

**Myth, Math and the Money: Media Framing of
the U.S. Gender Wage Gap debate from 1980-2014**

BY

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THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Communication
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2016

Chicago, Illinois

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dedicating a significant portion of one's adult life to returning to academia, effectively learning how to become a researcher, stumbling yet moving forward to create work that has merit and may make a difference is not done in isolation. I simply would not be at this juncture were it not for my outstanding, thoughtful, encouraging, and patient committee, family, and friends. Andy, my advisor, director of Graduate Studies, and "coach," you made this possible. The countless times you encouraged, motivated, and reasoned with me, providing structure and guidance while keeping the faith that I could and would succeed, is beyond my ability to thank. Our discussions helped me stay focused and grounded; thank you for being my biggest "cheerleader." Zizi, your unfailing honesty and support as my department chair, faculty, and committee member encouraged me to think about the bigger-picture questions and where I situate myself as a scholar. Rebecca, your willingness to jump in and join my committee, and unfailingly consistent e-mails of motivation and encouragement pushed me forward when I needed it most. Barbara, I was honored to be in your sociology class and learn from a true gender scholar; thank you for helping me find courage to challenge the status quo. Bill, I took your sociology course on gender and organizations many years ago; it was because of this and your unerring dedication to that course, its topics, and discussions, that I chose to examine the topic of media framing around the gender wage gap. Thank you for the inspiration. It is my hope to take this knowledge further, and you are all a part of that path.

My friends, peers, and colleagues: there is simply no "here" without you "there." Adriane, Gonca, Renee, Catherine, Fede, Dan, Kim, and Aimee—this work is yours, too. For the many e-mails, chats, phone calls, memes, funny photos, and Facebook posts that literally kept

me going at the most challenging times, I thank you, deeply, from the bottom of my heart. Ginnifer, you gave me unfailing positivity and sustenance. Jenny, my colleague and co-researcher in critical culture topics, thank you for always being so strong and inspirational. Tim, you reviewed earlier drafts and repeatedly took the time to remind me this was a worthy project—and you enthusiastically coded data for me! Emilie, you provided humor and grace and answered my many questions. Andrea, your intellect, unerring poise and determination continue to inspire me. Christina and Mamie, you are both irreplaceable and kept me on track. Thank you for all of your terrific administrative assistance. Hannah, you are an editor extraordinaire. Many thanks to how well you perfected this work.

To my former colleagues at Pricewaterhouse LLP, your intellect and dedication to client service made me a better consultant and helped pave the way for this research.

To my family: Dad, I wish you were here to see this, but I know you are present in spirit and gently nudged me when I needed it. Mom, you were my first “feminist” role model, even though I did not recognize that until this project—for your courage, determination, and all the tools you have given me, thank you (hálásan köszönöm). My family in Hungary and my godparents, Agnes and Steve, also deserve mention, as they have always supported me in reaching for my dreams.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Kevin, who supported me throughout this process, never wavering, always going the extra mile to lift me up, and who always said, “I love you...you can do this.”

SKP

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1. OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

At 27 years of age, I started a highly visible, highly paid occupation: I began work as a management consultant with a (then) “Big Five” global accounting and consulting firm in Los Angeles. I had successfully completed an undergraduate degree from a top-tiered all-women’s college on the East Coast, worked in administrative management for several years, obtained a master’s degree from an Ivy League university, and “negotiated” my first salary. My compensation increased 3-7% each year, not including annual merit bonuses, which in some years equaled as much as 35% of my net pay. I was, I thought, paid well—I enjoyed the consulting field, my career advancement opportunities, and my colleagues.

When offered my initial salary, I was so thrilled to have received an offer from a prestigious firm and the opportunity to live in Southern California with its seductive sunshine after years of East Coast winter climes that it did not cross my mind to actively negotiate a salary increase or other employment benefits—this despite having had completed several business courses in my master’s program that focused on negotiation among future clients and customers. Negotiation, through the process of self-advocacy, did not seem critical as a predictor of my future career contentment or success.

In the early 2000s, I took on other occupational positions and pursued additional business coursework that discussed gender differentials in the salary-negotiation process, and how women frequently did not engage in active negotiation behaviors to their benefit. I reflected back on that first big salary and my role in its measurement of my occupational worth. In subsequent occupations, I made a concrete effort to research market data on industry compensations, read

books and websites on effective negotiation skills, and arm myself with information to ensure my salary discussions were grounded in fact versus “pie-in-the-sky” ideals. Without exception, I was able to increase my original starting salary offers, my bonuses, or my benefits, and most often a combination of all three. It never, therefore, crossed my mind that I might not have been offered equitable pay based on my gender. Why would an employer intentionally discriminate, after all, given that my education and experience equaled or exceeded my male colleagues’? Ideology, gender-linked stereotypes, and gender roles and norms certainly did not seem to have any effect on my career advancement. How little I knew then!

1.2 “It’s not a myth; it’s math”

In his April 8, 2014, State of the Union Address, U.S. President Barack Obama remarked, “When women succeed, America succeeds” (Dann, 2014, para. 2). He used his comments commemorating Equal Pay Day to urge Congress to take legislative action to close the *gender wage gap*, commonly defined as the “difference in average hourly earnings of male and female employees after controlling for human capital factors such as education” (Khoreva, 2011; Blau, 2006). In response to critics who questioned the magnitude and scope of the wage differential, Obama forcefully noted, “It’s not a myth; it’s math” (Dann, para. 3). Here he referred to numerous studies that show women’s earnings as compared to men’s capped at 77 cents to 82 cents per dollar.

With these words, the president highlighted differences between political rivals and parties in Congress for upcoming midterm elections. Obama incensed both small- and big-business employers, who were concerned about having to allocate additional costs toward salary increases and potential lawsuits from former employees, but he also excited Democratic voters,

who tend to skew female, with women supporting Obama by a 55 percent margin in the 2012 election (Dann, para. 5). Furthermore, he set the stage for additional legislative action in the form of two executive orders intended to narrow the wage gap between men and women in the federal workforce.

Support for wage equality independent of gender is not limited to presidential politics; the issue of pay equality also factors into the (considerable) contemporary public discourse on increasing the minimum wage as a rallying cry for those protesting gender inequality. Opinion polls have generally shown clear public support of economic parity, via wage gap reparation by gender, with the support only growing over time (Pew Center Research, 2014): “Both men and women see inequalities in the workplace—77% of women and 63% of men said ‘this country needs to continue making changes to give men and women equality in the workplace.’” A 2013 HuffPost/YouGov poll found that 82% of survey respondents--with an equitable distribution across political partisan lines (87% Democrat, 81% Independent, and 76% Republican)--said that “men and women should be social, political and economic equals.” A subsequent survey polling likely 2014 voters noted that 54%, including 44% of male respondents, believed women faced ongoing and persistent discrimination in the workplace, and 60% were more likely to support a political candidate in favor of gender pay equalization, a higher minimum wage, and paid family and medical leave (American Women Research, May 2015). These data demonstrate that the public is aware and largely supportive of issues related to combatting employment discrimination, promoting wage equity, and increasing women’s health. The wage gap is particularly relevant in the 21st century in the United States, given the financial crisis of 2007–

2008, the Great Recession, growing poverty levels associated with single-mother households, and wealth/income gaps that are negatively gendered against women.

Given the longevity of debate surrounding the topic, policy formation has not kept pace with public opinion. More than 50 years after the enactment of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, gender pay inequality continues to exist. The act “prohibits sex-based wage discrimination between men and women in the same establishment who perform jobs that require substantially equal skill, effort and responsibility under similar working conditions” (www.eeoc.gov, “The Equal Pay Act”). Several key legislative reforms, including the Lilly Ledbetter Act of 2009, and federal policies requiring states to increase minimum wage levels have been passed in recent years. Although women comprise nearly half the labor force (44% of the 99.1 million according to the 2010 U.S. Census), women with equal education and experience levels continue to get paid 77 cents to a man’s dollar. Over time, a woman with educational credentials equal to those of her male counterpart (same major, same GPA) who takes a full-time position in the same occupation will earn 7% less one year after graduation. Over a 35-year career, women will earn an average of \$1.2 million less (AAUW, 2013).

The 2009 Forbes List of the richest Americans indicated that eight of the top ten were men, and of the top 100, only eight women were included (Chang, p. 11). The continuous channeling of women into a less rich, “wealth poor” status increases the likelihood of women living in poverty for longer periods of time than men, and ultimately reduces what Domhoff (2008) refers to as access to societal, economic, and political power. The 2014 midterm Congressional elections resulted in historical gains by the Republican Party in the Senate and the House, with Republican ownership of the Senate for the first time since 2006, and the largest

Republican majority in the United States in nearly a century (Pierog, 2014). Despite the turn toward a hyper-conservative Congress, public support to increase minimum wages continued to increase, with 50% of all adults saying they would be more likely to vote for a candidate supportive of the increase (*Washington Post*/ABC News poll, Feb. 27–Mar. 2, 2014), regardless of the inability of the partisan Congress to successfully pass equal paycheck legislation (*Washington Post*, April 9, 2014). The Paycheck Fairness Act of 2014 fell short of passing by the eight votes needed to overcome a Republican filibuster (52 to 40), and received no votes from the GOP as part of the fourth attempt since 2011 toward bill passage. Other organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC), however, and the majority of Americans across gender lines continue to argue that more equitable allocation and distribution of wages are necessary, in part because women are at a financial disadvantage overall in comparison to men (Schultz, 2014). These entities are not in agreement in terms of the causalities contributing to equal pay discrimination or the interventions advanced as solutions to the discrepancy.

A number of variables influence compensation, including choice (women opting out of the workforce), gender bias (motherhood penalty), preference (women, on average, indicate they do not want to pursue management positions at the risk of giving up family involvement), employer discrimination, more pressing societal issues (those the public interest deems more critical), and the like. I discuss these in greater depth in Chapter 2 to better explicate the examination of the contemporary discourse linking wage increases to shifts in public opinion and

legislative reform. My primary focus, however, is on examining the role media play in shaping the debate and its influence on public opinion.

As this study shows, while the gender wage gap *has certainly achieved attention in media discourse, there has been no comprehensive study of media messaging on the degree, frequency, salience, and slant based on media partisanship as related to the gender wage gap issue*. In this study, I seek to address that. This dissertation aims to fill that research gap to better understand what the media says about these issues matters in policy formation. Does the structuring of media messages and discourse around wage equality correlate with transitions in public opinion and subsequent policy and legislative action?

1.3 Motivation for this Study

I began this chapter with a personal anecdote as a backdrop to a deeper discussion around *power and influence* as related to women's wages in the United States. On average, a woman with educational experience and an occupational position equitable to those of her male counterpart will earn 77 to 82 cents per his dollar (Department of Labor Statistics, 2010; Catalyst Survey, 2013). Wade (2001) notes that while "women and men can effectively and comfortably exert power and influence when making requests" pertaining to salary negotiation, "women do not frequently make requests for themselves, because they have learned that they may ultimately lose more than they gain. This gendered difference has implications for ongoing pay and promotion inequities" (p. 65). Wade's argument is regularly levied by supply-side economists and sociologists (e.g., Gary Becker and June O'Neill, to name a few). Women either have negotiation skills that are more limited, are hesitant to negotiate, opt out of the labor force by choice (family, dependent care), or have a desire to work less than men. The counterpart

position to this, demand-side economists (e.g., Blau, England and Eagly, among others) argue that while supply-side conditions may factor in to women's compensation decisions, gender is the dominant factor. Quite simply, regardless of educational and occupational experience, women earn less because gender discrimination is at play at an institutional and societal level.

My principal questions which informed my research questions include the following:

- What has the media told the public about the gender wage gap issue over time?
- What central themes do the media emphasize (framing)?
- Does media coverage influence public opinion? And finally,
- Can and should media be informed and held accountable for its limiting selection of dominant frames, and lack of emphasis on human rights/equal rights and morality frames as necessary to the discourse?

