Framing a Pope: Analyzing Media Frames in *New York Times* Coverage of Pope Francis

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Abstract

This study extends notions of framing theory by drawing from research analyzing the framing of Pope Francis within coverage from *The New York Times*. The mass media has, since the election of Pope Francis in 2013, provided him extensive coverage on a myriad of issues. Previous studies have noted Pope Francis' propensity to draw massive amounts of media attention towards his actions and statements, even noting the potential for Pope Francis to control the media narrative through his own implementation of frames. Drawing on framing theory, this study examines the ways in which coverage of Pope Francis is defined by *The New York Times* by finding relationships between the issues addressed in Papal coverage, the frames implemented within this coverage, the valence of the messages, and the presentation of Pope Francis himself. This thesis yields that coverage of Pope Francis within *The New York Times* has shifted from positive valence to primarily neutral valence when comparing the first three years of his papacy to second three years. The findings of this thesis could potentially inform future studies which may wish to determine potential for frame transfer due to the content of articles or for studies which may wish to delve deeper into the issue with a much larger sample.

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General Audience Abstract

Since Pope Francis' election, the mass media has focused heavily on his statements and actions. Previous literature attests to the notion that Pope Francis is unique among his predecessors when it comes to media coverage, primarily due to his propensity to make statements or moral recommendations that seemingly oppose or deviate from traditional Catholic values. This thesis explores the relationship between Pope Francis and the American mass media by analyzing 226 articles published by *The New York Times* within the first six years of his Papacy. The findings of this thesis point to notions related to the valence of Papal coverage, which began as primarily positive but have shifted in nature from the beginning of Francis' Papacy. The findings of this thesis also point towards the religious nature of Papal coverage and also the potential for sex-scandal coverage to shift representation of the Pope.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In October of 2014, *Washington Post* reporter Ishaan Tharoor published an article entitled "Pope Francis says evolution is real and God is no wizard." In the article (Tharoor, 2014), statements made by Pope Francis, head of the Roman Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City state, were touted as provocative. In his address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences concerning the Roman Catholic Church's stance on evolution, the Pope suggested that the theory of evolution was in no way inconsistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Responses to the Pope's address was touted as another moment in a long line of "provocative" and "seemingly progressive" statements (2014). Switching gears, Tharoor, after discussing the statements of Pope Francis, then qualifies them against other statements and actions of previous Popes, mentioning that the Catholic Church has been a proponent of evolution for decades as Pope Pius XII insisted that the Church approved of theistic evolution (evolution set in motion by God) and that Benedict XVI found the debate between evolution and creationism to be "absurd" (2014).

However, a *TIME* Magazine article published the following day, entitled "Sorry, But Media Coverage of Pope Francis is Papal Bull," by contributor Elizabeth Dias (2014), points out how the presentation of the information in stories such as those published by Tharoor and the *Washington Post* seem to be missing the point entirely. Dias suggests that presenting the message that Pope Francis is espousing to be a radical subversion of Catholic doctrine is a symptom of a larger systemic issue within the American media in regards to their portrayal of Pope Francis, especially when these stories paint Pope Francis as being "progressive" (specifically mentioning articles that had made the Church's long standing opposition to the death penalty out to be a newly progressive stance) or paint him in direct opposition to the

Catholic Church (2014). Dias even goes as far as to mention the "danger" associated with these stories stating:

> "…this furor seems to occur most often when hot-button Western political issues can be tied to the Pope's statements—evolution, death penalty, gay marriage. Wednesday morning, Pope Francis asked for prayers for 43 Mexican students who were burned alive by drug traffickers. It is unlikely that that will get the same pickup. Moral of this story: Don't believe most of what you read about the Vatican. Papal coverage has gone wild." (Dias, 2014)

This short exchange between these two media outlets hints at a notion of disparity within American secular media framing of Pope Francis, and asserts that coverage of Pope Francis is approached from a myriad of different dimensions. However, as mentioned by Dias (2014), Pope Francis has often had a proclivity for statements that cause media stir. At the time of publication of these opposing articles, Pope Francis had been in office for nearly two years, causing a swell of media attention towards his statements on myriad of different social issues and issues within the Church since the early days of his Papacy. In July of 2013, Francis made headlines by stating "who am I to judge" when discussing the growing integration and acceptance of homosexuals within society (Willey, 2013), a sentiment far removed from those of his predecessors, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II (St. Martin, 2013).

Due to his propensity for making statements that deviated from the norms established by his predecessors, Pope Francis' early papacy was filled with different media frenzies based upon coverage of his then unusual statements concerning sexual ethics, immigration, the environment, and his large focus on the impoverished (Chua-Eoan & Dias, 2013), with this early buzz coming to a head in December of 2013 with Pope Francis being named TIME Magazine's "person of the

year" and amicably given the title of "The People's Pope" (2013), with Pope John Paul II being the last Pope to receive this recognition in 1984. Within the cover-story, Pope Francis is compared at length to his predecessors, whom mention Francis' obvious desire to engage with the public in ways never before seen from a spiritual leader, and is described as being "poised to transform a place that measures change by the century" (Chua-Eoan & Dias, 2013).

This propensity for Pope Francis to receive media attention has even been studied academically. As Guzik notes in her 2018 study of Pope Francis' communication and issue framing tactics, Pope Francis seems to be aware of the potential he has for media coverage, strategically taking the "accessibility," or potential for an issue or topic to remain in the memory of audiences (2018), of an issue into account as he often speaks on issues that will spark media coverage in hopes of reframing the issue or subject within the greater societal interpretation (2018).

In the nearly six years since this early coverage, and early praise, Pope Francis has become a key figure within the general media for a myriad of different reasons. Whether it be coverage of his conflict with American President Donald Trump over his proposed border wall in 2016, stating "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not of building bridges, is not Christian" (Reints, 2019). Or coverage of his response to the wave of sexual abuse accusations which swept the Church in 2018 or the subsequent summit of Bishops at the Vatican concerning the issue in 2019, which was framed as being focused on "responsibility, accountability, and transparency" (O'connell, 2019) within the church on the issue, whenever Pope Francis makes statements, the media tends to listen and provide coverage and commentary (Guzik, 2018).

This myriad of different forms of coverage of Pope Francis are addressed within literature (Blaney, 2017; Guzik, 2018; Pou, 2015). Blaney (2017) notes the inclination for the media to paint Pope Francis in a primarily political light (2017), while Pou (2015) notes that the messages from Pope Francis' statements were primarily approached from a focus on morality and religion as opposed to politics. These different ways in which Pope Francis is portrayed allude to the notion that the media are employing different frames, or lenses from which audience understanding and interpretation can be formed (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), within coverage of Pope Francis.

While previous studies have focused on framing of Pope Francis as a media figure, they focus on his responses to, and coverage of, very specific issues (Pou, 2015; Thompson, Perreault, & Duffy, 2017). While this is indeed helpful in theoretical expansion, there is a gap in the literature concerning long-term coverage of Pope Francis, Since he has seen a variety of different forms and tones of coverage throughout his papacy it seems appropriate to analyze framing of Pope Francis in order to establish precedent for potential frame transfer, gain an understanding of media depiction of Pope Francis over time, and fill the gap in literature which exists concerning coverage Pope Francis.

This thesis, incorporating a deductive approach to frame analysis, attempts to fill this gap, and broaden understanding of media framing of Pope Francis. This thesis presents a systematic content analysis of media frames appearing in *The New York Times* articles about Pope Francis in order to gauge American secular media framing of Pope Francis. By coding for the presence of various issues and generic frames established by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), along with the tone or valence of the article, the researcher hopes to gain an understanding of media framing of Pope Francis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Papacy

Specific to Roman Catholic doctrine is the rule of the office of the Papacy. This office, as described within the Catechism of the Catholic Church, is headed by an individual designated to be the Bishop, or Head, of the Roman Church and the successor of Saint Peter, whose primacy has been worked into doctrine of Roman Catholicism. The designated head of the Roman Catholic Church is known as the Pope. The Catechism further describes the role and power of the Pope as "the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.' 'For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered." (Catechism, p. 882)

On February 11th, 2013, Pope Benedict XVI, who had been Pontiff since 2005, resigned from the office of the papacy (Hackenmiller, 2015), leading to the Papal Conclave of 2013. After The College of Cardinals descended upon the Vatican in March and the election process began, two lead contenders in the papal race, Cardinal Scola of Milan, whom was supported by the conservative "Roman" camp of Cardinals, and Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, whom was championed later in the process by the "reform" camp of Cardinals, were identified. The conservative and reform Cardinals clashed for several days, with Scola eventually losing favor within the College due to "ancient envies and rivalries" (Gibson, 2013). Finally, on March 13th 2013, the College elected Cardinal Bergoglio, who eventually took the moniker of Francis, to be the 266th pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

As the contender championed by the "reform" camp, Francis, a Jesuit, was noted for his humility and an intense dedication to the impoverished. Beyond this, his status as a Jesuit painted

him as an outsider, and many of his actions have distinguished him from Popes of the past as well, focusing heavily on the poor and encouraging discord between more traditional catholic values and modern-day world views and practices (Hackenmiller, 2015).

Popes as Media Figures

While the intensity of media coverage of Pope Francis is at times unprecedented (Pou, 2018), the office of the Papacy has a history both in media interaction and in providing commentary on issues within the media.

In 1931, Pope Pius XI launched Vatican Radio, which provided a short blessing to the entire world that was played repeatedly. Since Vatican Radio's inception, the propensity for the presiding Pope to become a "mass media leader on an international scale" (Radwan & Pressman, 2018), has increased. In 1967, Pope Paul VI established the long running tradition of World Communications Day, an annual event in which the Pope reflects on the current state of media, be it appropriate actions of the mass media or commentary on changing communicative trends within society (2018).

However, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Pope Francis specifically seems to command media attention in a unique manner and seems to be aware of his propensity for media coverage (Guzik, 2018). Within the mass media, Pope Francis' status as both a religious leader and a political Head of State paint him as an important figure, able to offer relevant critique of global foreign policy while also offering spiritual guidance (2018).

The changes and communicative adaptations that came along with Pope Francis' election also place him apart from his predecessors and contemporaries. Pope Francis is noted as being unique for his increased Twitter presence compared to previous Popes, with Gruzik (2018) noting "'A year after his election as Head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Francis was

already the world leader with retweets as well as the fourth account in the world in terms of media mentions. In November 2013, he was mentioned in 510,000 tweets (…) His relevance and leadership from the quantitative point of view has continued to grow" (p. 114). This sentiment is echoed by O'Connell (2018), who notes the ability of the Vatican Communication system to change and adapt since Pope Francis' election, incorporating daily social media engagement and attempting to engage with other media outlets around the globe (2017).

Studies have even suggested that Pope Francis has the ability to reshape and reframe the narrative of certain stories based upon his vocalization of the issue, and is also (either consciously or subconsciously) aware of the agenda setting potential of the mass media, and uses this to his advantage in order to aid in his intended frame transfer (Guzik, 2018). In her 2018 study, Guzik describes Pope Francis' ability to reframe issues giving the example of his rhetoric concerning migrants and immigrants, noting that he tended to shy away from using terminology which dehumanizes individuals, rarely giving statistics and instead referring to the large influx of migrants into Europe as "brothers and sisters" in order to foster a feeling of connection with these individuals within the public (p. 119).

