatives together had 27% of all main actor mentions). Several parties were sometimes covered in the same piece but one or two of the main parties were almost always receiving the most space with the Conservatives at 14% of the total main actors just slightly before Labour at 13%. Perhaps that is quite understandable considering the traditional Westminster model, which is the concept of the two biggest parties, Labour and Conservatives and then the minuscule minority that is the others. Even though there are currently more parties the first past the post electoral system along with a two party centred coverage maintain the Westminster model as the prevailing idea of the political landscape (Scammel & Semetko, 2008; 73).

Reviewing the actual number of possible actors, particularly in this election, the coverage could have been more diverse. Besides the Westminster model one possible reason could be the focus on the election process itself, the game framing which has previously been addressed in more detail. Due to an obvious game frame in this general election, the parties associated with more niche political issues will have difficulty gaining any attention. This concurs with what the previous studies on this general election published by Deacon et al (2015) and Jackson and Thorsen (2015). It also concurs with the election coverage from previous elections as presented by Scammel & Semetko (2008; 82).

The general focus on the two main parties confirms how the Westminster model lives on in the election coverage (Scammel & Semetko, 2008; 73). However, the most mentioned type of event were matters to do with voting which was used both in order to discuss the election process and polls and which shows that the election process and electoral system, at least, is being discussed in the public debate.

2.9 Semiotic analysis and results

The chosen texts revolve around the event that was the erection of the stone tablet containing Labour's core pledges by the party leader Ed Miliband. These articles are particularly interesting to this study as they address a game event which including the

most mentioned actor. They also contain varying amount of personalisation in the framing of the main actor. The fact that all three articles cover the same event allows for a good comparison of the result.

2.9.1 Ed Miliband's manifesto monolith 'is a Kinnock moment'

Newspaper: Telegraph

Date: 03/05/2015

Author: Matthew Holehouse and James Rothwell, The Telegraph journalists

Title: Ed Miliband's manifesto monolith 'is a Kinnock moment'

Subtitle: - In grandiose gesture, Labour leader unveils eight-foot limestone monolith to show his vows are "carved in stone".

Starting from the main headline this 9-letter word already sets the tone for what is to come. To understand what a "Kinnock moment" is one need to look at the mythology. Neil Kinnock was the Labour leader who, in the 1992 general election, held an American style rally in Sheffield during which he repeatedly shouted "We're all right!". Kinnock's actions were considered grandiose and the scowling got even worse when he later lost the election very surprisingly to John Major (and the Conservative party), which is explained with an array of emotively charged words in the story below the first image (McNair, 2011; 130).

From this we can infer that having a Kinnock moment is a metaphor for shooting oneself in the foot, or making an ill advised political move (Ekström, 2008; 25-26). Referring to Kinnock also implies that there are hopes or at least expectations of an equally stunning loss for Miliband (McNair, 2011; 130). This later turned out to be the case but on the third of May there was nothing in the polls that would have suggested the final result.

The subtitle further strengthens the notion of Miliband's stone being a poor idea altogether by explicitly suggesting the move as one of foolish grandiosity. The last part of the subtitle "carved in stone", with its inverted commas nudging aggressively towards the reader; this is funny, forcing the figurative pun down their throats (Chandler, 2007; 127).

Image 1:



Figure 1 Ed Miliband. Photo: Stefan Rousseau/PA via www.telegraph.co.uk

The first image shows Edward Miliband from a frog perspective clenching his fist in front of the tall stone block with engraved writing on it. The party leader is surrounded on either sides of two bemused looking ladies, one of them holding on to a pink paper Labour election flag. One does not get the sense of a great turnout in public support. In the background is a glimpse of what looks like an empty car park.

Miliband's posture, gesticulation and the perspective the picture is taken from signals he is a man with power. The gloomy, empty surrounding rather suggests the opposite. These can be said to be two contrasting signs but together with the text tells a story of what is perceived to be a failed PR-stunt. That the ladies next to him look less than amused if not even a bit bored and perhaps confused, further decrease the feel of power and decisiveness that was probably intended by Miliband himself (Bergström, 2011; 176-186).

The story / text body: As previously mentioned the story starts with an explanation of the headline and why both the Kinnock rally and the 'milistone' are ridiculous acts of grandiosity made by quite feeble leaders. Labours opponents also get to have their say George Osborne also making the connection to Kinnocks 1992 gaff. Whilst his colleague Prime Minister David Cameron is quoted saying triumphantly that "the tombstone shows Mr Miliband has a problem with judgment". The daring quotations from the political opponents are the archetype of a narrative according to the game-schema (Aalberg et al, 2011).

The event along with its main actor, Mr Miliband, then get more stick from anonymous critics being quoted dubbing the rock a "policy cenotaph" and then there is "the heaviest suicide note in history". Once again the metaphor machine is running on full speed. Branding the stone as the heaviest suicide note in history is clearly quite harsh but even more so clearly portraying Miliband as a failure and an utter bungler. Miliband himself is likened to Moses in a metaphor referring to the biblical stone tablets with the 10 Commandments. The latter metaphor being emphasised in the last picture with Ed Miliband caricatured with two stone tablets with Hebrew engravings on them portraying him as a goofy Moses figure (Chandler, 2007; 127).