Answers to these questions are critical because if media framing, or *media messaging*, plays a role in influencing public opinion, it may also affect policy formation. While a myriad of social, political, and economic factors contribute to shaping the gender wage gap, the *media* play an important role in the ongoing public discourse on these issues. “The media matters—to politics, to citizens, to democracy,” notes Boydston (2013). “Thus, how media attention gets distributed across issues and how it changes over time matters, too.” (p. 2). Boydston also writes that “media attention has been shown, empirically and repeatedly, to influence both citizen attitudes and government responses toward policy issues” (p. 5). In a democratic society reliant upon information disseminated by the press, does the message matter when it comes to

influencing policy? By addressing these questions, we stand to gain insight into the roles that press, public opinion, and policy formation play in how every individual gets paid to make a living.

1.3.1. Influence of Media Framing on Public Opinion

Understanding media framing of the gender wage gap as a visible yet unresolved social issue, as well as knowing whether media framing shapes public opinion and policy formation, is critical because research has shown that media messages influence how audiences weigh considerations in forming opinion (Lee et al., 2008). The ways in which journalistic framing occurs impact public understanding around, and influence the presence or absence of, policy formation (Tuchman, 1978). A closer examination of media framing and potential bias has significant implications for the gender wage gap debate, yes, but even more so for a deeper understanding of how media framing correlates with public opinion shifts and policy outcomes. At a broader level, it also allows us to use the gender wage gap debate as an example of the efficacy of social movements. The inherent tension between what media tell us and which issues of societal importance are raised by individuals reveals media influence on political, legislative, and institutionalized remediation, and it merits additional exploration.

1.4 Study Objectives

This study seeks to ascertain the role *media framing* plays in public discourse, public opinion, and policy formation related to the contemporary U.S. gender wage gap issue. I consider the linkages between salience of media messages, shifts in public opinion (attitudes) surrounding the issue, and partisanship in formulating public policy (behaviors). I systematically analyze the predominant media frames that materialized in more than 400 news articles from

three major print (newspaper) and three electronic (television) news sources about the gender wage gap between January 1, 1980, and April 30, 2014, with the goal of identifying key media frames (economic, social, political). I then correlate these “significant events” (legislative, policy reform) with changes in public opinion.

1.5 Research Originality

A 2012 election-year Center for American Progress poll showed women as the majority of electoral voters (53%), and indicated that top voter issues were jobs, the economy, and health issues. An October 2010 White House Report on Jobs and Economic Security for America’s Women and a national poll found “that people rank equal pay for men and women as one of the most important issues for them personally and for improving the economy as a whole” (Congress Blog). Yet recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics place the median usual weekly income for women at 81 cents for every dollar earned by men (2012), with declining percentages based on race and ethnicity: 78 cents for African-American women, and 68 cents for Latina women.

The disparity in the earning status of women as compared to men presents a relevant economic, social, and political issue that has historical traction and public support for remediation. Yet this “woman’s issue” continues to reflect gender inequities in the labor market. Gender scholars, historians, economists, and journalists have posited a variety of explanations to explain the gendered division of labor. These range from supply-side economic arguments of human capital differences (Becker, 1964; Iverson and Rosenbluth, 2006) to demand-side orientation (Bielby, 1986, 2011) focused on systemic institutional and organizational processes

(motherhood penalty, stereotyping of performance) and policies that contribute to gender inequities in occupations (Jaffee, 2005).

I have two objectives with this research as related to gender studies: First, I seek to examine the gender wage gap issue through the construct of media framing as an influence on public opinion and policy reform of gendered economic practices. An abundance of research demonstrates the influence of issue frames on public opinion (Chong and Druckman, 2008; Baumgartner and Linn, 2008; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Nelson et al., 1999). A closer examination of media framing and potential bias has significant implications for the current status of the feminist movement and the economic resiliency of women and the nation as a whole, because of the influence exerted by media framing in crafting and making more salient those messages that influence public attitudes, behavior, and ultimately public policy without which economic parity is an unachievable goal.

Second, I aim to address the lack of research on this subject, specifically, and, more generally, around women's issues, the existing research on which either undervalues the importance and relevance of gender equality or is under-covered or significantly less represented in media stories. Scholarly examination on how the media *frame* women's issues is surprisingly thin. An academic database search (Sage, JSTOR, Academic Premier, Communication Abstracts) of research articles including the terms "gender wage gap" and "media framing" yielded no results. A second search that expanded search terms to "wage gap," "women," and "media framing" produced only *three* articles that were related, and then only indirectly, to the topic, and none that specifically used media framing analysis to explicate this issue.

The research that has been conducted, moreover, is limited in scope. To wit, Bronstein's (2005) work on the framing of third-wave feminism drew on textual and content analysis over a ten-year news cycle to identify and compare framing patterns between the second- and third-wave feminist movements. Its primary focus, however, was on the nature of the women's movement itself, with limited discussion specific to the wage-gap or wage-equality issue. Iversen and Rosenbluth (2006) employed a supply-side economic argument to explain the gendered division of labor by considering the "bargaining processes" employed by couples as they negotiate occupational and domestic divisions of labor. While one gains a clearer understanding of macro-level interventions that address factors contributing to decision-making processes around individual and couple employment, the analysis does not relate specifically to any aspect of media framing of the gender wage-gap issue.

Finally, while Gazso's (2004) framing analysis of newspaper discourse from 2000 to 2002 on women's inequality in the workplace contributes to the literature on gender as a social structure (Risman, 2004), it focuses on factors that contribute to individual career selection, division of labor, and occupational segregation within Canada; and it has limited news source/medium selection (two newspapers with circulation only in Canada). These findings lend interesting relevancy to the discussion of gendered allocation of labor, and to the gender ideology around "breadwinner" and "primary earner" constructs, but are more limited in scope than the study I have conducted. The thinness of existing research points to a compelling need for additional study of an issue with direct relevance for contemporary gender studies.

1.6 Theoretical Frameworks

This study uses media framing analysis and public opinion analysis as the primary frameworks for examining gaps between media messaging/framing and influences on public attitudes, as measured by public opinion polls. An exploration of media framing helps clarify (a) the factors that contribute to this gap and (b) the types of frame attributes brought to the attention of the public through political debate and how they contribute to or weaken the efficacy of the women's movement to reduce the wage gap.

Framing research seeks to highlight how the specific aspects of an issue or event influence a particular interpretation (Entman, 1991). Media framing analysis clarifies the process by which meaning is produced and mobilized on a mass scale (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin 1981; Benford and Snow, 2000). Likewise, it is critical to examine the linkages between media framing and public opinion. "The study of public opinion," write Chong and Druckman (2008), "is linked inextricably to analyzing how the news media frame their coverage of politics and how the public uses this information."

The study of public opinion highlights its current status as an omnipresent gauge of citizens' assessment of national affairs. It focuses on the extent to which assent or opposition to policy, policy reform, and national agendas are consistent with societal demand. Poll results also force institutional and political leaders into *response-based* modalities: "Political elites attempt to mobilize voters in support of their policies by encouraging them to think about those policies along particular lines" or frames (Chong and Druckman, p. 3). Thus public opinion cannot be disregarded if it contributes even indirectly to successful policymaking (Pew Research, 2009).

Public opinion is best measured over a period of time, because this helps clarify the relationship between changes in public sentiment and policy changes (Jacobs and Mettler, 2011).

For purposes of this study, analyzing changes in media framing from the 1980s to the end of the first quarter of 2014 provides the opportunity to see patterns across and between five presidential administrations (Reagan, H.W. Bush, Clinton, G.W. Bush, and Obama), seventeen significant milestones (laws, policies, events around the gender wage gap debate), and two waves of the women's movement (second and third: the former included the greatest increase of women in the employment ranks in U.S. history; the latter included the greatest economic recession since the Great Depression in the late 1920s).

A final aspect around public opinion to consider is the degree of influence it has on public policy. In a 2003 study, Burstein studied the correlations between issue salience, degree of impact of public opinion, government responsiveness to opinion, and policy formation. He found that public opinion affects policy to some degree approximately 75% of the time and to a "substantial degree at least a third of the time" (p. 36). This research echoes findings by Page and Shapiro (1983) who build upon previous economic studies (see Downs, 1957; Davis, Hinich, & Ordeshook, 1970), foreign policy research (Holsti, 1992), and state policy studies (Erikson, Wright and McIver, 1989, 1992). These predict a "high degree of responsiveness" from policy to public opinion. Page and Shapiro's examination of public opinion and policy data over a 44-year period (1935–1979) notes policy shifts are congruent with, or move in the same direction as, public opinion (p. 176). Of 357 cases of opinion change during this period, 231, or 66%, reflect agreement between majority opinion and policy formation or shift. When legislation did change, "it went overwhelmingly (in 92 percent of 25 cases) in the same direction as public opinion" (p. 186).

In an examination of state political party control and state policy, Erickson, Wright, and McIver (1989) likewise found high levels of correlation between state public opinion and state policy, with parties responding to state opinion and influencing changes in party ownership based on party responsiveness to public opinion. Holsti's study of shifts in foreign policy challenged the Almond-Lippman Consensus, which posited little agreement between public opinion's impact on foreign post-World War II. Holsti countered that a growing volume of public opinion research after the Vietnam War (1960-1970s) refuted this. In particular, the studies by Page and Shapiro (1988) highlight attitudinal shifts as "reasonable, event driven" (p. 214) reactions reflecting a rational public's shared perception of changing conditions reported by the media and political opinion leaders. Indeed, the authors note in their aggregate findings of more than 6,000 foreign and domestic policy survey questions, "Collective opinion tends to be rather stable; it sometimes changes abruptly, but usually only by small amounts; and it rarely fluctuates" (1988, p. 243).

Furthermore, "on issues about which the public has more well-defined opinions and shows more concern, where the scope of conflict is broad, policy tends to move in harmony with public opinion" (see Schattschneider, 1960). The gender wage-gap debate certainly qualifies under these criteria, as noted in public opinion polls that reflect divisions of opinion along gender and party lines (Swanson, 2014):

On the one hand, the new survey shows Americans tend to think that employment opportunities are not equal for men and women. Forty-six percent of respondents said they think men have more opportunities than women in most workplaces, while 40 percent said women and men have the same chances. Seven percent said women have more opportunities. On the other hand, only 32 percent said new legislation is needed to combat that problem. Thirty-seven percent said current laws are about right. Few dislike the measures already on the books, though. Only 11 percent said they wanted to repeal existing laws.

Closer examination, then, of the interdependence and associations between media, message framing, public opinion processes, and policy shifts is merited if we are to explicate how the gender wage-gap issue becomes politicized and gains or loses traction in the public mind and in political arenas.

I conclude, based on my analysis of these interdependencies across multiple, partisan, print and broadcast media sources, that media framing is surprisingly consistent across all sources, and has little influence on public opinion. Unless a trifecta of specific variables occur, which I refer to as a “perfect storm” and discuss at length in Chapters 5 and 6, the type of media framing invoked is relatively insignificant in driving changes in public opinion. Furthermore, the framing dimension of *Morality and Ethics*, which has successfully been employed as an ideological construct of media framing in other human rights’ movements (gay rights, minimum wage), has not gained traction in media framing of the gender wage gap debate. As a result, I argue, media become overly-reliant on the same repetitive discourse, employing economic, legal, political, and capacity-based frames to analyze the issue, resulting in limited actualized change (i.e. paying women the same as men for equal work).