Given this attention to Pope Francis' ability to reframe the debate around important public policy issues and set the agenda for coverage, along with his greater propensity for media engagement and coverage, it is important to identify the framing approaches employed by journalists at the *New York Times*, one of the most influential media sources in the world.

Early Framing Literature

In order to properly analyze media framing of Pope Francis, a brief exploration of framing theory, along with some overview of previous religious and Papal framing studies, is necessary. The terms "framing" and "frames" have been used in numerous social science

disciplines, which likely accounts for the many different iterations of definitions and applications since their inception in the fields of cognitive psychology and anthropology (Van Gorp, 2007). Social psychologist Irving Goffman developed what is considered the basis for modern framing theory (2007). Focusing on the ways an individual in the Western world interpreted, perceived, and rationalized messages they received from society, he asserted that each individual possesses their own personal internalization of events, which he terms to be one's "primary frames." Essentially, each individual views the world through a lens that has been crafted from life experiences that were particularly salient to them. Goffman further insists that individuals apply frames of meaning to messages they receive based upon an inherent understanding of their own primary frames, meaning that an individual's primary frame is the basis for how he will internalize the world around him. Experiences are the guiding factor in determining this segment of self-identified as the primary frame. For Goffman, these primary frames are the "original" interpretation of what is happening that are often taken for granted, or "are said to be real or actual, to be really or actually or literally occurring" (Goffman, 1974, p. 47) by the message receiver.

Media Framing and Message Salience

Framing has grown to represent a multitude of different theoretical perspectives (Van Gorp, 2007), and a distinction must be made between the early applications of framing, which attempt to explain individualistic internalization of social and environmental queues, and later evolutions and applications of framing, which attempt to explain the existence, use, and subsequent audience interpretations of frames within stories presented by the mass media (Sheufele, 1999).

The broad range of framing definitions and applications is further diversified within media framing studies. Entman (1993) described the framing process as involving both "selection and salience" (p. 52), where communicators implement frames by "selecting specific aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p. 52). In Entman's definition, *selection* refers to the predisposition for the media to contextualize events of reality within certain frames, and *salience* refers to the "making [of] a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences" (p. 53). Entman (1993) further asserts the correlation between salience and message consumption and retention among audiences, noting that increases in salience beget increased potential for information to be noticed by consumers and increases potential for information to be processed and internalized.

Previous literature attests to the interweaving of different framing elements within media framing studies, suggesting that frames exist within stories due to the typical narrative organization and structure of news articles, which provides consumers with information about "who is doing what, and with what purpose" (Ardèvol-Abreu 2015, p. 424). Beyond this, Tuchman (1978) touched on the notion that the "frames" provided by the news are highly specific to a particular aspect of reality, and thus provide a specific avenue for interpretation, making some aspects more prominent than others. It is also important to note that the media is not creating the frame, but rather selecting a frame that already exists through a collective understanding of reality that thrives within its culture (Van Gorp, 2007).

Previous literature also makes note of the ability for media and other news creators to select frames in order to guide their presentation of facts. The framing process is described as an

interactive process where both media creator and consumer are aware of the existence of frames and the way they affect interpretation, both using them in order to both convey and interpret messages about certain aspects of reality (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015). This process takes place out of necessity due to the notion that frames exist as a way of categorizing information, and is simply the easiest way to define elements of society (Van Gorp, 2007).

Although this study does not involve the potential for frame transfer between the media and their audiences, it is worthy to note communicative focus on the study of frame transfer within media framing studies. Notable studies which focus on the potential for frame transfer include Sheufele (1999) and Entman (1993), two researchers that provide theoretical basis for this potential, and Galander (2012), whose research explored potential transfer of frames within media coverage of the crisis in Darfur. Finally, media framing cannot be discussed without cursory mention of the potential for media framing to act as the second-level to agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). Research such as that carried out by Ghanem (1997), Golan, Wanta and Lee (2004), and McCombs et. al (1997), attest to this notion and provides evidence to support this claim.

Valence Framing

Previous studies of media framing have also noted the importance of tone in the mediated frame construction process and in the interpretation of frames by the public (Han & Wang, 2012). Beyond this potential, and similar to the potential agenda setting effects of the media (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), it has been observed that the media can portray a single topic in a myriad of different ways (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). In the media frame construction process, some aspects of certain issues will be highlighted at the expense of others (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006, p. 5).

Beyond coding for the presence of certain issues and generic frames, this study will also test for the presence of valence frames within each article. Valence frames, according to de Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003), "are indicative of 'good and bad' and (implicitly) carry positive and/or negative elements" (p. 363). The implicit presence of valence frames within stories stems from the relationship between frames and moral evaluation defined by Entman (1993), suggesting that "frames have inherent valence by nature as they contain a 'moral evaluation' as one of their defining characteristics" (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006, p. 10).

Researchers have used different strategies to identify and report the valence of media frames (Semetko, Boomgaarden, & De Vreese, 2003, Schuck & de Vreese, 2006, Han & Wang, 2012), depending on the topic or purpose of the study. For example, Entman (1991) in an analysis of American and Russian coverage of a KAL and Iran Air accidents, noted that a majority of U.S. news outlets framed the event as a "tragedy" (a more positive spin) while Russian news outlets framed the event as an "attack" (a more negative spin), suggesting that frames are presented in a certain way in order to guide readers towards a specific interpretation.

Specifically, this study will determine whether or not the valence frames present are either "positive," "negative," or "neutral," based upon framing notions determined by Han and Wang (2012), where frames are interpreted through a lens of either positive valence, highlighting "beneficial or advantageous aspects" or negative valence, highlighting the opposite (2012, p. 226).

Religious and Previous Papal Media Framing Studies

Recent framing studies exploring the media framing of religious issues in American media include Kerr's (2003) study of Fundamentalist Christian framing in network television news from 1980 through 2000. Kerr established that coverage of more conservative

fundamental Christians in the American media was not totally negative in nature, but was instead very narrow in nature and offered little variety in frames applied to coverage. Kerr's study, which explored American media over a 20-year span, determined that most fundamentalist Christian coverage is often political in nature and tends to focus on the divide between politics and morality for fundamentalist Christians (2003).

Beyond framing of Christianity, researchers have studied the media portrayal of previous Popes. One such study, from Hutchinson (2009) examined coverage of Pope Pius XII during World War II, especially during the years of the Holocaust. Hutchinson breaks down coverage of Pope Pius from a myriad of different sources, including the *New York Times*, which he determined focused on Pius' dedication to peace among the warring countries (2009).

Similarly, posthumous coverage of Pope John Paul II was researched by Joyner (2005), who determined that coverage (including three distinct pieces from the *New York Times)* were all rather straightforward in coverage. Joyner concludes that articles presented Pope John Paul II's desire not only to reshape Catholicism, but also to address morality in the world as a whole (2005).

Finally, Valenzano and Menetagos (2008) studied coverage of Pope Benedict XVI in *Turkish Daily News* (*TDN*) coverage of his visit to Turkey. Here, it was found that most *TDN* coverage emphasized the Pope as a political official as opposed to his role as a religious leader. The researchers focused on how these findings may have implications for the relationship between "government, audience, and religious culture." (2008, p. 207)

Head of State Framing Studies

Crucial to gaining a grasp of media framing of Pope Francis is the review of previous studies focusing on the media framing of other political heads of state. Since the Pope is both

leader of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State, research studies on other heads of state were consulted. For example, Wadensjö's (2008) study of media coverage of Mikhail Gorbachev notes that the Russian Leader often had duality within his coverage, as he was either portrayed as incredibly stern and serious while also being shown to be more playful at times to offset this.

Additionally, Xie's (2008) studied *New York* Times and *Wall Street Journal* coverage of Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972 as compared to coverage of the Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to the U.S. in 2006. Xie (2008) found that some form of conflict framing was present and pervasive in both instances when comparing these political figures, with articles often emphasizing the hostile history between the two nations. Finally, Thomas et. al (2007) studied FOX News Sunday's interviews with Bill Clinton in 2006. Thomas et. al (2007) also reported the prominence of conflict framing in coverage of this political leader (2007).

Previous Framing Studies of Pope Francis

Despite an abundance of studies based upon the generic frames established by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) (Han, Sun, & Lu, 2017, Makombe, 2018, Muhamad & Yang, 2017), literature concerning media framing of Pope Francis specifically is rather limited, with Thompson, Perreault, and Duffy (2017) briefly touching on framing effects while rhetorically analyzing images of Pope Francis during a trip to Cuba, and Blaney (2017) seemingly offering criticisms of the American media on their coverage of Cardinalate appointments of Pope Francis. Beyond this, and similar in nature to this study, Pou (2018) coded for the presence of the generic frames determined by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) within newspaper coverage of Pope Francis' environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'* in the U.S. and the U.K.

Previous literature also established that Pope Francis has, since his early days as Pontiff, been unique in comparison to other Popes. Blaney (2017) makes note of his position as a member of the Society of Jesus (or Jesuits), the first Pope to adhere to this particular theology, along with his Argentinian background, which makes him the first Latin American Pope. Blaney further notes that Francis' presentation as either specifically progressive or conservative is unique, due to the fact that ideological leanings of previous Popes was rarely disputed (2017).

Beyond this, Lungren (2017) notes that

"The media – as evidenced by their coverage – tend to tell stories about Pope Francis that showcase him as simple, humble, holy, and, especially, authentic. In so doing, they regularly contrast Pope Francis positively with his predecessors" (Lungren, 2017, p. 305)

The same study notes that Pope Francis is often portrayed in a political manner, specifically one that is closely related to the American politically progressive left. Since this is the case, Lungren notes, similarly to Blaney, that stories concerning Pope Francis are often political in nature (2017).

Beyond this, Tandoc, Takahashi, and Thomas (2018), note in their study that Fox News network tends to positively skew stories concerning Pope Francis due to the primarily Catholic identification of many of their anchors and editors. This study notes that, depending on the issues and the typical slant of the particular media outlet, coverage of Pope Francis can either be explicitly positive or negative (2018).

Studies also have noted Pope Francis' propensity for increased and clearer media communication, when compared to his predecessors. This increase in interaction has allowed the Pope to receive a great deal of media attention since his election, with Pou (2018) attributing this to Francis' uniquely vocal nature as Pope, stating that "Important documents and extensive

reflections are not the only reason for this [increased interaction], but also, and especially, his spontaneous statements in informal settings made for a good headline or for a highly expressive metaphor" (Pou, 2018, p. 139).

Regardless of whether it is due to the Vatican's improved communication channels or due to the Pope's statements on important church issues or doctrine, Pope Francis has gained so much media traction since his election in 2013. It is the media attention he has received that makes Pope Francis an individual worthy of study.

Sex Abuse Scandal Framing

Since 2002, with the release of the *Boston Globe* article "Church allowed abuse by priests for years" (Baker, 2015), the sexual misconduct of various priests and other Catholic church officials has become a topic of interest for the media and a massive controversy which has only escalated with time (Baker, 2015).

Baker (2015), in his article concerning the news framing and response to the 2002 shooting of Reverend Maurice Blackwell by a former victim of sexual assault notes that the American media tends to focus on the the act itself, depicting the priests in the same manner in which they would portray any individual who may have committed the same crime, focusing more on the criminality of the issue as opposed to the religious aspect of the crime (2015).