Image 2: Figure 2 Image of President Obama and David Cameron. Image via www.telegraph.co.uk

The second picture shows two men barbecuing in an opulent garden. Both of the men are familiar to most people who will come across this image, they are Prime Minister David Cameron and President Barack Obama. What they are barbecuing is difficult to make out but in front of them on the table which is dressed in a white tablecloth are little bowls of what looks like rubs and spices.

Almost out of frame hangs a bunting made from the American and the Union Jack flags. The heads of state look absorbed in conversation and their facial expression are serious. However, their rolled up sleeves and the garden setting signals a relaxed vibe. Both gentlemen have kept their ties on as a sign, which sums up the whole atmosphere of constructed relaxation, sleeves up but ties still on (Bergström, 2011; 176-186). This is a well-orchestrated event not like those Miliband tries to arrange (McNair, 2011; Ch. 7). Once again it is the emphasis on opposites that are typical of game framing (Davies, 2015 & Aalberg et al, 2011).

The story / text body: The story continues under the image of the Prime Minister barbecuing with President Obama. The reader is informed that the Labour party wishes to install the massive stone of pledges in the very same garden in which the merry heads of state are pictured having a barbeque on the above photo, the garden of 10 Downing Street.

After a brief description of the stone and the pledges on it is pointed out that the Prime Minister's residency at 10 Downing Street is a Grade One listed building where you by law are not allowed to make any major structural changes. The author then concludes that erecting the stone tablet in the garden of 10 Downing Street would be an impossible task for Mr Miliband.

His judgment is then questioned once again by his political opponents. The Chancellor is quoted saying that "Ed Milibands judgment is not rock solid" and manages to get a pun in before the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson compares the Labour party leader to Moses. This part of the text uses the same use of metaphors as previously with George Osborne's pun adding a touch of irony to the semiotic mix of political slandering (Chandler, 2007; 127+134-136).



Image 3:

Figure 3 *Image of the worker and Kolkhoz Woman, monument in Moscow. Image via www.Telegraph.co.uk*

The third image is not discussed any further within the article but the image text reads “*Image of the worker and Kolkhoz Woman monument in Moscow*”. The image portrays a sculpture depicting a man and in the background a woman. The man holding in his arm that is stretched above his head the hammer and sickle. The hammer and sickle have a strong symbolical values as the sign of communism through the union between the working-and peasant class and is predominantly both connoted and associated with the Soviet Union (Chandler, 2007; 17-24).

According to the text below the image the monument is to be found in Moscow, the capital of Russia, the former Soviet Union. The pictures connection is not explicitly explained in words within the articles but in the context it implies that the erection of a monument is somewhat totalitarian. Perhaps there are also hints that the Labour leader does not just possess a grandiose view of himself, as suggested explicitly on several places in the article but he might also suffer from a streak of megalomania. The overt nod towards communism also implies that there is a correlation between Miliband’s Labour party and the Soviet Communist party (Chandler, 2007; 18-24 +143-144).

The story / text body: The text beneath the image of the Russian monument does not mention the picture at all but rather goes on to present political intrigues within the Labour party. A current Labour political advisor is given the blame for the stone stunt and deemed arrogant by a previous Labour advisor. The argument goes on to explore whether the fault was actually Mr Miliband’s or a collective Labour decision.

It is then declared by a Labour spokesperson that the aim is no longer is, to erect the stone in the garden of 10 Downing Street. Then follows further quotation that shows the bickering and divide in the Labour party with a story about how there had been plans to unveil a similar pledge stone but had been stopped due to the possibility of it to resemble a tombstone.

The article is wrapped up with the announcement of how, in the midst of the kerfuffle in the Labour party, the Conservative party had released its final political broadcast before the election. Revealing the content of the video being; “*It features a glass cloche clock representing the British economy being destroyed by a sledge hammer, representing the Labour Party.*”

Video 1: “It’s working – don’t let them wreck it. Vote Conservatives on Thursday”. The last party political broadcast made by the conservatives, available to view at www.telegraph.co.uk and <https://youtu.be/xrqG6CbmZjw>

Figure 4 *(Video) Party Political Advert from Conservatives*

The two minutes and 45 seconds long video starts with a close up of a revolving horologe covered by an antique looking glass dome. Simultaneously the serious voice of a man begins telling the viewer that “In just a little time now, YOU can decide who’s going to run the country for the next five years”, The clock indexically pointing at the little time left until the vote and the coming five years (Chandler, 2007; 36-37).

It is also a metaphor showing how the conservative government makes the country work, running it as minutely as the clock (Chandler, 2007; 126-127).

The voice goes onto saying how the Conservatives, during their time in power, have mended the economy left in ruins by the Labour party. The man then thanks the hardworking people of Britain for enabling the creation of 500 new businesses and one thousand jobs a day. When this is being said the camera zooms in on the relentless movement of the works of the timepiece, quietly yet insistently signalling the approaching urgency of the election (Bergström, 2011; 176-186).

The voice goes onto explaining all the positive economic results of the previous conservative government and how on Thursday the viewer can vote for their successful reign to continue ” Or on Friday wake up to Ed Miliband propped up by the SNP and find this...”, a sledgehammer suddenly and dramatically crushes the glass dome with horologe. Upon this dramatic scene the voiceover says “It’s working, don’t let them wreck it” (The Telegraph, 03-05-2015).