1.7 Methodology and Research Questions

To optimize the opportunity to do cross-theoretical analysis, I employ several distinct methodological approaches: quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980); public opinion polls (General Social Surveys/Public Opinion research); and media framing analysis to examine how media frames affect public opinion, focusing especially on salience: “The more salient an issue is, the more likely citizens will know something about the issue, hold prior opinions related to it, and be motivated to evaluate new information about

the issue” (Chong and Druckman, 2007). I employed nine distinct media frames using a typology of pro and con positionality associated with the gender wage gap issue that reflected support or dissent for eliminating the wage gap, to track variations in media messaging, content and framing use over the 34-year period.

To assemble the data set for this study, I conducted database searches on LexisNexis Academic and ProQuest for newspaper articles and television news reports referencing “gender wage gap” and associated terms as the unit of analysis between January 1, 1980, and April 30, 2014, across six mainstream media sources of varying ideological affiliation (conservative, liberal, centrist). This resulted in 324 total articles and transcripts for review, clustered by decades (1980–89; 1990–99; 2000–09; 2010–14), which approximated the length of each presidential administration.

I also assembled a list of what Boydstun’s 2013 work refers to as “significant milestones,” pivotal events that invoke a “media storm—a sudden surge in news coverage of an item, producing high attention for a sustained period” (2013). Most scholars agree a period of two weeks—one preceding and one following the media item—is sufficient for news coverage analysis. A total of seventeen significant milestones, ranging from laws to executive orders to landmark court cases, were compiled between 1980 and April 2014. Media frames in the 324 news articles and transcripts were then more closely examined around the time of significant milestones to ascertain changes in media messaging (content tone, emphasis).

Finally, I extracted Roper Public Opinion polls and General Social Survey public opinion polls using the terms “equal pay” and associated terms from 1980 to 2014, first examining patterns over time by decade (changes in public opinion regarding gender wage-gap salaries),

and second correlating poll results/shifts in public opinion with different or changing messages in media milestones. I looked closely at what Page and Shapiro discovered when examining salience via the proportion of poll respondents answering “don’t know” or “no opinion” on survey questions: “When the proportion of don’t knows is relatively low – that is, when more people are willing to offer a preference—it is a sign of more public interest and attention and perhaps also stronger, more intensely held opinions” (1983, p. 181).

My five research questions, divided into three disparate but interrelated foci, are as follows:

- *RQ1: How has print media framed the U.S. gender wage gap debate from 1980 to 2014?*
- *RQ2: How has broadcast news media framed the U.S. gender wage gap debate from 1980 to 2014?*
- *RQ3: How do these frames vary based upon partisan affiliation and type (print or broadcast news) of each source?*
- *RQ4: How do these frames vary around significant milestone points?*
- *RQ5: In what ways does news media framing of the U.S. gender wage-gap issues correlate with variations in public opinion (attitudes) and policy formation (behavior)?*

The first two questions (RQ1 and RQ2) and corollaries target media framing of the gender wage by comparing/contrasting media sources (print and broadcast), and how these messages vary over time. The third question (RQ3) assesses if the media bias and partisanship of the source affects the message (Groseclose and Milyo, 2005). The fourth research question

(RQ4) considers if media messages appropriately reflect “significant milestones.” Finally, RQ5 looks at correlations between media frames, public opinion polls (attitudes), and policy formation (behavior) as examined through significant milestones.

1.8 Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of key concepts and research in the areas of media framing and public opinion to establish a foundation for this specific case study. In addition, I discuss the gender wage gap movement from 1980-2014, in relation to Benford and Snow’s (2000) discourse on framing processes and social movements. Chapter 3 gives a more substantive grounding for the methodological approach. Chapter 4 discusses pivotal findings based on media outlets, partisanship or slant, and media framing around significant milestones. Chapter 5 focuses on media framing in relation to public opinion polls, specifically responding to Research Question 5 (RQ5) as to whether what the media is saying about the gender wage gap is influencing public opinion. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a more detailed analysis and some initial recommendations on the path forward.

1.9 Summary of Findings

It is patently clear the gender wage-gap debate does not have a simple resolution. Nor is media the sole “problem.” By better understanding media’s role in the discourse, we gain clearer insights into the “what” they say determining the power of the people to influence political outcomes and policy formation. There are three key findings related to media framing, significant milestones, and changes in public opinion.

1. Media sources use astoundingly similar frames, and vary little despite partisan affiliation

Their consistent use of four dominant frames—*Economic*, *Legislative and Constitutionality*, *Political Factors*, and *Capacity and Resources*—is indicative of institutional mandates, systemic proclivity towards proxy news sources, and journalist and editorial decisions that replicate media frames across sources. The only effective frame for influencing public opinion, I argue, highlights the *moral and ethical* dimensions of the gender wage gap issue. However, this frame—*Morality and Ethics*—is used with some regularity by only one media source examined (NBC) and sparingly by the others. This reinforces the Gender wage gap issue as an economic, legal, and political one, but does not tackle the ideological root cause of this issue: the persistent ideological perception by society that women are not equal as human beings to men. Thus, the morality-based and ethical considerations of “equality” are subsumed by the more dominant (and more easily-palatable) frames centered around economic factors, adjudication, and political reform which serve as a smoke-screen to hide the true nature of bias embedded within media discourse.

2. The media support eliminating the gender wage gap. They use two to three times more “pro”-sided frames than “con”-sided ones, regardless of source type (print vs. broadcast) or partisanship.

The one exception is conservative broadcast network Fox, which employs “con” than “pro” arguments around the Capacity and Resources frame, with heavy emphasis on

women electing not to be employed or opting out of the workforce, thereby removing the moral component from the discourse and centering it squarely within a supply-side economic argument grounded in choice.

- 3. Significant milestones are not all that significant unless there is a “perfect storm”** that also includes legislative discourse at the Congressional level, proposed or pending executive action, and an increase in media coverage and heightened public awareness surrounding these events. This only occurs in five of seventeen purported significant milestones, and 80 percent of these instances manifest from 2009 – 2014. Shifts in public opinion do not seem to correlate with perfect storms, however, without the influence of a moral ideological shift which drives additional media coverage towards a demand-side versus a supply-side rhetoric. These and additional relevant findings are explicated in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Media Framing and Agenda-Setting

Framing theory has a long and contested pedigree in the social sciences. Goffman's seminal work in 1974, in which he reformulated William James's question "What things are real?" to "What is it that's going on here?" spawned a wealth of theoretical interpretations that attempted to deconstruct the cognitive processes in which audiences attempted to synthesize and interpret their social realities. Framing, according to Goffman (1974), was innate, an unconscious adoption of cognitive structures that guide individual perception and representations of social reality. Frames structure which parts of reality become more noticeable than others—that is, which elements become semiotic, or symbolically representative of meaning-making according to the Barthean tradition (1968)—but individuals are not necessarily aware of their activation at any given time. For example, an individual dressed in professional attire walking by an office building may evoke a frame reference of "business person," given that the images of business garb and office/corporate building have been previously linked in an audience's mental map to an employee engaged in professional pursuits in an environment where professional dress is a common code. That same individual dressed in athletic gear and entering the same office building would invoke a different map (perhaps one disconnected in some ways from the original reality: A person entering a corporate environment is expected to wear professional rather than athletic attire—our mental maps tell us so).

The difficulty in objectively and empirically measuring frames (Maher, 2001) may have contributed to the theoretical shift away from this "looseness" and toward frame

conceptualization as more deliberate, active, and manufactured. Much of framing roots lie in psychological, sociological, and economic traditions (Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Kahneman and Tversky, 1979, 1984) in which the focus resides on evaluation and the decision-making process individuals employ when presented with identical decision-making scenarios (Scheufele and Tewksbery, 2007). The vagueness of framing as a construct, and what Van Gorp (2007) calls “the absence of an unequivocal conceptualization” surrounding characteristics of frames and framing analysis, drove some theorists to develop a more restricted definition in relation to the news production and interpretation process.

Media framing theory, likewise, treats framing as a cognitively intentional and conscious process. It begins with a very basic premise: the idea that the media—as information gatherers, processors, and arbitrators—determine, through a strategic process of action, what aspects of a certain event or issue will be made more or less obvious to news audiences. The audience is asked to engage in a type of interpersonal relationship with the media as an agentic institution employing multiple agents—journalists, editors, publishers, news outlets, advertising sponsors—in pursuit of “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2004). The theory behind media framing suggests a correlation between how something is presented to the audience, as the “frame,” and how individuals choose to process that information. Van Gorp notes:

Framing refers, on the one hand, to the typical manner in which journalists shape news content within a familiar frame of reference and according to some latent structure of meaning and, on the other hand, to the audience who adopts these frames and sees the world in a similar way as the journalists do. (2007, p. 61; McQuail, 2005; Tuchman, 1978)

This process supports the interests of elites—whether they be journalists, political individuals, interest groups, media outlets, economic institutions, or others with dominant ideological perspectives—who use the media as an agentic identity to express ideological opinions and control (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2009). The media’s use of selective frames can affect how audiences think about a given issue (Kim, Carvelho, & Davis, 2010). In a study by Kim et al. examining the possible influence of political orientation of newspaper publishers regarding the framing of poverty, conservative papers presented the issue as one of individual agency, whereas liberal media sources made more frequent references to societal causes and interventions. The media’s presentation of the issue, or what Entman (1993) refers to as “problem definition,” directly influences audiences’ news consumption processes and issue attribution (Kim, 2010). Indeed, research from the Pew Center for the People & The Press indicate clear correlations between increased media coverage and public opinion trends. When examining linkages between press coverage dedicated to the top stories of 2010, including the Gulf Oil Spill (August 12–15) and Haitian earthquake (February 5–8), “in most cases, the public and news media’s priorities were in sync. At their peak intensity, each of these stories filled over 40% of the week’s newshole . . . and was the most closely followed story that week by more than 40% - and in several instances about 60% - of the public” (Pew Research Center News Interest Index, 2010).

Conversely, an argument could be made that news indexing results and public interest may radically diverge. From August to December of 2008, 25% of Americans, which represented a relatively “moderate” number, paid close attention to the economic landscape. “Yet it still outstripped media interest,” the Pew Center notes. Despite the public’s interest in the

economy during this period of recession following the collapse of the mortgage and banking industry and subsequent U.S. government bailouts, “In that period, the economy and energy prices combined accounted for [only] 4% of the newshole, making it the fifth largest news story ever” among more than 5,000 economic news stories across 21 newspapers and 2,000+ hours of broadcast news from January 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008 (Pew Center, August 8, 2008). In May of the same year, public attention to the increasing energy prices driving higher gas prices (crude oil reached \$120 a barrel) clocked in at 27%, yet media coverage of the economy equaled only 13% of news coverage, while the presidential campaign generated three times the amount of coverage on the economy. Public attention, however, reflected reverse priorities: 63% focused on the gas prices, 43% on the economy, and a little over a quarter (27%) on the campaign.

These 2008 examples do not diminish the correlational validity between amount of news coverage dedicated to a trending news event and public engagement. They do, however, suggest that while the media does not necessarily manufacture public attention around a given event, they likewise do not entirely reflect that interest. “It existed, in some sense, independent of the coverage” (Pew Center, August 18, 2008). By late 2008,

America’s anxiety about the economy intensified as media coverage increased. In other words, even if the media did not manufacture that public concern, more coverage may have reinforced those worries and confirmed for people that their fears are justified. As an example, in January [of 2008], 26% of Americans considered the economy to be in excellent or good shape, while 28% considered [it] in poor shape. By March, after news coverage more than doubled from the previous quarter, those numbers had changed markedly for the worse. Only 11% now considered the economy to be in excellent or good shape, while the percentage of Americans who considered the economy to be ailing had doubled to 56%.

This is of particular relevance to the discourse around social problems such as the gender wage gap and this study. Highlighting certain aspects of a news story both teaches the public

which stories have greater saliency or media attention and influences public opinion by emphasizing certain issues over others. Thus, media framing is considered an *applicability-based* model: “As an individual reacts to particular media content, such a reaction must at least partially be conditioned by and depend on pre-existing and more long-standing schemes of interpretation” (Scheufele, Shanahan and Kim, 2002).