Baker further asserts that …

"Religious scandals are especially oriented towards journalistic emphasis on scandals and unique events (Hoover, 1998)[…] by focusing on event-centered issues like crime, the news media tend to ignore the larger structural issues regarding church policy and organization." (Baker, 2015 p. 59)

The researcher also notes that religious news tended to be a place of scrutiny and negativity in the media, and that the media tended to act as a "watchdog" on most religious issues, offering observations whenever the Church is caught in a controversy that could be sensationalized (2015, p. 59.)

These specifics of sex abuse framing from Baker (2015) provide a basis of comparison for the findings of this thesis concerning *The New York Times* coverage of sex abuse in articles concerning Pope Francis.

Environmental Framing

Previous Popes were not strangers to statements regarding global warming, climate change, or the environment (Roewe, 2013, Mehan, 2005). However, Pope Francis is unique among his predecessors in this regard for a number of reasons, namely due to his position as Pontiff at the time of United States President Donald Trump's denouncement of the Paris Climate Accord. While Trump was withdrawing of the U.S. from the accord, the Pope was issuing the environmental encyclical *Laudato Si',* which states that the human race has a responsibility to be proper stewards and caretakers of the Earth (Gomes, 2018).

Previous literature concerning the Pope's views on climate change and the environment are limited. However, Pou (2105) notes that, since Al Gore's 2006 climate change documentary *An Inconvenient Truth,* it has become fashionable for popular figures or figureheads to share their opinions on climate change in order to shape larger public opinion, and Pope Francis is no exception.

When studying the frames used in stories covering Pope Francis' Environmental Encyclical *Laudato Si',* Pou (2015) notes that American media outlets tended to frame the environmental coverage of Pope Francis in a highly political aspect, rarely giving credence to the

religious aspects of the story or the Encyclical itself. However, the media does tend to focus on the morality of the issue despite the lack of religious framing (Pou, 2015).

Creationism/Evolution Framing

While there is a no previous literature concerning framing of Pope Francis based upon his statements concerning creationism and evolution, previous studies have been conducted concerning the cultural divide that exists between evolution and creationism. The cultural divide between creationism and evolution is manifested within the media as "a duel to the death, between the unbelief that attempts to speak through so-called science, and defenders of the Christian faith" (Caudill, 2013, p. 91).

Caudill (2013) further notes that many stories pitting creationism against evolution tend to frame the issue politically, referencing stories from NBC, CBS, ABC, and other media outlets that framed the issue in a political manner.

Homosexuality Framing

A study from Lynch (2005) focusing on the rhetoric of the Catholic Church's letter on sexuality entitled *Always Our Children* states:

> In recent years, the Roman Catholic Church has increased its explicit condemnation of gay, lesbian, and bisexual (glb) individuals and their political activities... While the church still advocates the stance of "Love the sinner, hate the sin," the institutional rhetoric now emphasizes the hatred of the sin. These declarations are the latest in a series of strategies designed to address challenges to the church's position on homosexuality (p. 381)

Studies such as Lynch's insist that the Catholic Church has a predominantly negative opinion on homosexuality. Previous literature concerning framing of religious reactions to

homosexuality tend to focus on the notion that homosexuals have experienced evolution in their portrayal by the American media (Moore, 2014, Trammell, 2015), which has generally swayed from contempt, misrepresentation, and underrepresentation, to a culture of acceptance and support amongst the media (Moore, 2014). The literature further notes that the Christian Church has a typically negative viewpoint of homosexuality, which is then sensationalized by the media in order to insinuate conflict between parties (Moore, 2014, Trammell, 2015).

Additionally, the literature notes that stories about homosexuality are typically framed politically. In fact, Moore (2014) provides comparison between the statements about homosexuality made by Bishop Louie Giglio to those made by controversial minister Rick Warren. Giglio was originally slated to speak at President Barack Obama's inaugural ceremony, but eventually relinquished his position due to a sermon he delivered on homosexuality in the 1990s. Rick Warren made controversial statements about homosexuality and his involvement in the 2009 inauguration was controversial as a result (2014).

Abortion Framing

Historically, the Catholic Church has had very clear rules involving most issues concerning sexuality and procreation, always vehemently opposing abortion for any reason (Hogan, 2010). Literature concerning media framing of abortion is limited. However, the literature often notes that abortion is framed in a myriad of ways by the media (McCaffrey & Keys, 2016; Rohlinger, 2002; Simon & Jerit, 2007). For example, when a topic within larger stories about Christianity, abortion is primarily framed using the "morality" generic frame (Rohlinger, 2002).

According to Rohlinger, coverage of abortion is focused on the notion that receiving an abortion is in opposition to the common Christian way of life, suggesting a more religious focus.

However, Rohlinger (2002) also suggests that these stories may be framed politically since much of the coverage grounded in conflict between a female's right to choose and the morality of potentially taking a life.

Contraceptive/Birth Control Use Framing

Similar to abortion, the Catholic Church has always had clear-cut rules involving the use of contraceptives and birth control, again vehemently opposing any means by which the creation of human life is deliberately avoided (Hogan, 2010). Literature concerning the media framing of contraceptive use or birth control use is limited. However, a 2010 study by David, Atun and Vina notes that the use of contraceptives is often framed politically, especially in regards to the issue of growing populations in other countries outside the U.S.

The study by David, Atun and Vina (2010) further notes the nature of the media to sensationalize stories about contraceptives or birth control and frame the issue in relation to the Church. The study, which focuses on framing of contraceptive use in the Philippines, notes that the Church has a hand in the politics of the state, which indicate that the issue is typically framed both religiously and politically, stating "When national population programs fail, many inevitably mention, either as a central argument or as a minor mitigating factor, the Catholic Church." (2010, p. 341)

Previous Studies of Media Practices

While it is not entirely unique for previous Popes to make statements concerning the media, it has been noted that, within Pope Francis' Papacy, his propensity to discuss the practices of the media as a moral issue set him apart from previous Pontiffs (Guzik, 2018). Specifically, Pope Francis has often tackled the issue of "fake news," defined as "disinformation that seeks advantage via manipulative and deceptive rhetoric" (Radwan & Pressman, 2018), since the

election of American President Donald Trump in 2016 (2018). Guzik (2018) notes that Pope

Francis places great emphasis on the role of the mass media as proper disseminators of

information, with some statements likening those that create fake news to the "crafty serpent"

from the Book of Genesis (Flores, 2018). This being the case, Pope Francis seems to approach

the issue of media practices and "fake news" in a primarily moral light (Radwan & Pressman,

2018).

     While a complete synthesis of studies related to appropriate media practices is not

necessary for this study, it is applicable to note previous studies which focused on the

phenomenon of "fake news" and its impact. The studies, such as those above and the one

conducted by Ștefăniță, Corbu, and Buturoiu (2018) focused on the political aspect of fake news.

The researchers suggest that these stories can lead to greater political biases, misinformation

among voters, and the deceptive nature of "fake news" overall. This notion, along with the

notion that Pope Francis is able to set the agenda on issues he is passionate about, makes Pope

Francis' mentions of "fake news" worthy of study.

Research Questions

     The unique nature of Pope Francis' papacy and the lack of a broader frame analysis

within communication literature lead the researcher to research questions, which are grounded in

Entman's (1993) notions that frames are specific aspects of a shared reality which are made

"more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem

definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p. 52).

This widely accepted approach, along with Pope Francis' seemingly natural propensity towards

being a media figurehead (whether intentional or not), has led the researcher to ask the following

research questions. The first question and the subsequent questions involve presence of a

particular issue, the second question and sub-question involve the presence of frames, and the third question looks for relationships between the issues and frames. Finally, the 4th research question involves potential change in Papal coverage within each year of the first six years of his papacy.

This thesis hopes to fill previous gaps in literature concerning the generic framing of contingent issues such as: papal legacy, sex abuse, environment, creationism/evolution, homosexuality, abortion, contraception/birth control, and media practices, in order to gauge the frames implemented by *The New York Times* when covering these issues in relation to Pope Francis. Beyond this, this thesis aims to gauge evolution in Papal coverage over the course of Pope Francis' papacy by determining valence over time, which can provide insight on changes and notable patterns in *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis. In order to properly explore these topics, the researcher asks the following questions:

RQ 1a: What issues emerge most from studying *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis?

RQ 1b: What are the dominant issues within *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis?

RQ 2a: What generic frames emerge from studying *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis?

RQ 2b: What are the dominant generic frames within *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis?

RQ 3: Did *The New York Times* primarily approach coverage of Pope Francis from a political/religious/neutral lens?

RQ 4a: What valence frames are most often implemented in *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis?

RQ 4b: Is there significant difference between the valence frames implemented and the dominant issue in the article?

RQ 4c: Is there significant difference between the valence frames implemented and the dominant frame in the article?

RQ 5: Are there notable changes or patterns of valence frames within *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis from year to year?

Chapter 3: Method

Framing research is typically approached either deductively or inductively, with deductive methodology being conducted through the analysis of predetermined frames which are then quantified based upon their application within a coded sample (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015). Conversely, the inductive approach requires researchers to analyze elements within a sample in order to establish evidence for the existence of unique and specific frames through the implementation of framing devices (2015). Thus, inductive coding requires the researcher to build and identify frames in the same rather than applying frame categories and definitions *a priori*. For this study, a deductive methodology was be used in order to identify the extent to which certain frames appear in the sample of *The New York Times* articles referencing Pope Francis.

Sample Selection

An exhaustive analysis of American secular mass media coverage of Pope Francis is not possible here. However, previous literature (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Speer, 2017) attest to the potential for *The New York Times* to act as a representative for the American media, suggesting that "...the *Times* is the organization from which other mass media outlets take the most cues. Evidence also suggests that the Times has become a self-conscious keeper of the nation's ongoing historical record" (Bennett, 1990, p. 113). This being the case, this study will analyze *The New York Times* articles which feature the term "Pope Francis" when searched within the paper's online index.

The systematic random sample will consist of articles from each year of Francis' Papacy, beginning with articles published by *The New York Times* on March 13th, 2013 and ending on March 12th, 2019. March 13, 2013 marks the beginning of Pope Francis' papacy, while March

12, 2019 enables the research to analyze six full years of coverage. When searched on *The New York Times* Index, the stories from this timeframe total more than 3,000. Due to the size of this total, along with the nature of this study, a smaller percentage of the total must be selected for analysis. This smaller sample size is based upon sampling practices defined by Nuendorf (2002), who describes systematic random sampling as a process where every "*xth*" article is chosen for inclusion in the sample. In order to determine this "*xth,*" the researcher selects the desired sample size from the larger sample. In this case, the researcher wished to analyze a sample of around 300 from the larger sample of 3,000. In order to determine this more appropriate sample size, the researcher determined a skip interval (2002) to act as the "*x*" in the "*xth*" interval through the formula:

$$\frac{(\text{population N})}{(\text{sample n})} = \frac{3,000}{300} = 10$$

According to this equation, the researcher selected every 10th article from each year of Francis' papacy within the *New York Times* index, which resulted in a desired 300 articles for analysis. Three hundred was used because it would likely result in approximately 50 articles in each of the 6 year time frames.

Beyond finding the appropriate desired sample size, the researcher screened *The New York Times* index results for articles which might distort the study outcome, such as periodical articles, opinion articles, film reviews, other entertainment-based articles, among others, which may inhibit the potential to appropriately analyze the presence of generic news frames. While gathering the sample, if the 10th story was not fit for inclusion in the sample, the 11th story was not immediately put in its place. Instead, the next story which was deemed fit for inclusion was included, with the count then starting after the sampled article. This screening while collecting the sample left the researchers with an overall sample size of 244. Finally, after all coding was

completed, the researcher again screened the sample eliminating a few more articles which were

duplicates.. The final sample, after all edits were completed, was 226 articles.