The image of the smashed dome and clock then lingers on the screen for a couple of seconds before a cut takes us into what looks like an office, the blinds are half shut and something that looks like the gloomy London skyline on a grey day is visible through the window. Before the window sits David Cameron, leader of the Tory party and prime Minister. He speaks with a serious voice about the same subjects mentioned in the previous clip, mainly about how the Tories have “mended” the broken economy left behind by Labour.

Using the word mended implies an almost craftsman-like quality in the ruling of the country. The same kind of metaphor is used in the sort tagline “*It’s working, don’t let them wreck it*” (The Telegraph, 03-05-2015). Referring to their style of governance as that of craftsmanship connotes at least two things; firstly it can be intended to mean that the Conservative party ruled the country with great precision and authenticity as that used in handicraft (Sebeok, 2001; 41-42). The other and complementary interpretation is that the Conservative party are trying to re-invent themselves as the party for the working man. (Ekström, 2008; 24) This interpretation would appear to resemble the Swedish Conservative party’s strategy when they rather successfully employed this move in a more explicit manner to become the “the new party of the workers”.

He almost threatens the viewer saying that voting for any other party than the Conservatives will have a catastrophic effect on the country’s finances. In his own words “Vote for any other party and Britain’s recovery could be stopped dead in its tracks. Ed Miliband propped up by the SNP would wreck the recovery, with more debt, more borrowing and more taxes. And this would be the result”. After this exhortation the video cuts back to the violent smashing of clock after which, Mr Cameron once again pleads for voters to choose conservatives on Thursday for the sake of the Country’s economy. The video ends with the text “vote conservative” in light blue capital letters on a white background next to a crossed out box symbolising that of a correctly filled out ballot (Chandler, 2007; 36-37).

The video is in itself an array of metaphors signified both indexically and symbolically (Chandler, 2007; 36-37). The rhetoric is severe and implies that the

election is a sort of war. The responsible and patriotic decision for “hardworking” Britons is to vote Conservative. The nature of the video is as previously stated quite harsh, however, it is the last broadcast before the election and the heat is most likely on. What is more interesting from this study’s perspective is the Telegraph’s choice of including it in the article. It might only be a matter of timing in relations to the stone unveiling which is the core story of the article. Even though this might be the case the video makes a strong case for a game framing of the political events by creating a polarisation along the intended lines of the Conservative party (Davies, 2013; 30-31).



Image 4:

Figure 5 Former Scottish National Party leader, Alex Salmond with his own stone of pledges. Image via www.telegraph.co.uk

The video is followed by a text and an image (image 4) portraying the former Scottish National Party leader Alex Salmond blithely kneeling and pointing at a stone which reads; “*The rocks will melt with the sun before I allow tuition fees to be imposed on Scotland’s students*”. The text just above the image also tells that the stone was erected at the Herriot Watt University as Mr Salmond stepped down as leader of the SNP.

The text does not go into further detail in describing the image but considering the solid critique of the Labour stone presented all through out the article the implications are that Salmond’s stone was of equally poor judgment. Also the SNP are often mentioned, more so than the other parties, in negative terms in general and more specifically in the telegraph. The SNP are called such things as “separatists” and “nationalist” which even though that might be true to some extent due to their stance in the Scottish referendum, those are words that hold a rather negative connotations and implies that the SNP are an extremist party (Sebeok, 2001; 41-42).



Image 5:

Figure 6 Photoshopped image of Labour leader Ed Miliband. Image via www.telegraph.co.uk

The article ends with the photoshopped picture of Ed Miliband's face onto the body of what appears to be Moses clutching two stone tablets with Hebrew script presumed to be the 10 commandments. The picture is not given any further explanation but has been addressed previously in the article. It is a very obvious use of both metaphors and myths. Metaphors because the image, even more so along with the previous comments likening Mr Miliband to Moses, it is a figurative portrayal as well as connecting the story to the historical and biblical myth of Moses (Chandler, 2007; 143-144 + 126-127).

Overall interpretation:

The journalist clearly takes the side of the Conservatives giving them most space for quotation and narrative control. Labour and Ed Miliband in particular are heavily criticised for their stone unveiling. Like the time when Miliband sloppily consumed a bacon sandwich and for it was deemed a sloppy incapable leader, he is here portrayed as a man of very questionable judgment, hence, being questionable as a valid option to lead the country. The overall focus of this story is quite clearly rather on the spectacle of unveiling the stone, not the policies engraved upon it. Once again an example of the game focused framing in the UK election coverage (Scammel & Semetko, 2008; 82).

Both of the party leaders but Ed Miliband in particular is made the equivalent of their party. The implication is that the way the leaders are perceived to act represents the type of politics that will reign if that party wins the election. This very explicit way of displaying bias in the narrative might seem odd even though the Telegraph very openly endorsed of the Conservative party it might seem a bit bold.

Overall the article has a fairly emotive language for a news article partly because it contains a relatively large amount of quotations from several different actors. Moreover, including the Tories party political broadcast in the article, which concerns a completely different matter, clearly signals a conservative bias.

2.9.2 Ed Miliband unveils stone carved with Labour pledges to be placed at Downing St if he wins.

Newspaper: Independent

Author: Adam Withnall, journalist with the Independent

Title: Ed Miliband unveils stone carved with Labour pledges to be placed at Downing St if he wins.

Subtitle: But reactions on social media suggest it could be Labour's tombstone.