Framing is thereby distinguished from *agenda-setting*, which is referred to as a memory-based *accessibility-based model* of information processing (Kim, Schuefele & Shanahan, 2002). “Agenda setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g., based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11). Druckman notes that the accessibility model characterizes the individual audience as “rather mindless, as automatically incorporating into the final attitude whatever ideas happen to pop into mind” insofar as what the frames suggest (2001, p. 235). Edson (2013) states

Framing...is different from agenda-setting. From the point of view of message construction, agenda-setting is cumulative. A news article does not provide an agenda, but placed within the context of previous and future similar stories across different media, it might elevate an issue into the media agenda. In contrast, individual messages contain frames. For instance, journalists cannot choose not to frame their news articles (Stromback & Luego, 2010). Thus a media agenda, derived from a cumulation of messages each containing frames, can include multiple and even conflicting frames.

With the framing process, however, Nelson, Oxley and Clawson suggest that audiences are more consciously and deliberately engaged in frame consideration via psychological processes during which they weigh the “relative importance of the considerations suggested by the frame” (2001, p. 237). “People form attitudes based on the considerations that are most salient (i.e. most accessible) when they make decisions” (quoted in Scheufele & Tewksbury,

2007, p. 11). Reese further suggests media agents and audiences question “how much framing is going on” (2001), employing a consciously critical and deliberate approach to interpreting which components of news stories are more or less relevant. The degree to which framing occurs is not a question that would have had relevancy in Goffman’s world of unconscious processing.

The discussion around how much audiences know and the degree to which they participate in frame consideration has shaped the controversial theory of “first-” and “second-level agenda setting,” both of which are controversial theories but merit examination in contrast to media framing. In first-level agenda setting (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; McCombs, 2004), increased media attention (salience) makes news stories more accessible to an audience and contributes to increasing the degree of public concern for these issues (Sheaffer, 2007). This first level of *agenda-setting* tells individuals what to think about, while *framing* shapes the parameters within which they think about those issues. As an example, “shifting the news frame of health care reform from a focus on economic considerations to ethical considerations alters how voters interpret the issue and use it in electoral decisions” (see Shah et al., 1996, 1997 as cited in Jasperson et al., 1998).

First-level agenda-setting by the media, then, creates the audience perception that the issues surrounding health care reform are of import and worth greater exploration. It also explains why certain issues gain greater traction than others: The influence of elite interests make an issue more or less relevant through salience, or frequency and scope of coverage. As an example, McCombs and Shaw’s 1972 study of the 1968 presidential election found that the public attention to issues depended upon which stories the media focused on; those garnering more coverage were deemed more important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 183). Ball and

Rokeach (1987), Gamson (1985, 1992), and Graber (1989), among others, note that increased media attention to “discrete features” of an issue alter public interpretation of the issue and subsequent import they assign to it (Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber, & Fan, 1998). Experimental results by Iyengar (1991) reflect the persuasive influence of frames with regard to political relevance and public opinion formation. Variations in how news stories are covered play a dominant role in shaping voter opinion, legislative changes, and policy mediation.

The Terry Schiavo living will case of 2005 provides an example. After Schiavo had been on life support for 15 years, her heart having mysteriously stopped in 1990, her feeding tube was disconnected based on a Florida Circuit Court judge’s 2005 ruling (Schiavo passed away two weeks later). Schiavo’s husband (the plaintiff) argued that his wife had provided a verbal advanced directive that stipulated she not live on life support if terminally incapacitated; Schiavo’s parents (the defendants) disagreed and employed highly visible political support toward their defense of Terry’s right to life, including then-governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, and U.S. President George W. Bush (Segal, 2002). This story garnered significant media attention in March 2005: 8% of *New York Times*’ first-page news was dedicated to coverage, averaging one story per day. More than 1,100 news stories were generated by 13 major newspapers in March, up from just 62 in February (Boydston, 2013, p. 4). Public information and opinion also shifted: in 1990, according to a Pew Research Center study (2006), 41% of Americans had heard of living wills, and only 12% had them. By November 2005, these numbers had increased to 95% and 29% respectively

Both the frequency and immediacy of the news reports had a direct impact on the tone and tenor of national discourse, changes in public opinion, and right-to-life directives and policy

formation. Agenda-setting played a role in the change: Greater news coverage about Schiavo's plight raised the public consciousness about the subject of living wills, making certain attributes of the subject more salient and relevant to audiences, and thereby contributing to causal action (an increase in the number of individuals with living wills). A variety of elite social agents concomitantly benefitted from the increase in media attention, altering the very landscape of death and radically shifting the history of the 40-year-old end-of-life movement in the United States (Boydston, 2013). Health providers, medical practitioners, and medical education institutions have had to radically alter their communication around death and the dying process, as 7 out of 10 Americans today die from chronic disease and more than 157 million are expected to live with at least one chronic illness. Arising after Obama's election and the passage of the Affordable Care Act, the "death panel" discussions in 2009 and 2010 have roots in the dialogue surrounding end-of-life issues, and they heavily influence public opinion based on the selective frames media uses to communicate to the public about these (R.H. Wood Foundation Report, 2014).

These numbers, while relevant in highlighting how agenda-setting shapes public discourse and shifts in opinion, do not tell the entire story. Agenda-setting, as a theory, has significant limitations. It does not, for example, focus on the nuances—key patterns, themes, selection or placement of words, and rhetoric—within the issue itself (Jasperson et. al., 1998). Likewise, it negates the changing parameters and focus of an issue over time, ignoring why certain aspects become more or less salient than others depending upon the news life cycle. It assumes that "there is a process by which the media influences the audience agenda over time. Across studies, however, the issue of time lag between media agenda-setting and audience

effects ‘is insufficiently theorized and underspecified’” (Kosicki, 1993, p. 107). Furthermore, it does not explain why a frame becomes dominant.

These limitations have prompted scholars (McCombs, 1992, 1994; McCombs and Bell, 1996; Pan and Kosicki, 1993) to develop a *second-level of agenda-setting*, referred to as the “compelling arguments” hypothesis (Jasperson, p. 206; Ghanem, 1997; Kious, 2005; McCombs and Reynolds, 2002), in which specific attributes or characteristics presented to the audience in news narratives become more salient and thus more influential in the audiences’ perspective. These *attributes*, then, ultimately set the media’s agenda by encouraging (biasing) the public’s interest not only toward specific news stories but also toward specific characterizations, highlights, and attributes of the narrative. As Entman notes, it is not simply the sheer quantity of information around a topic that drives its relevance; rather, “it is how media discuss a topic that fosters change in public opinion” (Jasperson et al., 1998). Second-level agenda setting alone is also problematic, however, because it does not consider why a frame becomes dominant. Both agenda-setting and framing use cognitive and psychological processes, but framing “seems to include a broader range of cognitive processes – than does second-level agenda setting (the salience of attributes of an object),” with emphases on elements of attribution, including moral evaluation, causal reasoning, appeals to principle, and recommendations for treatment of problems (Weaver, 2007). Weaver has likewise suggested not only that framing has become a more popular and broadly inclusive term within the lexicon of communication and policy research (p. 146) but also that additional research is needed to more clearly define frames and framing theory.

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2000) say that framing is not just about issue accessibility; rather, “it is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences.” Through the process of framing, therefore, audiences attempt to associate the news issue with how it impacts them directly, again emphasizing the *applicability* aspect (“What does this news story have to do with me? How does it impact my individual agency and/or society in broader terms?”). Thus, framing provides an additional focus on the role of elites and other groups responsible for and invested in the news production process itself—including journalists and media production outlets—an aspect that is not typically researched in agenda-setting in the context of political issues such as social movements (living will, Affordable Care Act, gay rights, abortion rights vs. right to life, minimum wage increase, the gender wage gap). For these reasons, framing theory is a more directly relevant approach to this study.

2.1.1 Frame Types

The media frames issues in an episodic way or a thematic way (Iyengar, 1994). An episodic frame focuses on a single, specific event or issue at hand, whereas a thematic frame places issues and events on a larger, more analytical level (Iyengar, 1994). Thematic frames are much less common and focus on broader structural (environmental, cultural, institutional) causes, and yet they would seem to offer a more comprehensive way to provide contextualized information to an audience. Iyengar’s repeated experiments in which participants were shown examples of news stories framed using either approach revealed that

subjects shown episodic reports were less likely to consider society responsible for the event, and subjects shown thematic reports were less likely to consider individuals responsible. In one of the clearest demonstrations of this phenomenon, subjects who viewed stories about poverty that featured homeless or unemployed people (episodic

framing) were much more likely to blame poverty on individual failings, such as laziness or low education, than were those who instead watched stories about high national rates of unemployment or poverty (thematic framing). Viewers of the thematic frames were more likely to attribute the causes and solutions to governmental policies and other factors beyond the victim's control (London, 1993).

This has direct relevance for social movements that seek to gain traction and political influence in the public sphere. Depending upon how the gender wage gap debate is framed—as episodic or thematic—we can expect to find a difference not only in attribution (who is responsible and accountable for the wage disparity) but also in outcome (who is responsible for addressing the issue).

2.2 Framing and Public Opinion

For purposes of my research, I am adopting framing theory as applied by Chong and Druckman (2007), whose work focuses more heavily on framing's influence on public opinion and policy formation. "Framing constitutes one of the most important concepts in the study of public opinion," notes Druckman (2001), with public opinion depending upon the frames elites select and make more relevant. Chong (1993) argues that "the essence of public opinion formation in general lies in the distillation or sorting out of frames of reference." When imbued with specific attributes that are more emphasized, frames encourage audiences to place greater weight and import on those considerations in constructing their opinions around a specific issue. These *framing effects* "occur when (often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion" (2007, p. 104), citing an example of an experiment conducted by Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson (1997) about whether respondents would support a planned Klu Klux Klan political rally. If primed with a free-speech frame, 85% of respondents were supportive of the rally; this number dropped to 45% when the question to

respondents was framed with the opening, “Given the risk of violence.” A relatively innocuous change in the linguistic presentation had significant influence on the reception to the news story. I hypothesize similar instances will be revealed in my examination comparing and contrasting print and broadcast transcript media messaging around the gender wage-gap debate.

Chong and Druckman’s framing analysis suggests that policy issues are therefore often influenced by these minor changes in phrasing, which allow audiences to “develop and particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue” (p. 104). The authors distinguish two types of frames: *equivalency* frames, which present news stories in terms of gain and loss, and *emphasis* frames, which provide more qualitative story characterizations and attributes that allow individuals to incorporate broader pieces of information over time, thereby altering their perception and interpretation of a news issue.

Equivalency frames, by contrast, include measures of individual attitudes related to competing polemic perspectives (pro/con, right/wrong, agree/disagree). A public’s attitude around a given social issue can be categorized as positive, negative, or neutral as measured through a “conventional expectancy value model of an individual’s *attitude*” (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Nelson et al. 1997b), which indicates a multiplicative function of importance and salience of the set of attitude attributes. Attitudinal measures, though easily accessible through a sample poll or survey from an organization such as Roper, Gallup, or Pew Center, may be too reductive to provide more in-depth analysis. For example, a poll question about the gender wage gap might ask respondents to answer “yes,” “no,” or “it depends” to the question: “Do you believe that women should be paid equally to men?” The question obfuscates the context within which it is worded: Is the reference to the same position held by both men and women? Does the

equal pay consider time in workforce, education, professional experience, or other factors? The lack of clarity in poll wording may make the poll result overly simplistic as an indicator of attitudinal measures.