Variables

This study, through a quantitative content analysis, codes The New York Times coverage

of Pope Francis by coding for the presence of the five predetermined generic frames as

articulated by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) in their study about European media coverage of

policies. The five generic frames include responsibility, human interest, conflict, morality and

economic reductionism. To ensure clarity, each of the frames is defined below. These

definitions, with slight modifications to include reference to Pope Francis, are based on the

definitions provided by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p. 100).

Generic Frames

Responsibility. The text highlights Pope Francis' reference to responsibilities. These

references to responsibility can include statements regarding either one's responsibility as the

cause of an issue or as the potential solution to the issue. It may also refer to Pope Francis'

responsibility to preside over the Roman Catholic Church or his responsibility as head of the

Vatican City state. The code book instructs coders to consider the following questions, which

are adapted from Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), to determine the presence of the

responsibility frame: Does the story suggest that Pope Francis has the ability to alleviate the

problem? Does the story suggest that Catholic Church has the ability to alleviate the problem?

Does the story suggest that Pope Francis or the Catholic Church is responsible for the

issue/problem? Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?.

Human interest. The text highlights Pope Francis' reference to the lives or the suffering

of individuals affected by the topic discussed. A human interest frame may also chronicle

experiences of individual citizens, priests, pilgrims, and followers. A human interest frame

typically illuminates an issue by talking about how the issue has influenced the live, or lives, of a

specific individual or individuals. The code book instructs coders to consider the following

questions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) to determine the presence of the human interest frame:

Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue? Does the story employ

adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or

compassion? Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the

issue/problem? Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors? Does the story

contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy, caring, sympathy, or

compassion?

 Conflict: In order for the conflict frame to be coded as present, the text must highlight

some division or disagreement between the Pope specifically, or the Catholic Church generally,

and some other entity. Conflict could exist between the Pope and any of his predecessors, any

other standing church leaders (for the Catholic Church or other denominations or faiths), or other

heads of state, corporate leaders, and more. Conflict could also be coded if Pope Francis' is

presented as conflicted between two potential courses or action or policies. For example, stories

might include statements regarding topics, issues or controversies between the Pope and other

figures, groups, or individuals, or potentially discusses his view in juxtaposition to the views that

may oppose or challenge Roman Catholic doctrine or the Pope's interpretation of doctrine or

practice. The codebook instructs coders to consider the following questions (Semetko &

Valkenburg, 2000) to determine the presence of the conflict frame: Does the story reflect

disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries? Does one party-individual-group-

country reproach another? Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue? Does the story refer to winners and losers?

Morality: The text highlights Pope Francis' reference to his own call to moral action or for a call to moral action among a group or an individual. Morality framing may also be a devise used by journalists to communicate, challenge, or support any justifications for church doctrine or church practice. Certainly, if moral grounds, moral warrant, or support based in moral considerations is used to justify Pope Francis' views or those of the Church, it is likely that moral framing is present. Based upon questions established by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), the coders referenced the following to determine presence of the conflict frame: Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries? Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another? Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue? Does the story refer to winners and losers?

Economic reductionism: The text highlights Pope Francis' or the Catholic Church's reference to the economic impact of suggested actions or to the economic impact of previous actions. For example, if a focus on an article about Catholic church or school closures in the U.S. are increasing as a means to help the church fund legal counsel or to settle financial settlements against the Church, it is possible that economic reductionism is present. Thus, economic reductionism is when an issue is presented primarily based on the economic consequences. The codebook instructs coders to consider the following questions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) to determine the presence of the economic reductionism frame: Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future? Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved? Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

Issue-specific Frames

Beyond coding for the frequency of these five generic frames, this study also will attempt to determine the presence of eight predetermined policy issues. Since one of the research questions asks whether this is a significant difference between the framing of issues, it is important to code for issue presence.

The *a priori* issues for coding were determined based on the researcher's scan or read of a broad range of *The New York Times* articles mentioning Pope Francis. It was not important to develop an exhaustive list of issues associated with Pope Francis, but it was important to attempt to identify significant issues. As there are a myriad of different dimensions and issues through which Pope Francis may be framed, a final other category was used to capture when an issues was present but not identified in the code book. The issues will be coded for presence if Pope Francis' stance on the issue is mentioned. Even a cursory mention of the issue will result in it being identified as having issue-specific frame presence. The issue definitions are as follows:

Papal legacy: Article includes reference to Pope Francis in comparison with previous Popes. Article could also include mention of potential future impact of Pope Francis on the Catholic Church or the world or how decisions he makes will have lasting impact. Questions from the code book that guide the coder to identify this issue are as follows: Does the article offer comparisons between Pope Francis and previous Popes? Does the article reference how actions or events will affect future perceptions of Pope Francis? Does the article reference how Pope Francis' actions or statements will affect the future of the Catholic Church?

Sex scandals: Article includes reference to sex scandals within the Church or Pope Francis' reaction to these scandals. Codebook questions to guide the coder are as follows: Does the article include reference the sexual abuse of young children within the Catholic Church?

Does the article include reference to the sexual abuse of Nuns within the Catholic Church? Does the article include reference to the impact of sexual abuse on the reputation of the Catholic Church? Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' response to sexual abuse scandals?

Environment: Article includes reference to Pope Francis' stance on the environment (i.e. climate change, pollution, etc.), environmental policies, or environmental conflicts. The coders looked to the following questions within the codebook for guidelines: Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, Laudato Si? Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on Global Warming/Climate Change? Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' response to the Paris Climate Accord?

Creation or evolution: Article includes reference to Pope Francis' stance on creation or reference to Pope Francis' stance on human evolution. The following codebook questions were referenced during coding: Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the creation of life? Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the evolution of life after creation? Does the article include reference to statements made by Pope Francis concerning creation/evolution? Does the article include reference to Catholic Church doctrine concerning creation/evolution?

Homosexuality: Article includes reference to Pope Francis' stance on homosexuality, same sex marriage, or gay adoption, or other related issues involving homosexuals or homosexuality. Questions from the code book that guide the coder to identify this issue are as follows: The Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the morality of abortion? Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on global abortion rates? Does the article include reference to Catholic Church doctrine concerning abortion?

Abortion: Article includes reference to Pope Francis' stance on abortion or the Church's doctrine(s) related to abortion. These are distinct from issues of contraception or birth control, which aim to prevent pregnancy. The following codebook questions were referenced during coding: Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the morality of abortion? Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on global abortion rates? Does the article include reference to Catholic Church doctrine concerning abortion?

Contraceptives/Birth control: Article includes reference to Pope Francis' or the Catholic Church's stance on the use of birth control and contraceptives. This would include, for example, articles about faith-based organizations in the U.S. that wanted reprieve from being required to offer employee's birth control as part of their organization-paid health insurance package. Questions from the code book that guide the coder to identify this issue are as follows: Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the use of contraceptives? Does the article include reference to Pope Francis views on healthy sexual practices? Does the article include reference to the morality of sexual practices according to the Catholic Church?

Media: Article includes reference to Pope Francis' stance on the role of the mass media or actions of the media. This could also include reference to separate media coverage of Pope Francis. The following codebook questions were referenced by the researchers: Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on proper media practices? Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the morality of "fake news"?

Other: Coding will include identification of other policy issues, either for the Catholic Church or for the Vatican. These issues could range from a variety of topics including: immigration, poverty, church politics, and others.

The five frames and nine issues work in tandem to allow the researcher to gain a fuller understanding and vision of journalistic interpretation of Pope Francis (Pou, 2018). It is also of note that neither the frames nor the issues are mutually exclusive, meaning "the presence of one does not necessarily mean the absence of the other" (Pou, 2018, p. 143). Thus, it is important to code for presence or absence of each issue and each frame, rather than the presence of a single issue or a single frame. However, this then requires the researcher to look for dominance among the frames and issues in order to accurately determine the media framework in which the sample is operating.

This procedure is largely left to the interpretation of coders by contextualizing multiple elements of the article in comparisons with coding dimensions determined within the codebook for content analysis to determine which issues and frames show prominence. To do so, the coders will read the article and make a list of present issues. Next, after reading and making a list of all present issues, the researcher will determine which issue is dominant within the text by considering which issue seems most salient. This will be decided by first determining which issue is given the most space on the page based upon the content of the article. If identifying the issues explicitly given the most page space does not yield a clear result, the article title will be consulted to determine the implied dominant issue. Finally, if the title does not yield a clear dominant issue, the issue first given focus will be considered the dominant issue. For example; an article containing brief reference to Pope Francis' previous comments on the big bang theory in order to contextualize his beliefs on climate change in an article about the *Laudato Si'*, will be coded as dominant on the *environment*.

Similarly, the dominant frame will be determined after coding the article for the presence of specific frames. Of the frames that appear in the article, researcher will then determine which

frame is dominant within the text by considering which frame seems most salient within the text based upon the questions adapted from Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), which are presented in the description of each generic frame above.

Frame Valence

Valence of articles was another important variable for this thesis. After reading the article, the coders determined whether the tone of the article was positive, negative, or neutral based upon the content in the article and valence specifics specified by Han and Wang (2012). Unlike the other frames and issues, there were no previously specified scales for which to test positive or negative valence, which led the researcher to determine scales based upon a series of categorical questions based upon these valence specifics established by Han and Wang (2012).

Positive valence was determined by referencing the following codebook questions: Does the article seem optimistic in nature? Does the article reference potential benefits of Pope Francis' actions? Does the article use words such as: "support", "success", "win" or other phrases with positive connotation in regards to actions made by Pope Francis? Does the article include reference to the positivity of following Pope Francis' teachings? Does the article highlight inconsistencies between Pope Francis and Catholic Doctrine or previous church teachings in a positive manner?

To determine neutral valence frames within the sample, coders referenced the following codebook questions adapted from Han and Wang (2012): Does the article reference neither positive aspects or negative aspects of Pope Francis' papacy? Does the article not include enough info concerning Pope Francis to constitute valence?

Negative valence was determined by referencing the following codebook questions adapted from Han and Wang (2012): Does the article include judgements of actions of Pope

Francis? Does the article include negative comparisons of Pope Francis to previous Popes? Does the article include references to disadvantages of following Pope Francis' teachings? Does the article highlight inconsistencies between Pope Francis and Catholic Doctrine or previous church teachings in a negative manner?

Leader Portrayal: Head of State (Political) or Head of Religion (Religious)

The next variable of note was the portrayal of Pope Francis as either a religious leader, as a political Head of State, or neutrally. Since there were no preestablished scales to determine religious or politically based portrayal, the researcher developed a series of questions based upon the religious depiction specifics and political Head of State depiction specifics from Thompson, Perreault, and Duffy (2018)

The following codebook questions were referenced to determine political Head of State depiction: Does the article mention the Pope's status as Head of State of the Vatican? Does the article mention the Pope's duties as a political leader? Does the article compare Pope Francis to other Heads of State?

In order to determine potential depiction of Pope Francis as a religious figurehead, the following codebook questions were referenced: Does the article mention Pope Francis' status as leader of a religious organization? Does the article mention of specific teachings or Biblical interpretations? Does the article focus on Pope Francis' interpretation of Catholic Doctrine? Does the article mention the conduction of Mass or other services by Pope Francis? Does the article mention moral advice from Pope Francis?