The title quite plainly explains the event of the picture situated below, which is the same as the one in the Telegraph article. Once again the symbolic metaphor “carved in stone” is used (Chandler, 2007; 126-127). Once again it is used as a pun, not uncommon in headlines in the British press. In the subtitle the critique is rather attributed to the general social media community or more specifically the Twitter community. Perhaps this is to distance the author as well the paper from the harsh accusations voiced later on in the article.

Image 1:



Figure 7 Labour leader Ed Miliband unveils Labour's pledges carved into a stone plinth in Hastings. Image by PA available at www.independent.co.uk

Image 1: The Independent has used the exact same picture as the Telegraph, purchased even from the same agency. The composition is obviously the same as well with the same ambiguity and the disharmony of the confident assertive Miliband in front of his stone slab in an abandoned car park (Bergström, 2011).

Text body: The article starts with explaining the event describing it as the unveiling of “a giant stone slab inscribed with Labour’s six election pledges”, which is a fairly straightforward description. The Labour leader is then quoted saying that he wants to keep the stone “in a place where we can see it every day as a reminder of our duty to

keep Labour's promises" (Independent.co.uk, 03-05-2015). According to the journalist, Labour sources have stated that the aim with the engraved tablet has been to regain the public's trust, which in the near time leading up to the event has been questioned by the audience of the BBC's Question time. The next paragraph goes "But the stone was widely mocked on social media on Sunday morning as being like something out of political satire *The Thick Of It*, and said it could be interpreted as Labour's "tombstone" if it lost." (Ibid). Once again keeping the author and the paper neutral from the Twitter storm of un-pleasantries.

By presenting both the Labour party's intended meaning of the stone's unveiling as well as the Twitter mockery, it manages to stay more neutral in covering the event than the Telegraph. The sparse use of images, only using the same picture that was also used as an introductory image in the other articles, they don't make any further implications in connection to the event. Thus reducing possible connotations and associations with the audience (Sebeok, 2001; 41-42)

Thereafter a few of the engraved pledges, amongst those, "A strong economic foundation", "an NHS with the time to care", "controls on immigration" (The Independent, 03-05-2015). These pledges were not unknown before the unveiling of the stone. The unveiling of the stone must be interpreted as PR –stunt as a part of the game frame with election events rather unrelated to actual political issues. The Labour party is also said to have admitted, earlier in the article, that the stone-stunt was a PR-event to win back the people's trust.

Mr Miliband is then quoted saying;

"These six pledges are now carved in stone, and they are carved in stone because they won't be abandoned after the general election." The very next paragraph is another quote from the Labour leader saying, *"I want the British people to remember these pledges, to remind us of these pledges, to insist on these pledges, because I want the British people to be in no doubt – we will deliver them. We will restore faith in politics by delivering what we promised at this general election."*

This quote emphasises the stones explicitly intended symbolic value. The use of the metaphor carved in stone is now even used by the Labour leader not only as a headline pun (Chandler, 2007; 126-127).

The intentions presented by Miliband sounds good. Not many people would argue that politicians who intend to live up to their promises isn't a good development but as the tweets will later reveal there is a lot mistrust towards politicians (Asp & Bjerling, 2014), not least against the Labour leader. This was quite evident to see judging by the quantitative part of this study where it showed that Ed Miliband was described as untrustworthy in 19 cases. When all the negative descriptions were added Ed Miliband was negatively described in 30 of the total of 58 times he was mentioned.

By allowing the Labour leader to present the story along his intended lines the author allows him to take narrative control. However, this is swiftly followed with presenting the "mixed response" from Twitter (which was after a run through all negative). Some

of the tweets included in the article will be analysed here but due to space constraint and the relative similarity of many of the tweets some will be left out.



Figure 8 Tweet from Boris Johnson @BorisJohnson. Screenshot of a tweet from www.independent.co.uk

The first tweet to be analysed here is from Boris Johnson, the current Conservative mayor of London. For those who don't know him, Johnson is well known for his comic way and unruly blond hair. He has often appeared on popular panel shows. Besides being known for his Boris bikes he has also been caught having several affairs (This is a contextual explanation and is not in the article).

Boris Johnson is quite clearly mocking the stunt by the phrase "Who does he think he is?". He also points out the Moses metaphor, which is in fact both a myth and a metaphor (Chandler, 2007; 126-127). Mr Johnson finishes the tweet by saying the stunt was a waste of a good stone. The tweet is in all senses negative and a different set of words would not change the sentiment much as it is so overtly negative to the event.

The second tweet included in this analysis is from Jess Bramar who is a journalist with BBC's Newsnight. Worth mentioning is that she on her Twitter page clearly states that the views aired on Twitter are solely hers and not necessarily representative of the BBC (The bio part of one's twitter page is a presentation to acquaint readers with the tweeters).

Brammar's tweet compares the Labour stone to a tombstone, once again a clear use of metaphors. Jess Brammar then concludes that erecting what she interprets to be a tombstone is not a clever choice so close before the general election. Brammar's tweet shows that she has completely misinterpreted the Labour party's intentions of the stone, possible quite a common misinterpretation. Anytime a PR-event is created there is the risk that the intended message doesn't come across. This seems to be case in this instance (McNair, 2011).