For purposes of this study, I am not focused on equivalency frames, but rather on *emphasis* frames. Emphasis frames engage the audience's mental maps about the attributes of issues (e.g., humanistic, moral, and economic equality). A subtle shift in the poll question might reword it with a different cue and therefore elicit an entirely different response: "Given that the United States is a democratic society in which all human beings are considered equal, do you believe that women should be paid equally to men?" Yet another rewording—"Given that the United States is a democratic society in which employers have rights to control compensation decisions, do you believe that women should be paid equally to men?"—would again alter an individual's response and what Chong and Druckman refer to as "frame in thought" (p. 105). For example, if an individual believes that human rights and equality, and/or a moralistic argument, dominate all other considerations in deciding whether women and men should receive equal pay for equal work, their "frame in thought" (Chong and Druckman, p. 105) is 'gender equality'. If, conversely, the individual considers free-market operations in a capitalistic society, then his or her frame in thought might more broadly consist of not only equality but employers' rights and free markets as well.

Frames in thought can significantly influence one's overall opinion; media invoke specific frames in thought by highlighting certain attributes, characterizations, and elements of a narrative around a policy issue and making these more salient to their audiences. As Gamson and Modigliani (1987) argue, "frames generally imply a policy direction or implicit answer as to

what should be done about an issue” (p. 140). As discussed earlier, media frames invoke certain attitudes from individuals around a given topic, and these may vary over time. They invoke certain attitudes from individuals around a given topic, which may vary over time (explaining the fluctuation in public opinion polls over a longer trajectory around specific issues), and the attributes individuals consider to be most important related to policy formation.

An example of how media framing has a direct effect upon attitudinal shifts in public opinion can be seen in Dardis et al.’s (2008) analysis of the shifting frames and public opinion surrounding the capital punishment/death penalty issue in the United States. A 2008 content analysis and exploratory experiment reveals two key findings: First, “uncontestable evidence” showed discourse around the death penalty has shifted toward an “innocence/system-is-broken” frame, suggesting the possibility of medical/technical errors in the system; and second, the new frame appealed to both supporters and detractors of capital punishment (Dardis et al., 2008). This does not indicate “reframing” of the debate—both supporters and opponents of the death penalty resonate with the existing “innocence” frame of reference, given the more recent trends toward exoneration, growing critiques of taxed resources in the penal system, and the evolution of DNA/forensic evidence (Dardis et al., 2008, p. 126). Rather, the “innocence” frame has evolved into what Dardis and colleagues refer to as a “conflict-displacing” frame:

These frames work by structuring the alternatives in a new way, thereby eliciting a cognitive response that moves an individual away from her or his established way of thinking of the issue . . . the new frame simply shifted attention to a different set of questions or to a different way of understanding the issue (p. 119).

Conflict-displacing frames permit opponents and supporters of the death penalty to find a common platform upon which to question previously sacrosanct opinions, as neither side has a valid logical counterargument to placing an innocent person to death. Dardis et al. go on to

investigate whether the presence of conflict-displacing frames have impact upon public opinion and policy formation. Interestingly, while conflict-reinforcing frames emphasize polemic dissonance, conflict-displacement frames “circumvent this obstacle by proposing a new dimension of evaluation that does not require individuals to reevaluate their previous opinions on the issue; rather, these frames bring up new dimensions of debate to which individuals may have no reason to object” (p. 127). This is, in part, because of attitudinal or mental mapping: If fewer counter-arguments to this new dimension come to mind, an individual is more likely to accept new dimensions related to an issue and potentially even adopt different opinions about the issue. Furthermore, conflict-displacing frames do not necessitate that an individual obliterate their initial opinions completely to accept secondary or tertiary dimensions of the argument. Instead, they enhance the cognitive decision-making processes by supplying more robust and varied perspectives from which to form an opinion.

A second contemporary example of “conflict-reinforcing” versus “conflict-displacing” frames surrounds the issue of immigration to the United States. The frames of protectionism and resource allocation, which defined immigration arguments in the United States during major immigration waves in the 1870s and the 1920s, have been replicated in contemporary arguments over the United States–Mexico border but have not been employed in the examination of South Asian information technology workers who have moved to the United States on work visa status. In the case of the former, conflict-reinforcing frames employ counterpositional attributes pitting those arguing for more “restrictive” policy reform against those lobbying for more “welcoming” policies (Hayes, 2008). Gallup and Pew Center polls reflect a growing preponderance of immigration/route-to-citizenship supporters. This is illustrated in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1.**POLLS MEASURING PUBLIC SUPPORT OF UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS**

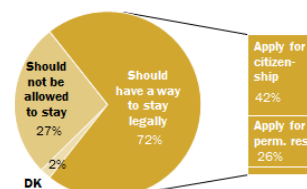
Which comes closest to your view about what government policy should be toward illegal immigrants currently residing in the United States? Should the government -- [ROTATED: deport all illegal immigrants back to their home country, allow illegal immigrants to remain in the United States in order to work, but only for a limited amount of time, or allow illegal immigrants to remain in the United States and become U.S. citizens, but only if they meet certain requirements over a period of time]?

	Deport all	Remain in U.S. in order to work	Remain in U.S. to become citizen	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2015 Jun 15-Jul 10	19	14	65	2
2011 Jun 9-12	21	13	64	2
2007 Mar 2-4	24	15	59	2
2006 Jun 8-25	16	17	66	1
2006 May 5-7	21	15	61	3
2006 Apr 7-9	18	17	63	2

GALLUP®

Most Support Path to Legal Status for Undocumented Immigrants in U.S.

Undocumented immigrants in the U.S. who meet certain requirements ...



% saying there should be a way for undocumented immigrants to stay in country, if requirements are met



Survey conducted May 12-18, 2015.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

In the case of the latter, however, these individuals are perceived as a necessary part of a functioning economy in which U.S-born citizens are deficient in the skills needed to perform these occupations. Therefore, alternate frames are evoked in lieu of protectionism and overburdened resources, namely economic necessity and skill gaps. This is not a reframing of the immigration issue; rather it is a shifting of questions within the immigration debate: When is

it appropriate for an individual to be “welcomed” as an immigrant? What rights afforded to citizens should be extended to an immigrant population based on legal status?

2.3 Media Framing of Social Movements

There has been prolonged media coverage on the gender wage gap. As my research indicates, the earliest references to the “gender wage gap” in the media sources I examined occurred in 1980 when the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, and USA Today began discussing it as a news story. Media framing makes social movements relevant, salient, impactful, and possibly successful in their objectives (Entman 1993; Scheufele 1999; Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1988). Through framing, political agents are classified and constructed as either “rational and thus to be taken seriously, while others are framed as extremist and therefore unacceptable” (Boykoff and Laschever, 2011). These distinctions contribute to public perception by allowing activists to disseminate their ideas and gain potential recruits to their cause.

Social movements rely heavily upon media coverage for validation; “for social movements that can get their messages into mainstream media, there is the potential for great rewards. They can expand the debate around an issue, energize a movement by mobilizing a population, and increase movement and organizational legitimacy in the political sphere” (Rohlinger, 2002; Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993).

Media filters can also serve to coopt and reinforce negative perceptions of the legitimacy of movements (Chomsky and Hermann, 1988). Ultimately, by directing our attitudinal proclivities, media influences collective behavior through public opinion shifts. This is particularly relevant when exploring the efficacy of the gender wage gap debate as a type of

‘social movement’ to ascertain how media frames contribute or detract from their ultimate objectives. Social movement theory (Benford and Snow, 2000) allows for a deeper exploration of framing processes as a pivotal force in interpreting the nature and evolution of social movements, examine the impact of framing attributes on the gender wage gap movement’s motility. Benford and Snow argue for the importance of movements to formulate collective action frames for garnering the support of the wider public. Effective frames identify and trace the origins of a problem (diagnosis), offer a solution (prognosis), and stir participants to action (motivation). Their model maps well to Entman’s (1993) four-step process of framing analysis (problem definition, diagnosis, solution, moral judgment) insofar as explicating why the gender wage gap ‘movement’ may not have gained as much traction as other social movements (gay rights, minimum wage, Tea Party movement, for example): media’s lack of framing around the gender wage gap as a moral and ethical issue versus simply an economic, legislative, or political one make it a “non-issue”.

2.4 Media Framing of Women’s Issues

The media are “deeply implicated in the process of defining and framing gender” (Aalbert and Jensen, 2007). Despite the media’s individual and interactional level of engagement, while feminists’ concerns—and, by expansion, women’s concerns—are well-researched, scholarly examination on how the media *frames* women’s issues is comparatively scarce. The predominant focus of media framing has centered on the social processes related to the feminist movement itself rather than specific issues such as equal pay or reproductive rights. Likewise, little work has longitudinally explored the relationship between the life cycle of a

social movement/public opinion issue and media's contribution to the movement's effectiveness or failure, with few exceptions.

One is Terkildsen and Schell's 1997 work, a frame analysis of voters' political attitudes and competing frames in weekly newsmagazines from 1965 to 1993. Of the five frames the researchers discovered on sex roles—feminism, political rights, economic rights, and anti-feminism—the latter two were negatively correlated with attitudes toward gender equality and women's rights. In another study, Rohlinger (2002) examined how the oppositional social movement organizations, Concerned Women for America (CWA) and the National Organization for Women (NOW) framed the abortion debate, finding limited coverage in mainstream media of issues deemed important to women, as well as difference in perception by each organization in terms of how media could be leveraged for political change. Costain and colleagues (1997) found frames pertaining to the division of labor, family, the Equal Rights Act (ERA), and the second-wave feminist movement in their study of *The New York Times* from 1955 to 1995 (Lind and Salo, 2002). The authors noted that few scholars had undertaken research that applied framing concepts to analyses of mediated representations of the movement, or created unrelated, non-cohesive frames (p. 214).

Media framing of what are traditionally considered “women's issues”—the feminist movement, rights in the workforce, the gender pay gap, reproductive rights, domestic violence, sexual slavery, body image and body dysmorphia—tends to rely upon and be structured through what Cirkse and Cuklanz (1992) argue are dichotomies and “oppositional dualisms—either/or, you/me, good/bad, high/low” to reinforce and reproduce linguistic codes that signal to news audiences normative (acceptable) and deviant (unacceptable) behaviors.

When related to controversial policy issues embedded in social movements, journalistic frame selection becomes even more influential. Those news stories that adopt “conflict flames” (Lee et. al., 2008)—which may include a clash of values, dominant versus oppressed or victimized individuals or groups, or competing actors vying for limited resources—may delimit both actors and causes into “their worst stereotypes, people possessing no motive but political advantage” (quoted in Lee et. al., 2008, p. 701). Social movements, including feminist or women’s movements, are frequently portrayed in deprecatory terms that frame certain ideas, ideologies, and actors as unstable and extremist, and therefore unacceptable (Gitlin, 1980; Boykoff and Laschever, p. 347).

Women’s issues are particularly susceptible to these types of dualisms and demonizations. Feminists or supporters of women’s issues have been depicted as intellectually lacking, “hairy,” or sexually repressed “Amazons,” “angries,” or “radicals” (Creedon 1993b). Lind and Salo’s 2002 study notes, “Feminists are nearly 10 times as likely to be associated with words such as jerks, bitches, radical, or bad as are women” (p. 224). In a study on mainstream media framing of the “F” word, Beck (2001) ties the evolution of feminism to a “national ‘dirty word’” (p. 139)—and feminists to a radicalized, ostracized, and overly politicized “fringe element” (p. 139)—as backlash to the women’s movement’s advances toward gender equality. When polled, American women have also indicated a steadfast dislike for the term “feminist,” with only 33% willing to claim the moniker in a *Time*/CNN survey conducted in 1989 (Wallis, 1989) and 38% in a 2013 YouGov poll reported in *The Washington Times*. The demonstrable vitriol around the term “feminist” has also contributed to the marginalization of women’s issues in the mainstream press.