Neutrality within depiction of Pope Francis was determined by referencing the following codebook questions: Are there no references to the political duties of Francis as Head of State of Vatican City? Are there no references the duties Francis has as a religious leader? Does the

article balance references to these duties evenly? Does the article seemingly lack focus on either of these potential depictions?

Finally, the date of publication will be noted within the code sheet in order to enable evaluation of change in issues or change in frame valence over time in the sample of articles from *The New York Times* for Pope Francis' year of papacy. Six years were constructed based on his election as Pope. Articles were coded as year 1 if they appeared between March 13, 2013 to March 12, 2014 and year 2 if the article was published between March 13, 2014 and March 12, 2015 and so on through March 12, 2019, the ending date for year 6. Coding for this variable will enable a 3 x 6 crosstabulation comparing valence (positive, negative, neutral) with year of papacy (first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth). The Crosstabulations test determinedif there was significant difference between years over time. Post-hoc year-to-year Crosstabulations were conducted when initial difference in valence were identified over time.

Coding procedures.

This study uses a single coding sheet consisting of the previously mentioned variables. The coders will then, after reading the sample selection, and adhering to the guidelines specified in the codebook, code the issue and frame variables for presence within each article by using either a 1 to code for presence or a 0 to code for absence. Beyond this, coders will also be coding for frame and issue dominance within the sample. In addition to the issue and frame variables coded for presence, the researchers will code the dominant frame and dominant issue for presence with the correlating number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc.) based upon the list in the codebook for content analysis. Similarly, the valence frame implemented within the article will be coded for presence again with the correlating number based upon the list in the codebook (i.e. positive: 1, neutral: 2, negative: 3). The final variable coded is the religious/political portrayal of Pope

Francis within the sample. This variable will be coded in the same manner as valence and dominance, based upon the corresponding list from the codebook for content analysis. Finally, publication date variable will also be coded uniquely with the provided publication date listed on the code sheet as (mm/dd/yy).

The specifics of the coding procedures for this study can be found in the codebook for content analysis (Appendix A).

Intercoder Reliability

In order to ensure reliability of codes, the researcher trained a coder to identify the presence of frames and issues within the sample selection by talking through the frame and issue determining process with the coder. This training ensured that the codebook for content analysis definitions were clear between the researcher and the coder so that revisions can be made to clarify if necessary. The coder and the researcher read and discussed several articles together to ensure agreement before the researcher assigned a 10% sample to the coder for reliability check. After training, the coders each coded a small sample of 30 articles from within the greater sample of 3000, of which care was taken to ensure there was no overlap with the actual sample of study, to act as the basis for establishing coding reliability. After these 30 articles are coded, a Cohen's Kappa test was run in order to determine reliability among coders and the coding scheme. The intercoder reliability was not reached on the first past through the 10% sample. In fact, only 8 variables reached a minimum threshold of .80 using Cohen's Kappa (these initial agreement categories included valence, date, leadership (head of state v. head of religion), and several issue-specific frames. This being the case, the coder and the researcher found it necessary to discuss certain elements of the topic and sample which were at first unclear. The selected a new small sample, outside of the larger sample of *The New York Times* articles concerning Pope

Francis used for this study, for mutual review and discussion of all variables and coding specifics. Care was taken so as none of the articles included in this review session were included within the final coded sample.

Beyond addressing specifics of the articles and topics, the coder and researcher again discussed codebook specifics, coming to mutual understandings of why variables would or would not be coded for presence, what constitutes issue dominance, what constitutes positive, negative, and neutral valence, and what constitutes political, religious, or neutral coverage. Then, after 2 hours of analysis of example articles to ensure mutual understanding of the codebook for content analysis, the coders recoded for reliability and reached universal reliability in all coding categories. The coder "retraining" session revealed some basic misunderstanding on the part of the coder, which lead to the initial discrepancies. For example, initially, the coder was not aware that papacy was a referral to the role of Pope. After working through several articles together and discussing any discrepancies, the coder and researcher working independently, recoded a sub-samples of articles not included in the analysis. The training session accomplished intercoder reliability of 1.0. It is understood that such universal agreement is unlikely in content analysis, but the independent coding results produced complete agreement across the various categories.

Chapter 4. Results

The research questions addressed multiple different areas of Papal coverage, ranging from the frequency of issues, the dominance of issues, the frequency of generic frames, the dominance of frames, the presence of valence frames, and the potential for change in coverage over time. The sample consisted of 266 *The New York Times* articles concerning Pope Francis.

RQ 1a asked which issues emerged most from *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis. Eight issues (papal legacy, sex scandal, environment, creationism and evolution, homosexuality, abortion, contraception and birth control, media, and an "other" category) were coded for presence and absence within stories that mention Pope Francis. The coders did not note every issue that was present when "other" was coded for presence. In order to answer RQ 1a, a frequency analysis was run in order to determine the frequency of the issue variables.

As shown in Table 1, among the coded issue variables, papal legacy was found to be the most frequent (56.2%) with frequency of 127 articles of 226 including papal legacy. Papal legacy was present more than 50% times more than any other issue coded. Beyond this, church sex scandals and homosexuality issues were also shown to be mentioned frequently, with sex scandal appearing in 28.3% of articles and homosexuality appearing in 26.1%, respectively. The "other" issue variable was coded for presence 64.2% of the time, and the implications of which will be touched on further within the discussion. Beyond the most prolific issues, abortion was also coded for presence within a fair amount of the sample at 14.2%. The issues of contraception/birth control and environment were coded for presence within a similar portion of the study, at 9.7% and 8.4% respectively. Finally, the issues of media and creationism/evolution were found to have the lowest, but similar presence within the sample, at 2.7% and 2.2% respectively.

Table 1

Issues in New York Times coverage of Pope Francis (N=226)

Issue	Frequency	Percentages
Other	145	64.2%
Papal Legacy	127	56.2%
Sex Scandal	64	28.3%
Homosexuality	59	26.1%
Abortion	32	14.2%
Contraception/Birth Control	22	9.7%
Environment	19	8.4%
Media	6	2.7%
Creationism/Evolution	5	2.2%

RQ 1b asks about the dominant frames within *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis. In order to answer this question, a frequency analysis was run to determine which frame was dominant in most articles. As shown in table 2, among the coded variable the issue of papal legacy was found to have dominance more than the other variables, at 25.7% of the time. Additionally, echoing the frequency of the issues themselves, sex scandal and homosexuality were found to have frequent dominance over the other variables with sex scandal at 18.6% and homosexuality at 6.2% respectively. The "other" issue variable was coded for presence 42.9% of the time, the implications of which will be touched on further within the discussion.

Table 2

Dominant Issues in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N=226)

Issue	Frequency	Percentages
Other	97	42.9%
Papal Legacy	58	25.7%
Sex Scandal	42	18.6%
Homosexuality	14	6.2%
Environment	9	4.0%
Media	4	1.8%
Abortion	1	0.4%
Contraception/Birth Control	1	0.4%
Creationism/Evolution	0	0.0%
Totals	226	100%

RQ 2a asks what generic frames emerged the most in *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis. Five generic frames were coded for either absence or presence: responsibility, human interest, conflict, morality, and economic reductionism. Similar to the previous research questions, a frequency analysis was run to determine frame presence and absence. As shown in Table 3, the conflict frame, with a frequency of presence in 163 stories, was found present in 72.1% of stories sampled. Next, the human interest frame was present within 53.5% of the sample. The morality and responsibility frames were found to have similar frequencies within the sample, and appeared in 38.1% and 34.5% of articles, respectively. Finally, the economic reductionism frame was found to have the least frequency within the sample, appearing in 12.4% of articles.

Table 3

Generic Frames in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N=226)

Frame	Frequency	Percentages
Conflict	163	72.1%
Human Interest	121	53.5%
Morality	86	38.1%
Responsibility	78	34.5%
Economic Reductionism	28	12.4%

RQ 2b asks what dominant frames are apparent within *New York Times* coverage of Pope

Francis. As with the previous questions, a frequency analysis was run in order to determine

which frames most often showed dominance within Papal coverage. As shown in Table 4, the

conflict frame (*n=106*) clearly had the most dominance within the sample as it appeared in

nearly half of the articles (46.9%). Each frame decreased considerably in frequency when

compared to the conflict frame, with human interest (*n=58*) being found dominant within 25.7%

of the sample, followed by a large jump down to the responsibility frame (n=34), which was only

coded for dominance within 15.0% of the sample. Next, the morality fame (*n=23*) followed,

coded within 10.2% of the sample and the economic reductionism frame (*n=5*) was coded in

Table 4

Frame Dominance in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N =226)

Frame	Frequency	Percentages
Conflict	106	46.9%
Human Interest	58	25.7%
Responsibility	34	15.0%
Morality	23	10.2%
Economic Reductionism	5	2.2%
Totals	226	100%

only 2.2% of the sample.

In order to answer RQ 3, concerning the religious, political, or general portrayal of Pope Francis within *New York Times* coverage, a frequency analysis was run on the coded religious/political/neutral variable. As shown in table 5, the test found that, within *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis, he was portrayed mostly as a religious figure, within 48.9% of the sample. Next, politically based coverage was coded for presence within 31.6% of the sample, and finally, general coverage of Pope Francis was coded for presence within only 19.6% of the sample.

Table 5

Religious/Political/Neutral Portrayal in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N = 226)

Portrayal Category	Frequency	Percentages
Religious	110	48.9%
Political	71	31.6%
General	44	19.6%
Total	226	100%

In order to answer RQ 4a, which focused on the valence frames presented within *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis, a frequency analysis was run. The results of the test show that valence of Pope Francis was primarily neutral in valence, with 43.8% of articles within the sample being coded as neutral. Positive and negative valence frames were coded within 37.6% and 18.6% of the sample, respectively.

Table 6

Valence Frame Frequency in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N = 226)

Valence Frame	Frequency	Percentages
Neutral	99	43.8%
Positive	85	37.6%
Negative	42	18.6%
Totals	226	100%

In order to answer RQ 4b, which concerned the significant difference between the valence frames implemented and the dominant issue in the article, a crosstabulation of valence frames with dominant issues was completed. The results, shown in Table 7, are as follows: Of the coded variables, articles in which papal legacy showed dominance were most often coded for positive valence and, with positively valanced articles being found within 38.8% of the units coded for presence of the papal legacy issue, leaving 17.2% of articles coded for neutral valence and 13.8% of articles coded for negative valence. The results also yielded that articles which showed dominance for the sex scandal issue were most often coded negatively, with 40.5% of sex scandal articles containing negatively valanced frames, leaving 16.2% of articles coded for neutral valence and 10.6% of articles coded for positive valence. Unfortunately, the cell sizes for the crosstabulation were not sufficient to run a robust Crosstabulation. While an Exact test is possible, the SPSS software did not have sufficient power to complete the Fisher's exact test when more than 60% of cells had counts less than five.