Figure 9 Tweet from Jess Brammar @jessbrammar. Screenshot of a tweet from www.independent.co.uk

The overall impression

This article contains greater focus on social media than the other two. Perhaps this is partly due to the Independent's more "youthful" approach and "younger" age as a newspaper. In giving Mr Miliband more quotation space, relative to the Telegraph that is, they also give him a greater deal of narrative control (Hodkinson, 2011; 73).

The Independent rather let the twitterers take care of the slandering of the Labour leader. By distancing themselves from the negative comments they are asserting a more neutral stance than the Telegraph. Another way in which they try to maintain some manner of neutrality is through quoting Labour sources in a fairly neutral way and addressing the actual pledges that are carved into the stone. Lastly, by having the tweets as screenshots the paper distance itself from the comments by clearly showing they are written by a third party. The Telegraph on the other hand weaved the critical tweets in with the editorial text, thus making it more difficult to differentiate the opinions of the journalists to that of the featured tweets.

2.9.3 Ed Miliband to set his promises in stone

Newspaper: Guardian

Author: Toby Helm, The Observers (The Guardian's Sunday Edition) Political Editor

Title: Ed Miliband to set his promises in stone

Image: Tall limestone structure is intended to underline party leader's commitment to keep Labour's election pledges to voters

Image:



Figure 10 Ed Miliband unveils Labour’s pledges carved into a stone plinth in Hastings Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA via www.theguardian.com

The Guardian has, just like the other two papers used, at least almost, the same picture (see above) and used only that one. What differentiates this picture from the others is that it is taken from a further distance. This allows the camera to catch more of the onlookers. Even though the image contains some ambiguity interpretively with the Labour leaders’ confident posture and the perspective of the photo but the surrounding of the empty car park gives a less than confident impression around the event itself (Bergström, 2011; 176-186).

Text body: The Guardian article has the least apparent negative sentiment towards Miliband’s epic or fatal election move. This can be a sign of The Guardian’s bias towards Labour, the party they also endorsed to win the general election. This is evident through the lack of negative comments and allowing the Labour party and Mr Miliband to have narrative control through quotation (Hodkinson, 2011; 73). When mentioning the reason that was given by the Labour Party in connection with the unveiling of the stone the article states;

“The issue of trust in politicians –or lack of it – was highlighted in last week’s final television debate when the audience pummelled Cameron, Miliband and Clegg with questions about why they broke promises and failed to answer questions.”

The quote highlights (besides the literal highlight of public discontent) a more gentle attitude towards Miliband by “spreading the blame” in terms of the public’s disapproval thus not singling out the Labour leader. The fact that the discontent was directed to all three of the leaders participating in the debate is for instance not presented in the Independent article. Withholding this information can easily lead the reader to believe that all the heat was down to Mr Miliband’s unreliability alone (Hodkinson, 2012; 70-71).

The article then goes on to presenting a couple of the pledges on the stone and ends the list of included pledges by that they are issues where “*where the next generation can do better than the last.*” This last bit of the paragraph could be interpreted as an agreement with Labour and agreeing with the Labour party in thinking that the Conservative party had not done a good enough job on the issues addressed on the stone (Sebeok, 2001; 41-42)

It is then declared that the Labour party wants to erect the stone in the rose garden of 10 Downing Street. The Telegraph loudly claimed the Labour party’s plans were ludicrous and disrespectful. The Guardian simply let Labour’s press release announce the event. However the paragraph ends with “*What happens to it if Labour loses is less clear.*” which does if ever so slightly question Labour. This comment could be interpreted as pointing at the mindlessness and grandiosity of the Labour PR stunt. The article ends with a quote from the Labour leader himself, ““This stone is a symbol of our commitment to keep our promises,” Miliband told the *Observer.*” By allowing Mr Miliband to get his intended point across unchallenged hence the article end with the narrative control in the hands of the opposition leader (Chandler, 2007; 150-159).

2.10 Differences and similarities – when three become one

2.10.1 Semiotic similarities

Despite their differences all of the articles exemplify the personalisation and game framing within politics. Regardless of whether the article is more or less negative towards the Labour party or its leader, he is equated to the party just the same. When the unveiling of the stone is described as an utter mistake or when it is presented as a move with good intentions the stunt is attributed to Ed Miliband not only as the leader of the Labour party but the party personified (Bjerling, 2008).

The main semiotic tools that are used across all the articles are metaphors, semiotic affordance, and myths. A vivid example is the Kinnock moment, which is presented in the Telegraph article. The Kinnock metaphor also shows the use of semiotic affordance. To understand the context and connotations the reader needs a certain amount of semiotic affordance (Ekström, 2008; 25-28). On the other hand, to understand the storyline in most political news, one needs semiotic affordance as well as knowledge of the contextual meaning (Chandler, 2007; 27)

2.10.2 Difference in description

The fact that the pledges on the stone were not new on the date of the unveiling highlights the event as a spectacle, a campaign event for the campaign’s sake. Ed Miliband said it was to regain the public’s trust whether this is the genuine reason or not, the unveiling of the stone was a spectacle (McNair, 2011; 130). A massive stunt like this provides a lot of attention without having to explain your policies further and without having to present any new policies. It is the symptom of the game framing in politics, which shifts the focus from policies to campaign moves (McNair, 2011; 130).