Likewise, women's issues are either under-covered/significantly less represented in media stories or presented in a way that undervalues the importance and relevance of gender equality. For example, there are limited studies that explore the media's portrayal of female versus male political candidates, and those that do are limited to general election campaigns (Bystrom et al., 2012). Returning to Terkildsen and Schnell's 1997 test of voters' political attitudes comparing feminist, sexual, political, economic, and anti-feminist frames, the authors noted:

The latter two had a strong, negative impact on . . . attitudes towards gender equality, support for women's rights, support for non-traditional gender roles and the frequency with which subjects mentioned "women's issues" as among the most important issues facing the U.S. In addition, the feminism frame also exerted negative effects. (p. 879)

Research by Fowler and Lawless (2009) also shows that media coverage, though not consistently gender-biased in quantity, is far more likely to discuss female candidates' physical characteristics, appearance, emotion, and marital and motherhood status. Their study concludes that, after controlling for variables of press coverage and context, women are depicted as more passive and less effective than their male counterparts (Ryan, 2013).

In summary, research on media framing to date indicates a negative media bias on issues related to gender that may correlate with negative public opinion surrounding the importance and relevance of these issues. A closer evaluation of framing and agenda-setting related to women's issues is an imperative.

2.5 Media Framing of the Gender Wage Gap Debate

A March 2014 Gallup Poll indicated 59% of Americans surveyed ranked the state of the economy and individual financial status as their top national concern (Gallup Poll, 2014). An earlier survey, from the 2010 White House Report on Jobs and Economic Security for America's

Women, and a national poll found “that people rank equal pay for men and women as one of the most important issues for them personally and for improving the economy as a whole” (Congress Blog, 2010). Economic disparity weighs heavily on the minds of the American public. Recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics place the median usual weekly income for women at 81 cents for every dollar earned by men (2012), with declining percentages based on race and ethnicity: 78 cents for African-American women, and 68 cents for Latina women. Other studies (Blau, 2012; American Association of University Women, 2014; Bielby, 1986; 2011) place the range between 77 cents to 82 cents per dollar earned. President Barack Obama echoed this data at an April 8, 2014, press conference on equal pay for equal work: “Today, the average full-time working woman earns just 77 cents for every dollar a man earns . . . in 2014, that’s an embarrassment. It is wrong.”

The gender wage gap—also referred to as the “gender pay gap,” “gender earnings gap,” “male-female income disparity,” and “gendered income distribution”—commonly refers to the “difference in average hourly earnings of male and female employees after controlling for human capital factors such as education” (Khoreva, 2011; Blau, 2006). According to 2010 census data, women comprise 43.2 million workers (men 56.1 million), the former earning \$36,300 annually compared to \$47,100 for the latter. The percentage of female managers increased from 12% in 1940 to 38% in 2009. Similarly, female-owned businesses grew to 35.9% in 2009; however, 42–62% of this growth occurred in the service sector (education, health care, retail), which generally correlates with lower revenues and profitability.

Inequalities in wages are compounded over the earnings life cycle into a “wealth gap,” defined as assets minus debt (Chang, 2013): Women aged 18–64 have 36% the wealth of men in

the same age group. In the United States, Chang writes, “wealth is much less equally distributed than income” (p. 6). In the period from 1983 to 2004, the top 1% of the U.S. population saw a 78% increase in average wealth, in comparison to the bottom 40%, who saw a wealth decline equal to 59% (Chang, 2013). The concentration of wealth lies in a few hands: “As of 2010,” Domhoff (2013) notes, “the top one percent of households (the upper class) owned 35.4% of all privately held wealth, and the next 19% (the managerial, professional, and small business stratum) had 53.5 percent.” Twenty percent of household owned 89% of wealth; the remaining 11% was left for the bottom 80% (wage and salary workers).

The 2009 Forbes List of the richest Americans indicated that 8 of the top 10 were men, and only 8 women appeared in a list of the top 100 (Chang, p. 11). The continuous channeling of women into a less rich, “wealth poor” status increases the likelihood of women living in poverty for longer periods of time than men, and ultimately reduces access to societal, economic, and political power:

First, wealth can be seen as a “resource” that is very useful in exercising power. That's obvious when we think of donations to political parties, payments to lobbyists, and grants to experts who are employed to think up new policies beneficial to the wealthy. Wealth also can be useful in shaping the general social environment to the benefit of the wealthy, whether through hiring public relations firms or donating money for universities, museums, music halls, and art galleries. Second, certain kinds of wealth, such as stock ownership, can be used to control corporations, which of course have a major impact on how the society functions.

The income distribution also can be used as a power indicator. [Although] it is not as concentrated as the wealth distribution . . . the top 1 percent of income earners did receive 17.2 percent of all income in 2009. That's up from 12.8 percent for the top 1 percent in 1982, which is quite a jump, and it parallels what is happening with the wealth distribution. This is further support for the inference that the power of the corporate community and the upper class have been increasing in recent decades (Domhoff, 2013, p. 4, para. 14).

An American Association of University Women (AAUW) study of 2013 indicated that women with educational credentials equal to those of their male counterparts (same major, GPA range) who take a full-time position in the same occupation will earn an average of 7% less one year post-graduation. This gap widens significantly over the career horizon, so that over the course of a 35-year career, a woman will earn an average \$1.2 million less than her male peers.

Given the scope and relevancy of this issue related to how women are framed by media as labor producers and economic providers, the amount of scholarly research dedicated to this topic is sparse. Bronstein's (2005) study of third-wave feminism drew on textual and content analysis over a 10-year news cycle to identify and compare framing patterns between the second- and third-wave feminist movements. Her examination included coding for five frames (demonization, personalization, trivialization, goals, and rights) across 94 news stories from 1992 to 2004 in *The New York Times* and three weekly newsmagazines. Demonization frames were particularly strong for second-wave descriptions (25%), while "feminism lite" was the most frequent representation associated with the third-wave (34%). Gender wage gaps were contextualized in the goals and rights' frames; however, journalists framed second-wave feminists as seekers of "absolute equal rights and opportunities for women, a constitutional amendment to make it so, a chance to be compensated equally and to share the task of raising a family," whereas third-wave feminists sought a word of choice, in which "they can choose to be anything—the President or a mother, or both" (p. 792).

In another study, Iversen and Rosenbluth used a supply-side economic argument to explain the gendered division of labor (2006). As Aisenbrey and Bruckner (2014) explain,

supply-side theories (Reskin, 1993) are based upon rational choice or what is often referred to as human-capital considerations; or in some instances, socialization. In the case of the former, women make intentional decisions to opt-out, limit or engage in the labor force at will; in the latter, there may be biological differences between genders that dictate or shape choice (i.e. childbearing, or the physical limitations of women in performing certain physical jobs). No structural, institutional, or systemic barriers prevent them from behaving as ‘rational’ agents in the economic job market. Conversely, demand-side theories (Bielby, 1986; 2011) which are based on employer decisions and behavior in the job market, suggest the presence of institutional and structural biases coded in to the employment system that create and reproduce systemic gender discrimination in based on persistent gender assumptions of differences between men and women in terms of performance.

Expanding previous work by labor economist Becker (1964; 1971; 1981; 1985), Iversen and Rosenbluth considered the “bargaining processes” employed by couples to negotiate divisions of labor, suggesting that childcare has become a contested part of public policy debate and reform, and influences the bargaining power women have within the family to stay at home or be required to work outside the home. As in Bronstein’s research, while we get a better sense of macro-level movements, neither relates specifically to media framing of the gender wage-gap issue.

In terms of research related specifically to media framing analysis, while Gazso’s (2004) framing analysis of newspaper discourse from 2000 to 2002 on women’s inequality in the workplace contributes to the literature on gender as a social structure (Risman, 2004), it has more limited application in the context of the gender wage gap. Firstly, it analyzes two Canadian

versus U.S. newspapers, which function under different business models (readership versus circulation practices and metrics; different advertising/sponsorship revenue models) and competitive landscapes (Canadian newspapers face greater competition in larger cities as more papers exist). These differences may account for variations in editorial content, with Canadian papers focusing more heavily on unique storylines related to a broader range of social issues than their American counterparts (Macleod, 2011). Second, Gazso's findings focus more on factors contributing to individual career selection choices, division of labor, and occupational segregation as variables supporting a demand-side argument for wage differentials. In sum, while Gazso's work is relevant, it provides a non-American cultural contextualization, limited corpus, and minimal attribution to factors outside the demand-side argument.

Now that I have provided a theoretical underpinning on media framing as compared to agenda-setting, framing in relation to public opinion, and a synopsis of how traditional women's issues are framed in media discourse, I turn my attention to a historical overview of the gender wage gap as an economic, social, and political movement from 1980 to 2014. Explicating the changes in the labor market during this period, under the parameters of different political administrations (four U.S. presidents, Democratic and Republican Congresses), legislative activity (laws and enactments), and legal events (class-action lawsuits) contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors driving the gender wage gap.

2.6 Gender Wage Gap Movement 1980-2014

The labor movement in the United States has undergone a sea change since the 1950s in terms of participants, occupational growth and diversity of industries, and demographics (Fullerton, 1999). In parallel fashion, the gender wage-gap movement ties its ebbs and flows to

key milestones in American history: wars, civil rights and women's rights movements, and political partisanship.

The most significant growth in the U.S. labor market occurred from 1970 to 1990 (Fullerton, 1999, p. 3). This was due in large part to overall population growth (76%), an increase in the baby boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964; 10%), and overall an even more definitively to a growth of women entering the aggregate labor force, to the tune of a 14.2% increase (Fullerton, 1999, p. 3; Toossi, 2002). This period was part of an era from the 1950s onward during which significant changes to women's role in the working world came into play. In 1950, women made up approximately 37% of the labor force. By 1980, this number had grown to 51.5%, with labor participation rates of cohorts ages 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 at 65.5% (Fullerton, 1999, p. 4; Bureau of Labor Statistics 1999).

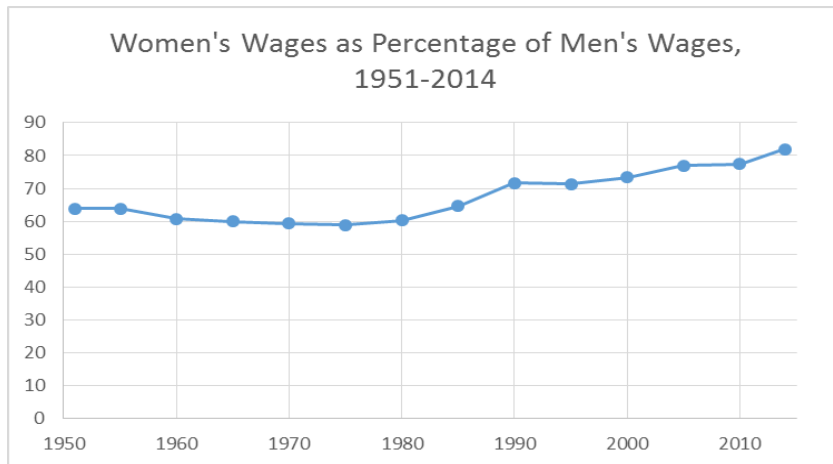
A confluence of legislative, economic, and social factors contributed to this phenomenon. In 1963, the Equal Pay Act was signed in to law by President John F. Kennedy, making it illegal for employers to pay men and women unequal wages for equal work. The Act followed the recommendations of The Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, an advisory committee Kennedy established in late 1961 to investigate and propose solutions to inequality in education, in the workplace, and under the law. The 26-member committee, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt until her passing in 1962, included legislators, activists, and philanthropists engaged in women's rights issues. Their final report issued in 1963, *American Woman* (colloquially referred to as the *Peterson Report* after the committee's second chair, Esther Peterson), documented widespread employment discrimination practices and recommended affordable child care, equitable hiring and promotion practices, and paid maternity leave (National Women's Law

Center Working Paper, 2008). Not surprisingly, the commission's proposal and the Equal Pay Act faced extensive criticism from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, labor unions, and the National Retail Merchants Association, who based their arguments on economic disincentives or added costs associated with female employees. These included higher rates of absenteeism, state laws mandating rest periods and longer meal times, and separate toilet facilities. Likewise, as the issue was being addressed by 21 states at the time, the need for legislative intervention at the federal level was moot (interestingly, we will see a similar argument advanced in my analysis by all three print media sources—*USA Today*, *New York Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*—as well as television news outlet CNN; the more conservative the source, the more heavily utilized this legality frame). To appease the business community, the Equal Pay Act became an amendment to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, which addressed basic wage and overtime issues and outlined penalties. “During the law's first ten years, 171,000 employees received back pay totaling about 84 million dollars” (Freeman, 1975).