Table 7

Dominant Issue Valence (N = 226)

Issue	Positive (n = 85)	Neutral (n = 99)	Negative (n = 42)	Totals
Other	29 (34.1%)	53 (53.5%)	35.7%)	97
Papal Legacy	33 (38.8%)	17 (17.2%)	13.8%)	58
Sex Scandal	9 (10.6%)	16 (16.2%)	17 (40.5%)	42
Homosexuality	7 (8.2%)	6 (6.1%)	1 (2.4%)	14
Environment	4 (4.7%)	5 (5.1%)	0 (0%)	9
Media	2 (2.4%)	2 (2.0%)	0 (0%)	4
Abortion	1 (1.2%)0	0 (0.0%)	0 (0%)	1
Contraception/Birth Control	(0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.4%)	1
Creationism/Evolution	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0%)	0
Totals	85	99	42	226

In order to answer RQ 4c, which concerned the significant difference between the valence frames implemented and the dominant frame in the article, a crosstabulation of valence frames with dominant generic frames was completed. The results, shown in Table 8, are as follows: articles which showed dominance of the human interest frame showed the most positive valence within the sample, with 40.0% of articles coded for the human interest frame coded also for positive valence, leaving 21.2% of articles coded for neutral valence and 7.1% of articles coded for negative valence. The most negatively valanced frame was the conflict frame, with 61.9% of articles coded for conflict frame dominance coded for negative valence.

Table 8

Dominant Frame Valence (N = 226)

Frame	Positive (n = 85)	Neutral (n = 99)	Negative (n = 42)	Totals
Responsibility	23 (27.1%)	57 (57.6%)	26 (61.9%)	106
Human Interest	34 (40.0%)	21 (21.2%)	3 (07.1%)	58
Conflict	10 (11.8%)	12 (12.1%)	12 (28.6%)	34
Morality	15 (17.6%)	7 (07.1%)	1 (02.4%)	23
Economic Reduct.	3 (03.5%)	2 (02.0%)	0 (00.0%)	5
Totals	85	99	42	226

In order to answer RQ 5, A Chi Square analysis was run in order to identify patterns of valence framing within *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis from year to year. The analysis found that, as shown in table 9, positive valence frames were statistically implemented the most during 2014-15, where 52.2% of articles were coded as positive. Neutral valence frames were statistically implemented the most during 2016-17, with 73.7% of articles being coded as neutral during this year. Finally, negative valence frames were statistically implemented the most during 2018-19, when 55% of the articles were coded as negative. As shown within table 7, valence frames started out primarily positive, while gradually becoming more negative while

simultaneously becoming less positive. The X2 test reveals that coverage of Pope Francis was valenced significantly different over time, X^2 (10, 226) = 43.43, $p \leq .001$. As Table 9 shows, coverage of Pope Francis was more positive (and less negative) in his first two years as Pope and then become more negative, and less positive, in the most recent year of Pope Francis' papacy.

Table 9

Valence Frames by Year (N = 226)

Years	Positive (n = 85)	Neutral (n = 99)	Negative (n = 42)	Totals
2013-14	19 (47.5%)	15 (37.5%)	6 (15.0%)	40
2014-15	24 (52.2%)	15 (32.6%)	7 (15.2%)	46
2015-16	29 (36.3%)	38 (47.5%)	13 (31.0%)	80
2016-17	4 (21.1%)	14 (73.7 %)	1 (05.3%)	19
2017-18	5 (23.8%)	12 (57.1%)	4 (19.0%)	21
2018-19	4 (20.0 %)	5 (25.0%)	11 (55.0%)	20
Totals	85	99	42	226

To further explore RQ 5, and determine patterns of valence within *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis, another Chi Square analysis was run, this time dividing the larger sample into two separate units of analysis based upon the first three years of Pope Francis' Papacy, 2013-2015, latter three years of his Papacy, 2016-2019. According to, table 10, some significance was found within this test, which showed that valence frames of Pope Francis implemented during the first portion of his Papacy were primarily positive in nature, while valence frames implemented during the second portion of his tenure at the time of study were primarily neutral in nature, with 53.8% of articles being coded for this valence frame within the 2016-2019 time period. The Crosstabulation reveals a significant difference in frame valence between the first three years of Pope Francis' papacy and the most recent three years, X^2 (2,226) = 9.22, $p \leq .01$. Table 10 demonstrates that the frames were more likely to be positive or neutral in the first three years for Pope Francis while the last three years had stories that were framed

mostly neutral with positive and negative valence occurring with the same frequency during the

second three years of his office

Table 10

Valence Frames by Year (N = 226)

Years	Positive *(n = 85)*	Neutral *(n = 99)*	Negative *(n = 42)*	Totals
2013-2015	72 (43.4%)	68 (41.0%)	26 (15.7%)	166
2016-2019	15 (23.1%)	35 (53.8%)	15 (23.1%)	60
Totals	85 (37.6%)	99 (43.8%)	42 (18.6%)	226

Chapter 5 Discussion

This thesis aimed to answer questions related to the media framing of Pope Francis within *The New York Times* since his election as Pope in 2013 until the beginning of his 7th year in office in March of 2019. The researcher, employing a content frame analysis of 226 articles, sought to explore the types of issues presented within coverage, the generic frames identified by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) implemented within coverage, valence frames based upon definitions from Han and Wang (2012) implemented within coverage and patterns among valence by year, and the religious/political nature of Papal coverage.

The results yielded that coverage of Pope Francis within *The New York Times* has generally been positive in nature, with coverage moving towards overall neutrality when it comes to valence frames. This move towards neutrality may be informed by the proliferation of stories concerning sex abuse at the time of study due to the many controversies which erupted in mid-to-late 2018 and the subsequent summit on sex abuse at the Vatican in early 2019. This notion, in line with previous literature which suggests the inherently negative nature of sex abuse studies, could be shaping coverage of Francis. This comes despite the pre-established notion that the Pope is a prolific media figure whom is generally liked and well received by the media (Guzik, 2018). This change in valence of coverage is also represented within the yearly breakdowns of coverage which suggest that Francis was very well received within the early years of his pontificate. As suggested by Guzik (2018), Pope Francis causes some dissonance within those that cover him due to his propensity to make statements which may seem out of line with traditional Catholic Values. However, coverage of sex abuse is rather bipartisan in nature (Baker, 2015).

This thesis also provides points on the portrayal of Popes by the media. While the Pope acts as both a religious leader and a political leader, Pope Francis is most often portrayed through a lens informed by his role as head of the Catholic Church as opposed to his role as a political head-of-state of Vatican City. This could be taken into consideration when comparing coverage of Pope Francis to other political leaders due to this greater emphasis on the religious nature of his leadership. Future studies could potentially delve further into the uniqueness of this notion.

Discussion of Research Questions

RQ 1a asks what issues emerge most within coverage of Pope Francis in *The New York Times.* The papal legacy, sex scandal, and homosexuality issues were most often touched upon within the sample. The notion that the legacy of Pope Francis would be at the forefront of coverage is intriguing, as it hints towards sentiments stated by Guzik (2018) and Chua-Eoan and Dias (2013), wherein it is noted that the Pope is often compared to his contemporaries and predecessors within media coverage. Due to the pattern of media reaction and ability for Pope Francis to set the media agenda, either inadvertently or implicitly (Guzik, 2018), it is unsurprising that the media too seems to be aware of this, and often ensures that Pope Francis is compared to previous Popes or ensures that the potential impact of the story at hand on general perception of the Pope and the Catholic Church is noted. For example: an article from Povoledo (2013) from within the sample notes that:

> "Under Pope Benedict XVI and his successor, Pope Francis, the Vatican has made concerted efforts to open up the Vatican Bank and its affiliated financial organizations, traditionally secretive institutions that have made headlines when financial scandals have come to light." (Povoledo, 2013)

Similarly, an article from Vitello (2014), noting the passing of Rev. Robert Nugent, whom counseled gay priests in the 1970's, states:

> "Pope Benedict's successor, Francis, has expressed a more welcoming view, though the doctrine remains the same. "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" Pope Francis said in July. The remark gave Father Nugent "great consolation," Sister Gramick said." (Vitello, 2014)

These examples show obvious comparisons with previous Popes, and these early articles often noted elements which contrasted directly with previous Popes.

RQ 1b sought to further specify the dominant issues which became apparent within the sample during coding. Similar to the findings of RQ 1a, the issues of papal legacy and sex scandals showed clear dominance within the sample. This suggests a myriad of different implications, mainly pertaining to the focus of the media on Pope Francis. Although many different issues were touched upon within the sample, it appears that stories focused most heavily on Francis' legacy, which is likely due to the notions related to Francis' ability to set media agendas and focus attention on himself and what he is saying about an issue. In this way, the press seems to be building Pope Francis up when compared to his predecessors on most issues, as focus on papal legacy early in his Papacy was heavy, correlating with the primarily positive nature of frame valence within this period as well.

While not as often dominant as papal legacy, the sex scandal issue was also heavily and consistently noted within *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis. This suggests that sex scandals are a massive issue of contingency between the media and Pope Francis, which is clearly illustrated by the finding that articles focusing on sex scandals are primarily valanced negatively. This finding is interesting also because, at the time of study, the issue of sex scandals

is particularly salient due to a recent increase in allegations and the summit of Bishops at the Vatican in February of 2019 (Harlan & Boorstein, 2019). This seems to be a developing issue within the Church, and this could provide the basis for future studies which focus on the coverage of sex scandals within the Catholic Church by the American secular media.

While this thesis did not quantitively code for the issues present when the "other" variable was coded for analysis, the researcher did evaluate some of the "other" issues after the final analysis was conducted. In doing so, the researcher noted seven separate "other" issues within the 97 articles coded for "other" issue dominance. These seven "other" issues broke down as follows: 2 articles focusing on divorce, 2 articles providing updates on Pope Benedict post-resignation, 3 articles focusing on Pope Francis' background in Argentina, 9 articles concerning Christian interest specific issues, 10 articles focusing on Pope Francis' statements concerning Immigration and related poverty, 10 articles focusing on Church growth/decline, 25 articles concerning political matters within the Catholic Church, and 36 articles focusing on international politicsWithin this portion of the sample, a majority of articles gave dominance to Pope Francis' response to or involvement in politics at large. Such articles include mention of the Pope's plea for the release of a missing activist priest in war-torn Syria (Hubbard, 2013), mention of the Pope's influence over the United States' budding relationship with Cuba (Yardley, 2014), and in one narrative concerning the Pope's message of peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina. For example, reporter Rick Lyman (2015) noted:

> "Coming to a country whose national anthem has no lyrics because its bickering ethnic groups cannot agree on them, Pope Francis on Saturday called for greater religious reconciliation and an end to the sectarian conflicts that still threaten Bosnia and

proliferate around the world in 'a kind of third world war being fought piecemeal.'"

(2015)

Beyond international politics, Pope Francis' involvement in politics within the Catholic Church was also noted often within the sample. Such articles concerned issues ranging from controversy surrounding Pope Francis' selection of Bishop Blase J. Cupich, considered by many to be adverse to traditional Conservative Catholic values, as Archbishop of Chicago (Goodstein, 2014), the official recognition of the International Association of Exorcists as legitimate by the Vatican, and narratives involving the dispute between left and right leaning Catholics over the death penalty in the United States, which include the article from Oppenheimer (2015) which described Pope Francis' ability to create bipartisanship on issues within Catholics. The article states, "Last year, Pope Francis called on all Catholics 'to fight ...for the abolition of the death penalty. 'The practice is abhorrent and unnecessary.'" (2015).