Judging by this article the three papers operate a somewhat different manner of storytelling. The Telegraphs article is long and from start to finish encourages the reader into negative connotations, “Kinnock moment”, a picture of a soviet statue etc. (Chandler, 2007; 27). They freely mix quotes that are negative to the event with editorial negative commentary.

The Independent doesn’t itself take part in the slandering of Miliband’s stone-stunt but rather quotes a twitter wall of comments ridiculing the Labour leader. Not only distancing themselves but also showing their young and more “buzz” way of telling stories. The Guardian was the most lenient with Miliband’s stunt.

The Guardian article was rather more neutral in its description but at the same time it left out the twitter backlash thus simplifying the narrative to Miliband’s advantage (Schudson, 2011; 171-174). Another hint towards possible Labour bias from the Guardian is how they allowed his comments to stand unchallenged.

2.10.3 Miliband times three



Figure 11 Ed Miliband. The above image featured in The Guardian



Figure 12 Ed Miliband. The above image featured in both The Telegraph and The Independent

All three papers have a very similar image of Ed Miliband in front of the stone tablet on an empty car park. However, the body language differs slightly, in the first and second picture (Telegraph and Independent); he’s clenching his fist looking rather assertive. He also seems to be holding a passionate speech even though the two

onlookers don't appear to be up in arms about it. We also get a closer look at the Labour leader as the shot is half body, which also creates a more emotional feel as you get to see the subject's facial expressions more closely.

In the photograph used by the Guardian, by the looks of it taken at almost the same time as the other picture, Miliband is mid-speech. The asserted fist is gone but his wide legged stance, which we can now see from the more out zoomed photo, also signifies if not as clearly, confidence and assertiveness. The fact that this photo is either taken from a further distance or zoomed out also means that the beholder can see more people in the crowd which creates a greater legitimacy for the event. If there were only two interested Labour supporters as the Telegraph and Independent's pictures suggest the Labour party's reason of winning the public back with the stone would look more ill advised than it does in the Guardian's picture (Davies, 30-31).

3. Quantitative and qualitative conclusion and discussion

This study's aim has been to examine the election coverage of the 2015 UK general election in order to find out how the campaign was described in three of the national broadsheet papers. Undertaking a quantitative content analysis and a semiotic analysis made up the mapping of the election coverage.

The two analytical approaches complimented each other well and were able to paint the more general picture as well as pointing out the fine nuances. Firstly a quantitative content analysis was used to examine all news texts concerning the election campaign in the week leading up to the General election. The semiotic analysis then exemplified these patterns and deciphered their underlying narrative frames and jargons.

The quantitative analysis indicated a high frequency of gaming topics and events, which suggests a game-framework. This type of framing was common across all the examined papers; however, The Guardian had slightly fewer game topics and the Independent slightly more. This result could be interpreted to connect to the history and the image of the papers. The Guardian has an older heritage and is known to publish longer articles, which conduces to the more in-depth commentary policies need. The Independent is younger as a paper and with its 1100 page has delved more into viral news, which was also made evident through the semiotic analysis where most of the article was made up of tweets. A game jargon is usually a simplified version of politics where opposites are created hence it suits the fast-paced environment of viral news. The Telegraph also had a lot of game topics but judging by the semiotic analysis this once again comes from a frame of polarisation and exaggeration.

The frequency of game events in the articles was also very high, however, game events will not provide the same certainty in concluding the framework used. Game events are committed merely for the purpose of taking part in the election game. The definition between game-events and policy is not as clear but the event-result in this study was supported by the frequency of game topics. The fact that the frequency of

events and topics was also similarly spread across the papers further ensures the validity of the result.

The results indicated a focus on political actors in general and the party leaders in particular, highlighting a focus on the person rather than the collective. Furthermore, the party leaders of the two main parties were by far the most frequently mentioned actors, suggesting a game frame also when it comes to the actors (Scammel & Semetko, 2008 Ch. 5). The party leaders were noticeably framed in different manners further suggesting a personalisation framing. David Cameron and Ed Miliband were both framed with outer attributes but Cameron was framed more so and more statesmanlike (Bjerling, 2012; 78-79).

Bjerling (2012) states that in spite of game frame and personalisation both becoming more frequent there isn't enough evidence to support a correlation. However, Bjerling's result are based on Swedish figures, in the British research it has shown that the two party race have encouraged increased personalisation of the party leaders of those two parties (Scammel & Semetko, 2008)

Not only did the quantitative analysis find patterns suggesting a personalisation framing in the election coverage but the figures also showed a bias within the examined broadsheets. Perhaps not very surprisingly the papers described the political actors along the line of their political endorsement (www.guardian.com, 04/05/2010). The Telegraph, which was the most biased, were a lot more positive towards The Tory party and its politicians and were quite negative in its description of the Labour party.

The semiotic analysis looked at one article from each paper (three altogether), which addressed the same event. The event in question was the Labour leader Ed Miliband's unveiling of a stone with six of Labour's pledges inscribed in it. The narrative patterns discovered in the quantitative approach were supported by semiotic analysis. Once again the game frame was dominating, perhaps unsurprisingly as the event covered was very much game oriented (Aalberg et al, 2011). The bias discovered in the quantitative analysis was supported by the jargon used by each respective paper. The most common narrative tools used in across the texts were polarisation, exaggeration and simplification, which are narrative tools that are indicative of a game frame (Schudson, 2011, 171-174).