The watershed year 1964 saw the enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, prohibiting anti-discrimination actions by employers on the basis of sex, race, color religion, and national origin, in effect expanding wage protection issued under the FLSA and Equal Pay Act by adding in “sex” as a protected status. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was also established as a clearinghouse to investigate and allocate penalties. By 1968, the EEOC had ruled that sex-segregated help-wanted ads in newspapers were illegal, a ruling later upheld in 1973 by the Supreme Court, allowing women to apply for higher-paying positions that had previously been open only to men. This affected the overall composition of the labor force: For men, decreases in labor participation rates were most evident in the 1950–1970 period

as Social Security (the Social Security Act was established in 1960) and the addition of pensions and disability awards became more prevalent (Fullerton, 1999, p. 5). During this same period, women aged 16 to 24 and 25 to 34 experienced the greatest gains (8.5 and 9.0 percentage points respectively) in labor force participation, and the largest increases of any age groups from the 1970s–80s (Fullerton, p. 4-5). Women’s wages, however, remained between 57-78% of men’s.

Table 2.1 illustrates salary differentials in the United States between women working full-time, year-round as compared to men. For example, in 1951, women earned approximately 64 cents for every one dollar earned by men. The wage gap has narrowed over time, with today’s women (age 15 and over) in 2013 working full-time through the year earning 78 cents for every dollar earned by men.

TABLE 2.1**WOMEN'S EARNINGS AS A PERCENTAGE OF MEN'S, 1951–2014**

Source: U.S. Women's Bureau and the National Committee on Pay Equity. Reproduced by permission of the National Committee on Pay Equity.

The enactment of the Equal Pay and Civil Rights Acts had followed a 20-year journey filled with multiple attempts to implement wage equality. In 1945, Congress introduced the Women's Equal Pay Act, which included the phrase "comparable pay for comparable work," implying pay was to be determined by comparing the worth and/or difficulty of occupations and correlating pay to these evaluations. The phrase provoked much consternation due to its ambiguity and lack of concrete measurement or evaluation criteria, and the bill failed to pass.

From a historical standpoint, the timing of the bill's introduction was not optimal. Millions of men had demobilized after World War II and returned to the United States with the expectation of resuming their previous employment. Though the wartime labor movement had substantively improved the working opportunities of women and another previously marginalized group, African Americans, once the 10-12 million men were restored to occupations, the percentage of employed women dropped from 37% in 1945 to 32% in 1950 (Moody, 1998; Palmer, 1954). At the same time, the introduction of television in the mid-1940s and its evolution to a mass medium by 1950 likewise drove consumption efforts and family planning in the 1950s (Kellner, 2002). Corporations began the production of efficient, time-saving devices such as dishwashers, washers and dryers, and refrigerators with freezers, and promoted these through television advertisements as enticements to women to "occupy" household and domestic positions versus those outside the home.

Family values focused heavily on ideological constructs rooted in women ascribing to maternal values as the country rebuilt its manufacturing industries. As much as women were targeted in the successful 1940s government-led "Rosie the Riveter" propaganda campaign to boost their wartime munitions employment (www.history.com), a decade later witnessed a paradigm shift whereby government ideologues and corporations saw the necessity of enticing women back in to the household on a more permanent basis. The American consumer was praised as a "patriotic citizen" in the 1950s, contributing to the reestablishment of the "American way of life." Explained historian Lizabeth Cohen, "The good purchaser devoted to 'more, newer and better' was the good citizen since economic recovery after a decade and a half of depression and war depended on a dynamic mass consumption economy" (2004). Situated in this historical

context, with economic and social forces working in tandem to stratify gender roles and occupations, it would have been highly unlikely that any legislation aimed at gender equality in the workplace could have gained traction.

Nearing the end of the 1960s, the economic post-war boom that had been built on the supremacy of American industrial production came to a halt, as the economy began to fracture under the weight of new structural challenges. Decline of manufacturing supremacy in the 1970s, the increase of baby boomers and women in the workforce, unsustainable levels of government spending predicated on President Lyndon Johnson's investment in the Vietnam War, greater inflationary pressures, and shortages of oil supplies in 1973 and 1979 resulted in "stagflation" (sky-high inflation in a time of slow growth versus rapid growth, and rising unemployment) heading in to the presidency of Ronald Reagan era of 1981-1989 (Shmoop Editorial Team, 2008). Reagan's attempts to rectify the economic misery included deregulating industries, reducing or eliminating government regulations, reducing government spending, and virtually eliminating taxes for corporations to spur competition in the free market.

Moving away from a "misguided liberal agenda" toward a neo-liberal, supply-side economic theory promoting trade expansion, free movement of capital, and limited governments intervention, Reagan's policies resulted in an economic dichotomy: On the one hand, the economy experienced a recovery beginning in 1983 that lasted in to the early 1990s and ultimately yielded 20 million new jobs; on the other hand, critics argue, the "Reagan Revolution" served as "an assault against the great liberal gains that, over the previous 50 years, had democratized and humanized America", including civil rights, abortion rights, welfare, Social Security, and income equalization (Troy, 2005).

Despite the growing political conservatism and anti-liberal sentiment during the 1980s, the gender wage gap issue did gain some legislative traction in the Supreme Court. In 1974, *Corning Glass Works v. Brennan* ruling made it illegal for employers to justify paying lower wages based on the “going market rate,” stating that a “wage differential occurring simply because men would not work at the low rates paid women” was unacceptable (Baird, 1975). This laid the precedent for a 1981 landmark court victory in *County of Washington (Oregon) v. Gunther*, resulting in pay increases for female prison guards from 70 to 95 % of what male guards earned. In the same year in the public sector, San Jose, California, city workers were the first to strike for pay equality, gaining \$1.5 million in pay equity adjustments. Three additional years passed in the private sector before Yale clerical and technical workers won a battle over pay equity; 20 states conduct pay equity surveys in 1984, with four making pay equity adjustments. By 1989, Pay Equity for Federal workers passed into law, and in the same year, Executive Order 11246, an 11-year old sexual/wage discrimination case against Harris Trust Savings Bank rewarded the largest single financial recovery to a Plaintiff in history (\$14 million) (National Committee on Pay Equity, 1999).

During the 1990s, under the political leadership of Presidents George H.W. Bush (Republican, 1989-1993) and Bill Clinton (Democrat, 1993-2001), America experienced both a recovery from economic recession and population growth of almost 33 million people (U.S. Census data, 2000). Tumultuous events on the foreign stage introduce the Gulf War, ethnic conflict in Rwanda and other African countries, and the Bosnian War; increase in the global drug trade, and a surge in immigration levels. Clinton signed the Family and Medical Leave Act (1993), Welfare Reform Act (1996), Telecommunications Act (1996), and Student Loan Act

(1993) into law, and succeeded in passing an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit Expansion/Working Family Tax Cut: “by 1999, the EITC lifted 4.1 million people out of poverty—nearly double the number lifted out of poverty by the EITC in 1993” (eeoc.gov/statistics). In 1999, more than 77,000 discrimination complaints were lodged with the EEOC, of which 23.1 percent (17,883) were related to Title VII and 1.3T (1,044) (eeoc.gov/statistics).

Historic wage discrimination lawsuits against Boeing and Texaco were settled in favor of the plaintiffs alleging discrimination. These outcomes, though pertinent and visible, had little effect on the wage gap reduction. Progress continued to slow through the 1990s; though the gap had narrowed dramatically in the 1980s, since that time it narrowed much more slowly. The persistence of the pay gap continued in the early 2000s as George W. Bush (2001–2008) assumed the presidency in a Republican-controlled Congress. His first presidential act in 2001 was to once again impose the Reagan-enacted “gag rule” preventing the distribution of U.S. funds to any family planning agency that mentions ‘abortion’ during counseling, even those using its own discretionary funds. As Ferris (2015) notes, the same tactic was used by the GOP in 2010, 2012, and again in 2015 in an effort to reverse Title IX and cut funding to Planned Parenthood, the largest recipient of the grants). Dubbed the “War on Women” or “War against Women,” Republican party legislation and right-wing government ideology from 2001 to 2008 sought to curtail women’s rights at a broad spectrum, including reproductive rights, protective rights against violence, and workplace discrimination. Finlay argues in her 2006 book:

Thus, while Nixon, Ford, and Carter were more or less supportive of women’s equity laws, the Reagan and George H.W. Bush years saw attempts to redefine, weaken, or push back on some of the rights gained by women in the previous decades... These trends were reversed again during the Clinton presidency. Thus, presidents have the power to

influence women's status and resources even where no change has occurred in their legal standing, by the use of the 'bully pulpit', by executive order, by budgetary measures, and by commitment to enforcement actions. George W. Bush has used all of these means to work against many of the gains women had made over the past three decades, along with pushing back on civil rights advances in general (p. 5).

Women's groups are continuing to push the Paycheck Fairness Act, which has been introduced and failed to pass in Congress numerous times. The legislation aims to strengthen the 1963 Equal Pay Act, "which prohibits gender-based wage discrimination, by increasing pay transparency, accountability for businesses to justify pay grade differences, and protections for employees who identify wage disparities" (Johnston, 2015). I will refer to this and other legislative/policy enactments during my analysis in Chapter 5, as they are instrumental in how media frames its messages around this issue and public policy formation.

2.7 Summary

In terms of framing and agenda-setting, and how the two function concurrently to drive public opinion and ultimately shape policy formation, the gender wage gap debate provides a compelling case study for a closer examination of how media as an institutional aggregator of information shapes public discourse, and makes it more or less relevant in the public domain. Media framing theory affords the ability to examine issue relevancy, diagnose attribution, and provide recommendations and therefore the approach I am employing in this study to better understanding framing of news messages and the correlational shifts in public opinion and policy formation.

The limited research on women's issues as a whole or, more specifically, the gender wage gap within the contextualization of how media frames these issues warrants additional research. Research by Chong and Druckman (2006; 2007; 2007a;), Baumgartner (2008; 2009),

and Boydstun (2013, 2014) shows correlations between media framing and public opinion shifts. The research identifies the factors that contribute to the salience of news coverage and the focus of public attention and how this process ultimately drives policy formation. The longevity and pervasiveness of the gender wage gap in the United States, along with the fact that media framing of this issue is understudied, make this a unique case study from a media framing perspective. Media messaging around this topic, how it varies by news partisanship, and the impact those messages have on the American public may be one of the keys in addressing why the wage gap persists, and why the gender wage gap debate has not gained significant enough traction to result in substantive and lasting policy reform.

3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1 Research Questions

For reading convenience, I have again noted the research questions below.