The ten articles on Church growth/decline included focus on a myriad of different narratives, including some concerning the spike of German Catholics leaving the Church in 2013 (The Associated Press, 2014), where it was noted that:

"…more than 178,000 Germans left the church in 2013, the conference said. Slightly more than 118,000 people decided to leave the church in 2012. Pope Francis removed Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst as the bishop of Limburg last year after an outcry over the cost of his new residence." (2014)

Also mentioned within this section is the propensity for Pope Francis' South American heritage to influence growth within the Church in South America (Goodstein, 2013), and the expansion of the Catholic Church in South Korea (Sang-Hun. 2014). Similarly, the ten articles which were then found to focus on immigration and related poverty included coverage of

different narratives, such as Pope Francis' statements on the migrant crisis in Malta (Povoledo, 2018) and Pope Francis' statements concerning poverty and Catholic's responsibility to care for the impoverished while discussing Mother Teresa's canonization (Povoledo, 2016).

Beyond these issues, the researcher also noted coverage of stories which seemed to be of specific interest to Christians. Such stories ranged in topics from a resort in Galilee for pilgrimaging Christians on a site where Jesus Christ was said to have taught and Pope Francis' subsequent comments on the resort (Kershner, 2014) and Pope Francis' pilgrimage to the Italian village of Assisi, the birthplace of St. Francis of Assisi, the Pope's namesake saint. The article states::

> "The carefully choreographed pilgrimage was sprinkled with impromptu moments, too, as the pope appealed to the church and to Christians worldwide to divest themselves of worldliness, which leads to 'vanity, arrogance and pride,' because 'it is bad for us,' he said." (Povoledo, 2013).

RQ 2a sought to determine the frequency of generic frames established by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). The results showed that the conflict frame was most often implemented in *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis, with the human interest frame following in frequency. The frequent use of the conflict frames within coverage is consistent to that of other political Heads of State according to previous studies from Wadensjö (2008), Xie (2008), and Thompson et. al (2007), which note that the conflict frame is most often implemented within coverage of political Heads of State.

Beyond this, the frequent implementation of the human interest frame is unique among coverage of political Heads of State, previous Popes, religious figures, or coverage of Christianity in general (Thompson, Perreault, and Duffy, 2017, Wadensjö, 2008, Valenzano &

Menetagos, 2008). However, this frequency falls in line with the notions expressed by Guzik (2018), who notes that Pope Francis is able to reframe the issue of his choosing within the media by his ability to provide worthy commentary on the subject. Guzik (2018) notes that the Pope is particularly able to reframe the issue of immigration and poverty to become more focused on the human aspect of the issue. This, along with Francis' personal focus and emphasis on the plight of the individual which may work in tandem with his ability to reframe issues within the media (Guzik, 2018), may provide explanation of why this generic frame is so often implemented within *New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis specifically. These findings could act as a starting point to filling holes in literature which cover Pope Francis' ability to adapt and reframe issues within the media, but also differences in how the teachings and comments of Popes or religious figures are affecting society. This emphasis on papal legacy and sex scandal within the sample was echoed within the findings for RQ 2b, which concerned the dominance of issues within the sample. This being the case, similar implications for dominance of these frames can be assumed.

RQ 3 concerned the depiction of Pope Francis as either a religious leader or a political Head of State. Since previous literature noted this type of depiction within a variety of different issues, it seemed appropriate to test for this variable within the sample in order to further specify the ways in which Pope Francis is portrayed within *New York Times* coverage. The findings suggest that Pope Francis was primarily portrayed him based upon his duties as a religious figure. This notion is interesting due to the assertions made by Blaney (2017) which suggest that stories concerning Pope Francis are often framed politically. The findings of this thesis suggest that the American media often focuses on the religious aspect of Francis' leadership, and this

discrepancy could call for further study on the framing of Pope Francis in this manner within the greater media landscape.

RQ 4a focused on the valence frames most often implemented within the sample. The results showed that, generally, *The New York Times* is rather neutral in their coverage of Pope Francis. This finding is intriguing due to the notions suggested by Baker (2015), who notes that news centered on Religion tends to be largely negative and scrutinized. However, this thesis found that media coverage of Pope Francis often stays in between positivity and negativity, often mentioning positives of Pope Francis while also scrutinizing the issue at hand or the actions of other Church members. Tandoc, Takahashi, and Thomas (2018) mention the potential cognitive dissonance that exists within FOX News anchors and reporters when they seek to cover Pope Francis. Here, the media often shows disdain for the issue, causing a decent amount of negative rhetoric within coverage, while also painting Pope Francis himself in a primarily positive light, leading to a lot of supportive rhetoric as well. This could hint at possible reasons for coverage of Pope Francis being primarily neutral in nature.

RQ 4b sought to identify significant difference between the valence frames implemented and the dominant issue in the article. This research yielded that, among the dominant issues, papal legacy was often framed positively within *The New York Times*. This finding emphasizes the idea that the media is proliferating a certain portrayal of Pope Francis when pertaining to his legacy and he is often compared positively to his contemporaries and predecessors within coverage. This may be, due to notions determined by Guzik (2018), related somewhat to the propensity for the media to promote messages they agree with positively. Due to the nature of *The New York Times* as a generally progressive media organization catering to a generally left leaning audience (Blake, 2014), it is likely that Pope Francis' propensity to make statements

which may be considered more progressive (Blaney, 2017), have caused the media to embrace him more and portray him more positively.

Beyond this, articles which were found to contain sex scandal issue dominance were most often portrayed negatively within the sample. This notion echoes sentiments addressed by Baker (2015) who notes that, regardless of the relationship to Pope Francis and the Church, sex scandal issues are often discussed negatively and the immorality and illegality is often focused upon whether the sex scandal stemmed from abuse from a Priest within the Church or from another party. This was found in an article from Rojas (2019) in which the author describes the reaction within a Church to the news that five priests whom had served their congregation had been accused of sexual abuse, stated that Priests were "on a campaign of apologizing, often in personal terms, as the Catholic Church wrestles with the fallout of a scandal that has drawn the scrutiny of law enforcement officials and stirred a crisis of confidence among followers." (Rojas, 2018)

It is interesting to note that, while *The New York Times* does discuss Pope Francis' legacy positively and sex scandals negatively, it is worthy of note that, while Pope Francis is often mentioned and heavily referenced in articles focusing on sex scandals within the Church, he is not always the main focus, as the issue itself and the surrounding details are often mentioned negatively, similar to notions expressed by Baker (2015)

RQ 4c sought to identify significant difference between the valence frames implemented and the dominant frames in the article. The findings showed that stories showing dominance of the human interest frame were most often framed with positive valence. This is particularly interesting because several of these stories focused on portraying Francis himself as relatable and humanistic individual. For example, an article from Povoledo (2014) illustrates this by stating

"Francis spoke with displaced Christians who are in a tent camp in northern Iraq and told

them that they were like Jesus. Many in the camps have been forced to leave their homes

by militants of the Islamic State. 'You are like Jesus on the night of his birth when he had

been forced to flee,' the pope told them in a telephone call broadcast live by an Italian

Catholic television station. 'You are like Jesus in this situation, and that means we are

praying even harder for you.'" (2014)

However, some human interest stories involved individuals which were in some way

related to the Catholic Church or Pope Francis through interactions with his teachings and ways

that Pope Francis' presence is affecting their lives either as individuals, and these were often

framed positively due to the focus on the humanistic side of the story. For example, an article

from Yardley and Goodstein (2015) focused specifically on the public reaction to Pope Francis'

statements concerning abortion, quoting one individual as saying:

"'I was frankly taken aback at how savvy he was," said Stephen Schneck, the director of

the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies at the Catholic University of

America. 'He was clearly aware of all the very divisive issues for Catholics in American

public life but talked about them in a way that didn't give ammunition to either

conservatives or progressives in the United States to use in their political wars.'" (2015)

The final question, RQ 5, asked are there notable changes or patterns of valence frames

within *The New York Times* coverage of Pope Francis from year to year? The findings in relation

to this question asserted that valence frames were most often positive in nature in the first half of

the sample. This could suggest that Pope Francis had a grace period near the beginning of his

Papacy, which is echoed by the notion that frame valence appears to be trending as primarily

neutral near the most recent half of Pope Francis' papacy while becoming increasingly more

negative while also being less positive. This is likely due to the recent uproar involving sex scandals within the Catholic Church which, as found within the findings, is primarily valanced negatively regardless of the involvement of Pope Francis, whom is usually individually valanced positively.

Discussion of Framing Implications

This thesis focused heavily on the framing of Pope Francis within *The New York Times*. Beyond simply providing basis for answering the intended research questions, the findings of this study also provide implications for studying generic frames and frame valence of both political Heads of State, as well as suggesting implications for the framing of Popes and the framing of religious figures as well.

This study suggests that framing may be more of a two-way-street than most literature suggests (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000), as Pope Francis seems to be aware of the potential for framing within the media and the propensity for the media to cover him as an individual along with the messages he is purveying. The findings of this thesis suggest that frames are less of an unseen entity and that the Pope may be aware of this notion, causing some issues to portrayed in certain ways (i.e. positive/neutral/negative or religious/political/general coverage).

This thesis expands upon framing literature by noting the issues primarily discussed within coverage of Pope Francis. It can be determined from the findings that the most frequent issue within coverage is actually the legacy and depiction of Pope Francis himself. This study, while expanding basic frame literature, also provides unique insight on Pope Francis' unique nature within the media. While this study did not universally define coverage of Pope Francis which sets him apart from others, this notion could be explored further as touched upon in the chapter on limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 6. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the exhaustive nature of this study, limitations such as time and other study requirements limited the sample size to around 300, despite the more than 3,000 articles which have been written by *The New York Times* concerning Pope Francis. This limited 10% sample size reduced the scope of study immensely and provides only a snapshot of Papal coverage from *The New York Times.* In order to definitively define media framing of Pope Francis within this publication, a larger sample size would be necessary based upon prior research trends.

Beyond this, Pope Francis is an incredibly prolific media figure, and this study was only able to analyze framing from within a single source. Although *The New York Times* is considered the publication of record within the United States, there are thousands of other newspapers published daily across the nation and, again, a single source only provides a snapshot of Papal coverage on a much larger scale.

Beyond this, issue variables within this study were primarily pre-established major church issues or clear issues of contention between the Catholic Church and the rest of society. While the coders did code for presence or absence of an "other" issue variable, they did not note the "other" codes that caused this variable to be coded for presence. Despite this, the impact of Pope Francis' stance or statements on issues such as: divorce, Catholic Church growth/decline, internal church issues, or poverty, were apparent within the sample.

Another limitation of note is the sample size. When collecting every tenth article for the sample, the researcher elected not to select the 11th article to take the place of the 10th article if the 10th article did not fit sampling criteria due to study restrictions, leaving the researcher with an initial sample of 244 instead of the goal of 300. While literature from Nuendorf (2002) suggests that a 10% sample size is appropriate based upon the criteria for systematic random

sampling, this thesis was only able to analyze 226 articles out of more than 3000 articles present within *The New York Times* database after final edits were made post-coding and pre-analysis. Future research focusing on the same area should grow the sample considerably in order to grasp a larger picture of Papal coverage within *The New York Times.*

Finally, a lack of previous formal research on Pope Francis and previous Popes, while providing a gap in the literature for this study to fill, limited the comparative nature of this study greatly as there is little in the way of prior consensus concerning the framing of religious figures.

In terms of future research, the findings of this study could provide the basis for a larger scale framing study of Pope Francis either within *The New York Times* coverage or the coverage of additional or separate publications. Beyond this, researchers could avoid objective media completely and focus instead on faith-based media coverage of Pope Francis, providing either analysis of frames used within these publications, or comparing the frames implemented within secular based media to that of spiritually based media. Future researchers could also analyze the discrepancies in framing of Pope Francis between spiritually based media from other religions or other Christian denominations.