The denotative meanings in the articles appeared quite different due to the different framing both semantically and otherwise. As intended the semiotic analysis revealed the story of the multimodal elements, such as pictures and videos (Ekström, 2008; Ch. 2). The Telegraph are very explicit about their editorial stance but also used a lot of connotations and metaphors. Both the Guardian and the Independent article were shorter in length and did not include as many images, which led to fewer connotative meanings. The Guardian used fewer emotive statements altogether while The Independent distanced themselves from the use of negatively charged statements and simply left the use of harsh words to the twitterati. The Telegraph were more invested in the story telling on both a connotative and denotative level, displaying their distrust in the Labour leader and his party through out the article, in outright statements as well as in the connotative meanings of the images included.

The three broadsheet papers examined in this study had their similarities and differences. The game frame and the personalisation appears central to the modern election campaign (Bjerling, 2012; Ch.1). Gone is also the stiff upper lip reporting of yesteryear, instead the storytelling is emotive, sometimes exaggerated other times simplified.

The risk of an increase in game frame, as I see it, is the deterioration in the public's political knowledge, which could lead to un-informed decisions and in the long turn undermine democracy. The wide public distrust, which has long been discussed, is not likely to go away with even more focus shifted away from the topics that effect them in their everyday life. Then there is the possibility of the game-framed media coverage creating symbiosis where the media are fed delicious PR-stunts while the politicians are showered with media attention. These scenarios are of course merely qualified speculations and to find the out what the real consequences of such framing other studies will have to be made.

It would also be interesting to conduct this study again after the next 2020 General Election if only to see how the current Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn is presented. Especially considering that the Telegraph hinted that Ed Miliband might have been a bit of a communist, one can only imagine what the would say about the empathically socialist Corbyn. Another interesting study for the next 2020 election would be one that looked into the two party race aspects of game framing, considering the increase in smaller parties.

To conclude, this study has examined and presented the framing of topics, events and actors in the election coverage of three British broadsheets. The narrative differences and similarities have also been presented and compared.

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5. Annex 1

Explanation and definition of the quantitative variables

V5 and 6 mentioning of national region and towns vs rural areas

These variables are included to find out where most of the news coverage in the British national press is concentrated. This is important in understanding the description of politics in general and in particular in the lead-up to an election. Consider the result of the election and the very significant role played by the Scottish vote which, in favouring the SNP over the Scottish Labour Party, helped to bring about Labour's defeat. It is particularly interesting to see how much coverage was achieved by the most northern country in the United Kingdom compared to the impact of its citizens' vote (Scammel & Semetko, 2008; 73).

V7 and V8 number of actors and Main actor

A focus on the number of actors is interesting when considering the framing of the election, so as to assess whether the coverage is concerned with person-focused events or rather emphasises collective political efforts.

V9 Actor's gender

Actor's gender, this variable is partly included to show the general way that the campaign is being portrayed. It will show the share of female vs male mentioning; whatever the result may be it is interesting when looking at the general description. It is simply coded based on the described gender of the main actor. The same variable is also included in the Loughborough and election analysis reports, which makes it even more interesting to include.

V11, V13 and V15 Positive, negative or neutral description

All the variables addressing what sentiment an actor, event or topic is being described with will be coded simply according to whether the text contains clearer or more positive, negative or neutral descriptions. Also the positive, negative neutral variables are coded according to the majority principle. If there is a majority of negatively charged emotive words in the description of an actor, event or topic then it is coded as negative (Esaiasson, 2012; 207).

V12 Topic within the general election debate

What political and other issues are addressed in the articles that describe some part of the campaign leading up to the general election? When coding this variable the same definition will be made as in variable "V8 main actors", which means that even though several topics are addressed within one text the one text that gets the most space and highest priority will be coded as the topic and any secondary topics will not be coded (Esaiasson, 2012; 207).

V 14 What type of action is being described

This variable aims to find out what actions are favoured in the examined news texts. The coding of this variable also goes along the majority rule principle (Esaiasson, 2012; 207). The data from this variable will paint a clearer picture of how the political narrative in the UK press is constructed. This variable will also point to what the focal

points of the coverage are. From examining which actions receive the most coverage in correlation with the positive or negative descriptions, one should be able to conclude what actions are deemed, for instance, admirable and responsible and what type of actions are considered contemptible or negligent. Or if the same action seems to receive positive response if conducted by a certain actor, but is negatively addressed when conducted by a different actor, this would indicate that there is a positive or negative bias towards one or another actor and would add much to the way the general description and narrative tools are used across the objects of study.

V16 Is the story's general feel serious or lighthearted.

Whether a story is serious or lighthearted it is interesting to assess whether there is any correlation of the topic, the actor or any other variable and the fact that a story is told in a more lighthearted and less serious manner. To be coded as serious the article needs to be centered on classically serious political matters and have a serious tone. To be coded lightheartedly an article may contain “silly”, “funny” or “quirky” elements. Smearing or gossiping and other scandalous stories, which are not really concerned with an actual political event or topic can be counted as lighthearted. For instance, an article about where best to watch the general election, or a television review.

5.1 Annex 2

Code table

V1 News Paper

- 1. The Times, The Sunday Times**
- 2. The Telegraph**
- 3. The Guardian, The Observer**
- 4. The Independent**

V2 Day of the week

- 1. Monday**
- 2. Tuesday**
- 3. Wednesday**
- 4. Thursday**
- 5. Friday**
- 6. Saturday**
- 7. Sunday**

V3 Date

Enter manually the date in the following six-digit format DD-MM-YY

V4 Accompanied by image

- 1. Yes**
- 2. No**

V5 Mentioning of National region

- 1. England**
- 2. Scotland**
- 3. Wales**
- 4. Northern Ireland**
- 5. General United Kingdom**
- 6. International**
- 7. na**

V6 Mentioning of smaller towns and rural areas

- 1. Yes**
- 2. No**
- 3. Na**

V7 Number of actors

- 1. One**
- 2. Two**
- 3. Three**
- 4. Four**
- 5. Five**
- 6. More than five**
- 7. Group**
- 8. No Active actors**

V8 Main Actor / group

- 1. Party Leader, Labour - Ed Milliband**
- 2. Party Leader, Conservatives – David Cameron pm**
- 3. Party Leader. Liberal Democrats – Nick Clegg**
- 4. Party Representatives Green Party**

5. Party Leader UKIP, Nigel Farage
 6. Party Leader SNP, Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon
 7. Other MP
 8. Member or former member of the house of Lords
 9. British MEP
 10. Local/ Regional politician
 11. Labour Party
 12. Conservative party
 13. Liberal Democrat Party
 14. Green Party
 15. UK Independence Party
 16. Scottish National Party
 17. Other Party
 18. Trade union rep.
 19. Business leader/s
 20. Person/persons from the general public
 21. Labour MP or candidate
 22. Conservative MP or candidate
 23. Liberal Democrat MP or candidate
 24. Green Party MP or candidate
 25. UKIP MP or candidate
 26. SNP MP or candidate
 27. Political Commentator/ Political broadcaster
 28. Trade Union
 29. Business
 30. Group from the general public, grassroots groups
 31. Other code manually
 32. No actor
 33. No main actor, several independent equally important
 34. Religious group Muslim
 35. Religious group Christian
 36. Other religious group
 37. Family or friend of politician
 38. Other newspaper or representative for other newspaper
 39. The Two main parties or the two main parties or party leaders (lab and con)
 40. The three parties or party leaders for Conservative, Labour, Lib-dem
 41. Former politician
 42. Celebrity/celebrities
 43. Think tank/ REPRESENTATIVE OF THINK TANK
 44. Civil servant/s
 45. Royalty
- V9 Actor's gender**
1. Female
 2. Male
 3. Neither
 4. Not disclosed
 5. Both, several actors
- V10 Mainly quoted / narratively in charge (storyteller)**
1. The journalist

2. The main actor/actors
3. A professional political commentator (not journalist)
4. A member of the public
5. An editorial office within the publication in question

V11 Is the actor described.

1. Positively
2. Negatively
3. Responsive (democratic, has the people's support)
4. Non-responsive (Establishment, part of the power-elite)
5. Neutrally
6. Trustworthy
7. Untrustworthy
8. No Answer
9. Pitied or emotionally supported by narrator
10. Despised or opposed by the narrator

V12 Topic within the general election

1. NHS
2. Immigration
3. Europe
4. Military
5. Education
6. Benefits
7. Taxation
8. Jobs
9. Environment
10. Regional campaign events and matters
11. Foreign affairs
12. Financial matters / economics
13. The Election process/general campaign events
14. Opinion polls
15. Other, specify
16. Religion
17. Ability or aspiration to lead the country the actor's or another candidate
18. Personal story, emotive
19. A politicians appearance, clothes, physical and so on
20. Policies on several topics
21. Legal matters
22. LGBTQ matters
23. Housing
24. Biased Media Coverage or endorsement of a certain party
25. The electoral system
26. Minorities
27. Funding
28. Equality
29. Culture

V13 How is the topic or policy being portrayed by the main narrator

1. Positively along the actor's (or narrators) intended lines
2. Negatively, against the actor's (or narrators) intended lines
3. Neutrally

4. Na

V14 What type of action or event is being described?

1. TV Debate or other broadcasted event
2. PMQs house of commons
3. Other political debate in the House of Commons
4. Event in the House of Lords
5. Unveiling of new policies
6. Attack opponents or actors (political actor not the actor) policies, or ability to lead the country etc
7. Personal stories on a politician / politicians
8. Personal story from a member of the public
9. Grassroots initiatives, petitions etc
10. Political comment from non-politician celebrity
11. Comparison of policies
12. General political commentary
13. Live political commentary
14. Neither of the above specify
15. Matters to do with voting
16. Campaign move from politician or party
17. Comparison of actors (parties or representatives)
18. Regional campaign events
19. Campaign events on social media
20. Attack on the actor or the actors ability to lead the country by the Journalist
21. Defection by actor from current party
22. Scrutiny of an actor's physical appearance
23. Fraudulent conduct
24. Other inappropriate or controversial (negatively) behavior from actor (blunt, racist or otherwise inappropriate)
25. Campaign move from non political actor
26. General campaign events

V15 How is the event being described

1. Positively, actors actions in the event or actors story is supported by the narrator
2. Negatively, opposed or treated with great skepticism by the narrator
3. Supported by the general society, normative view
4. Not supported by the general society, going against normative view
5. Neutrally
6. Na

V16

1. Serious
2. Lighthearted