Additionally, the findings of this study warrant the analysis of media effects on consumers, along with establishing a basis for determining the potential for frame transfer within articles. Future studies could focus on *New York Times* consumers' reaction to the implemented frames and determine the potential for opinion change and thusly transfer of frames from media to consumer. Additionally, this could be done similarly to other publications after establishing the dominant frames present.

Future research could also focus on the specific "other" issue variables that could be identified within the sample. This would allow researchers to gain a more extensive grasp of *New*

York Times coverage of Pope Francis. Additionally, these issues were clear issues of contention and clear church issues based upon the salience of issues during the time of study. Future studies should adapt the issue list to fit the current dialogue within the Catholic Church and the current social influences on church focus.

Finally, future studies may consider analyzing the effects of these frames on perception of Pope Francis and the Catholic Church among Catholics and different groups alike, asking questions related to: the perception that Catholics have of their own Church based upon the frames implemented, along with the perception of Catholics, the Catholic Church, and Pope Francis among non-Catholics. These studies could also focus on how the lives of Catholics or other Christians are affected by coverage of Pope Francis.

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List of Tables

Table 1

Issues in New York Times coverage of Pope Francis (N=226)

Issue	Frequency	Percentages
Other	145	64.2%
Papal Legacy	127	56.2%
Sex Scandal	64	28.3%
Homosexuality	59	26.1%
Abortion	32	14.2%
Contraception/Birth Control	22	9.7%
Environment	19	8.4%
Media	6	2.7%
Creationism/Evolution	5	2.2%

Table 2

Dominant Issues in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N=226)

Issue	Frequency	Percentages
Other	97	42.9%
Papal Legacy	58	25.7%
Sex Scandal	42	18.6%
Homosexuality	14	6.2%
Environment	9	4.0%
Media	4	1.8%
Abortion	1	0.4%
Contraception/Birth Control	1	0.4%
Creationism/Evolution	0	0.0%
Totals	226	100%

Table 3

Generic Frames in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N=226)

Frame	Frequency	Percentages
Conflict	163	72.1%
Human Interest	121	53.5%
Morality	86	38.1%
Responsibility	78	34.5%
Economic Reductionism	28	12.4%

Table 4

Frame Dominance in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N =226)

Frame	Frequency	Percentages
Conflict	106	46.9%
Human Interest	58	25.7%
Responsibility	34	15.0%
Morality	23	10.2%
Economic Reductionism	5	2.2%
Totals	226	100%

Table 5

Religious/Political/Neutral Portrayal in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N = 226)

Portrayal Category	Frequency	Percentages
Religious	110	48.9%
Political	71	31.6%
General	44	19.6%
Total	226	100%

Table 6

Valence Frame Frequency in New York Times Coverage of Pope Francis (N = 226)

Valence Frame	Frequency	Percentages
Neutral	99	43.8%
Positive	85	37.6%
Negative	42	18.6%
Totals	226	100%

Table 7

Dominant Issue Valence (N = 226)

Issue	Positive (n = 85)	Neutral (n = 99)	Negative (n = 42)	Totals
Other	29 (34.1%)	53 (53.5%)	35.7%)	97
Papal Legacy	33 (38.8%)	17 (17.2%)	13.8%)	58
Sex Scandal	9 (10.6%)	16 (16.2%)	17 (40.5%)	42
Homosexuality	7 (8.2%)	6 (6.1%)	1 (2.4%)	14
Environment	4 (4.7%)	5 (5.1%)	0 (0%)	9
Media	2 (2.4%)	2 (2.0%)	0 (0%)	4
Abortion	1 (1.2%)0	0 (0.0%)	0 (0%)	1
Contraception/Birth Control	(0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (2.4%)	1
Creationism/Evolution	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0%)	0
Totals	85	99	42	226

Table 8

Dominant Frame Valence (N = 226)

Frame	Positive (n = 85)	Neutral (n = 99)	Negative (n = 42)	Totals
Responsibility	23 (27.1%)	57 (57.6%)	26 (61.9%)	106
Human Interest	34 (40.0%)	21 (21.2%)	3 (07.1%)	58
Conflict	10 (11.8%)	12 (12.1%)	12 (28.6%)	34
Morality	15 (17.6%)	7 (07.1%)	1 (02.4%)	23
Economic Reduct.	3 (03.5%)	2 (02.0%)	0 (00.0%)	5
Totals	85	99	42	226

Table 9

Valence Frames by Year (N = 226)

Years	Positive (n = 85)	Neutral (n = 99)	Negative (n = 42)	Totals
2013-14	19 (47.5%)	15 (37.5%)	6 (15.0%)	40
2014-15	24 (52.2%)	15 (32.6%)	7 (15.2%)	46
2015-16	29 (36.3%)	38 (47.5%)	13 (31.0%)	80
2016-17	4 (21.1%)	14 (73.7 %)	1 (05.3%)	19
2017-18	5 (23.8%)	12 (57.1%)	4 (19.0%)	21
2018-19	4 (20.0 %)	5 (25.0%)	11 (55.0%)	20
Totals	85	99	42	226

Table 10

Valence Frames by Year (N = 226)

Years	Positive *(n = 85)*	Neutral *(n = 99)*	Negative *(n = 42)*	Totals
2013-2015	72 (43.4%)	68 (41.0%)	26 (15.7%)	166
2016-2019	15 (23.1%)	35 (53.8%)	15 (23.1%)	60
Totals	85 (37.6%)	99 (43.8%)	42 (18.6%)	226

Appendix A

Codebook for Content Analysis

Unit: The coders will assign each *New York Times* story with a number, starting with 1.

Date: The coders will note the date of the article (i.e. mm/dd/yyyy).

Issues: The coders are asked to identify the presence or absence of a number of issues from a predetermined list based on prior research:

(1) Papal Legacy
- Does the article offer comparisons between Pope Francis and previous Popes?
- Does the article reference how actions/events will affect future perceptions of Pope Francis?
- Reference to how Pope Francis' actions/statements will affect the future of the Catholic Church?

(2) *Sex Scandals*
- Does the article include reference the sexual abuse of young children within the Catholic Church?
- Does the article include reference to the sexual abuse of Nuns within the Catholic Church?
- Does the article include reference to the impact of sexual abuse on the reputation of the Catholic Church?
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' response to sexual abuse scandals?

(3) *Environment*
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si*?
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on Global Warming/Climate Change?
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' response to the Paris Climate Accord?

(4) *Creation/Evolution*
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the creation of life?
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the evolution of life after creation?
- Does the article include reference to statements made by Pope Francis concerning creation/evolution?
- Does the article include reference to Catholic Church doctrine concerning creation/evolution?
-

(5) *Homosexuality*
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on Homosexuality?
- Does the article include reference to the Catholic Church's stance on Homosexuality?
- Does the article include comparison to previous Pope's views on Homosexuality?
- Does the article include reference to changing views on Homosexuality within the Catholic Church?

(6) *Abortion*
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the morality of abortion?
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on global abortion rates?
- Does the article include reference to Catholic Church doctrine concerning abortion?

(7) Contraceptives/Birth Control
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the use of contraceptives?
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis views on healthy sexual practices?
- Does the article include reference to the morality of sexual practices according to the Catholic Church?

(8) Media Practices
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on proper media practices?
- Does the article include reference to Pope Francis' views on the morality of "fake news"?

(9) Other

Dominant Issue: The coders will read each article, determining a list of present issues. After making this list, the coders will decide which issue is dominant based upon the salience and importance of the issue within the context of the article. For example, an article which includes a cursory mention of the Pope's climate encyclical but is primarily focused on a timeline of Pope Francis' reaction to sex abuse scandals would include both "environment" and "sex scandals" on the original issue list. The coders would then reread the article, focusing on the main idea of the story and the issue being discussed, and then code for the dominant issue with the corresponding number from the above list.

Generic Frames: The coders are asked to determine the presence or absence of the following frames, as listed and described below, based upon a variation of:

(1) Responsibility
- Does the story suggest that Pope Francis has the ability to alleviate the problem?

- Does the story suggest that Catholic Church has the ability to alleviate the problem?
- Does the story suggest that Pope Francis or the Catholic Church is responsible for the issue/problem?
- Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?
- Does the story suggest that an ind. (or group of people in society) is resp. for the issue-problem?
- Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action?

(2) Human Interest
- Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?
- Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?
- Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?
- Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors?
- Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy, caring, sympathy, or compassion?

(3) Conflict
- Does the story reflect disagreement between parties-individuals-groups-countries?
- Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another?
- Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue?
- Does the story refer to winners and losers?

(4) Morality
- Does the story contain any moral message?
- Does the story make reference to morality, God, and other religious tenets?
- Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?

(5) Economic Reductionism
- Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?
- Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?
- Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?

Dominant Frame: The coders will read each article, determining a list of present generic frames. After making this list, the coders will decide which generic frame is dominant based upon the salience and importance of the generic frame within the context of the article. For example, an article which includes a cursory mention of the economic consequences of Church sex scandals while focusing specifically on how the Pope should handle the crisis would result in both the "responsibility" fame and the "economy" frame being included on the list. The coders would then reread the article, focusing on the main idea of the story and the main frame being

implemented, and then will code for the dominant frame with the corresponding number from the above list.

Valence: The coders will also code for valence frames within the sample. These valence frames will be coded differently than issues and generic frames, with the presence of each frame being coded with the number (1, 2, or 3) corresponding to the following list. The following questions were adapted from valence framing specifics from Han and Wang (2012).

(1) Positive
- Does the article seem optimistic in nature?
- Does the article reference potential benefits of Pope Francis' actions?
- Does the article use words such as: "support", "success", "win" or other phrases with positive connotation in regards to actions made by Pope Francis?
- Does the article include reference to the positivity of following Pope Francis' teachings?
- Does the article highlight inconsistencies between Pope Francis and Catholic Doctrine or previous church teachings in a positive manner?

(2) Neutral
- Does the article reference neither positive aspects or negative aspects of Pope Francis' papacy?
- Does the article not include enough info concerning Pope Francis to constitute valence?

(3) Negative
- Does the article include judgements of actions of Pope Francis?
- Does the article include negative comparisons of Pope Francis to previous Popes?
- Does the article include references to disadvantages of following Pope Francis' teachings?
- Does the article highlight inconsistencies between Pope Francis and Catholic Doctrine or previous church teachings in a negative manner?

Political/Religious Representation: Finally, the coders will code for the portrayal of Pope Francis as either a political head of state, a religious figure, or neutral portrayal.

(1) Religious Figurehead
- Does the article mention Pope Francis' status as leader of a religious organization?
- Does the article mention of specific teachings or Biblical interpretations?
- Does the article focus on Pope Francis' interpretation of Catholic Doctrine?
- Does the article mention the conduction of Mass or other services by Pope Francis?
- Does the article mention moral advice from Pope Francis?

(2) Political Head of State
- Does the article mention the Pope's status as Head of State of the Vatican?
- Does the article mention the Pope's duties as a political leader?
- Does the article compare Pope Francis to other Heads of State?

(3) Neutral
- Are there no references to the political duties of Francis as Head of State of Vatican City?
- Are there no references the duties Francis has as a religious leader?
- Does the article balance references to these duties evenly?
- Does the article seemingly lack focus on either of these potential depictions?