- *RQ1: How has print media framed the U.S. gender wage gap debate from 1980-2014?*
- *RQ2: How has broadcast news media framed the U.S. gender wage gap debate from 1980-2014?*
- *RQ3: How do these frames vary based upon partisan affiliation and type (print or broadcast news) of each source?*
- *RQ4: How do these frames vary around significant milestone points?*
- *RQ5: In what ways does news media framing of the U.S. gender wage gap issue correlate with variations in public opinion (attitudes) and policy formation (behavior)?*

3.2 Methodologies Selected

Part I of this study, which addresses research questions RQ1–RQ3, uses Chong and Druckman’s *emphasis frames* and Boydston’s 2013 Policy Handbook, which provided a template for coding categories. In this case, media frames were treated as independent variables in order to examine the influence various frames have on aggregate perceptions of the issue of the gender wage gap. This is a type of qualitative content analysis, which Mayring defines as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication” (2000). In addition, to more closely address RQ1a and RQ2a, I identified seventeen “significant milestones” (Boydston, 2013), which equate to a “media storm – a sudden surge in news

coverage of an item, producing high attention for a sustained period” (2013). These included the passage of laws, executive orders, and landmark court cases as critical news points during which media provided extensive coverage of the gender wage gap debate. Milestones were identified during each of the four decades (1980–1989, 1990–1999, 2000–2009, and 2000–2014) to best elucidate any changes to message content, tone, and positionality over time.

Part II of the study, designed to address the correlations between media framing and public opinion, used public opinion polls from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research and the General Social Survey (GSS) January 1, 1980–April 30, 2014 pertaining to questions around gender and wages. Polls were included from a wide variety of sources if they contained questions related to women’s wages, compensation, and pay differences. General Social Survey data were likewise examined for shifts in public opinion around significant milestones.

The step-by-step sequence approach for the study was as follows:

Part I – Qualitative Content Analysis, Media Framing Analysis, Significant Milestones

1. Identified issue, developed research questions, identified corpus (print news articles and broadcast transcripts)
2. Ran Lexis Nexis and ProQuest for corpus
3. Identified-unit of analysis as words (i.e., “gender wage gap”; “wage inequality + women”; “salary gap between men and women”; “equal pay + women”; “paycheck equity”) to segment/target specific sub-sample of corpus (N = 324) for each source
4. Created Coding Protocol, resulting in nine (9) total frame dimensions; developed pro-con codes and descriptions for each using Chong & Druckman (2007) typology and Boydston (2013) policy handbook

5. Conducted coding of content in NVivo software
6. Conducted initial media framing analysis of frequency, type of frames, key messages by source/decade
7. Created list of significant milestones
8. Compared timeframes of significant milestones to frames and key messages by source/decades

Part II – Media Framing impact on public opinion

1. Gathered opinion polls (Roper, GSS) from 1980 – 2014 on wage-related questions
2. Compared media framing analysis to polls
3. Conducted subsequent analysis to assess if there were any variations in public opinion after significant milestones. For example, if a significant milestone occurred in April 2010, and a poll related to gender wage gap questions was conducted around April 2010, was there any change in public opinion from last poll?

3.3 Media Framing

Chong and Druckman's (2010) framing theory is predicated on hypotheses surrounding how individuals process information over a period of time, and the framing effect that competing messages have on audiences. A "framing effect occurs when a communication changes people's attitudes towards an object by changing the relative weights they give to competing considerations about the object" (Druckman 2001a). Referring back to Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley's experiment (1997) with media framing on the Ku Klux Klan's right to hold a public rally, competing frames of free speech versus public safety/disorder reinforced more tolerance for the hate group in the case of the former than the latter. When exposed to both frames,

individuals “who placed a higher priority on freedom than law and order were inclined to be tolerant, but those who subscribed more strongly to law and order tended to be intolerant” (Chong and Druckman, 2007, p. 102). Additionally, the importance of social order as a public necessity declined. Further experimentation presenting news media frames replicated these findings (Nelson et al., 1997).

As we have seen, various factors influence framing effects, including compelling arguments or attributes (Jasperson, 1998; Ghanem, 1997; Kiou, 2005; McCombs & Reynolds, 2002), issue applicability, strength, or resonance with people’s values (Chong and Druckman 2007a, 2007b); the thematic or episodic nature of the media report (Iyengar, 1991); and the degree to which framing messages are reinforced over time. Experiments that retest opinions shows that “in the absence of additional communications, framing effects rapidly decay over time . . . the effects induced by the treatment vanish after several days” (Tewksbury et al. 2000; Druckman and Nelson 2003; de Vreese 2004; Mutz and Reeves 2005; in Chong and Druckman 2010). However, stronger opinions—those that are situated in long-standing attitudes of an individual and draw upon easily accessible cognitive reference points about the issue under evaluation—correlate with resistance to change in opinion. Furthermore, over time supportive or oppositional arguments may be repeated with varying frequencies (repeated exposure), “but each side on the issue tends to concentrate on a small number (one or two) of frames that are presumed to be stronger or more effective arguments” (Chong and Druckman, 2010, p.667; Hanggli 2010).

It is with contextualization in mind that I applied Chong and Druckman’s (2006) coding typology of competing (pro/con) frames for purposes of my study (see Appendix A). I

developed nine distinct media (emphasis) frames, referred to as *codes*, *a priori* to examination of 324 news articles, including print news articles (*WSJ*, *NYT*, *USA Today*; N=203) and broadcast transcripts (Fox, CNN, NBC; N=121). This approach allows for a deeper analysis of media frames as independent variables to better examine the influences of frames on specific issues and/or the individual's perception of an issue. It likewise presents the opportunity to determine which of the nine frames were more or less frequently applied (frequency/quantity), and the perceived strength of each frame as "strong" or "weak," categories that are "typically assessed empirically by asking pretest participants to rate the persuasiveness of a message or frame by characterizing it as either strong or weak" (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993; Petty and Wegener, 1998). The authors define a frame's "strength" based on its persuasiveness.

Weak frames are typically seen as unpersuasive, whereas strong frames are more compelling. For example, presumably most people would see "public safety" as a strong or persuasive frame for why a hate rally should not be allowed, whereas "preventing litter on the streets" would be a weaker frame (2007a, p. 103).

Finally, I sought a clear understanding of which frames were more or less preponderant in which media source (newspaper or broadcast transcript) to ascertain if any differences exist, and whether these frames varied based on medium partisanship (which, based on the demographic profiles of the media source's readership or viewership correlate with issue accessibility and influence of opinion). The nine frames I selected are described below:

1. The *Economic* frame focused on considerations related to wages, salaries, compensation, economic drivers, employment levels, contributors or detractors to the gender wage gap. Examples include increasing numbers of women entering the labor

force, occupational segregation, human capital variables (choosing to opt-in or opt-out of the workforce), and wage influence on families.

2. The *Morality and Ethics* frame was grounded in the ideological construct that men and women are equal human beings in every regard, should thereby receive equal treatment and equal rights as manifested through equal pay by gender.

3. The *Capacity and Resources* frame examined the presence or lack of resources—time, physical, geographic, technological, financial, political, human, and others—that may help or hinder addressing the gender wage gap issue. Examples included the opportunity costs of addressing this issue versus other pressing societal issues, and that involvement in the labor force may be dictated by resource limitation or availability (women may or may not be able to exercise choice in labor force participation, due to economic resource constraints).

4. The *Legality, Constitutionality and Jurisdiction* frame examined laws, policies and mandates already in place to protect discrimination related to the wage gap, and restitution or material appropriation related to lawsuits.

5. The *Employer and Organizational Rights* frame looked at the responsibilities and rights corporations and organizations have in employee recruiting, hiring, retention, promotion, and compensation decisions.

6. The *Profitability* frame explored the institutional level of corporations and the drivers that spur or deter from profitability. This included market maximization, the operation of the labor market, and economic arguments regarding levers that affect profitability.

7. The *Public Sentiment* frame focused on general social attitudes, opinion polls, voting/electoral results, and overall public sentiment in regards to support for or opposition against reducing the gender wage gap.

8. The *Political Factors* frame centered around political considerations related to political parties, electoral voting practices and results, and gain or loss for political entities (Congress, Senate, House) and political parties (Republican, Democrat, Independent, other) related to this issue.

The *Information and Education* frame, which was added after initial coding began, coded for any education or information-providing efforts from the government or other institutionalized sources that contribute to the education of the public and/or employees about the gender wage gap. This includes reference to Clinton and Obama's initiatives to educate and empower employees with salary/compensation information, workshops, seminars, and other initiatives that employers are required to provide to educate employees.

Each of these general frames subsumes pro and con positions, which I elaborate below.

3.4 **Research Software**

The data analysis software used for the analysis permitted the researcher to do both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. **NVivo (for Windows 2010)** is a mixed-method data analysis program developed in 1999 by QSR Industries that allows qualitative and empirical and discourse analysis for a variety of text-based content, including news print articles and news transcripts, and is structured for linguistic/code pattern identification. Word frequency, word counts, patterns, links, valence, context, and relevancy of coded words and phrases can be

analyzed to better understand how the gender wage gap are framed in mass public discourse.

The software also allows for extensive report modeling and data processing. Using these reporting query tools to determine the frequency and “relational dynamics” of words (based on word proximity or repetition of use in text), concepts and ideas linked to the gender wage gap, the researcher was able to ascertain (a) media messages by media source; (b) unique variations in discourse between media sources; and (c) content patterns and major themes through word frequency.

3.5 **Part I: Corpus: Electronic and Print Media Sources**

Source Selection

Table 3.1 illustrates the media sources analyzed:

TABLE 3.1
MEDIA SOURCES

Source name	Type in corpus	Published by/ Year of inception	Viewership/Circulation	Partisanship affiliation/ media slant
Wall Street Journal (WSJ)	Print – News articles	Dow Jones (News Corp.); July 8, 1889	2.4 million	Conservative
New York Times (NYT)	Print – News articles	New York Times Co.; September 18, 1851	1.71 million (39 th in world)	Liberal
USA Today	Print – News articles	Gannett Co.; September 15, 1982	1.61 million	Centrist
Fox Network News (FNN)	Electronic – Broadcast transcripts	October 7, 1996	1.78 million (number one cable news network)	Conservative
CNN	Electronic –	Turner Broadcasting	578,000	Liberal

	Broadcast transcripts	System (Time Warner); June 1, 1980		
NBC	Electronic – Broadcast transcripts	February 21, 1940	9.08 million (number one broadcast news network)	Centrist

Source selection of both print news sources and television broadcast transcripts was a conscious decision, despite the preponderance of evidence suggesting that, in terms of creating an informed electorate, “the question of whether newspapers outperform television (and other media) remains open due to methodological challenges that even the latest studies have not wholly been able to overcome” (Druckman, 2005). As Druckman goes on to note, however, by studying a single case or social issue across multiple contrasting modalities of media coverage, these methodological differences can be minimized. However, my research suggests that there are some limited differences in media messages on the gender wage gap in newspapers versus television broadcasts, which are emphasized or minimized based on how each respective medium contributes to message reception and audience perception.

McLuhan’s seminal assertion that “the medium is the message” (1964) contends that the medium may indeed matter. To some degree, television has more limited “physical space” in which to present a news story (Robinson and Davis, 1990; Vinson, 2003), and audiences have less time in which to process news information in the broadcast environment. By contrast, newspaper readers have more latitude in reading, rereading, and ruminating on content. Though some scholars suggest that learning/knowledge acquisition and issue familiarity is minimal

regardless of medium (Neuman et al., 1992; Graber, 2001), others find different correlations between medium and message acquisition, with “high correlations between newspaper reading and information about issues, and either relatively lower or no correlations between television viewing and information” (Sotirovic and McLeod, 2004; Robinson & Levy, 1986; Robinson and Davis, 1990).

A 2005 study conducted by Druckman on the 2000 Minnesota Senate campaign compared newspaper and television coverage beginning with the primary election and leading up to election day. It examined quantity of content, media frames of campaign coverage, and information acquisition. Results concurred with findings from the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2004a, 2004b): Newspapers covered the issue five times as much as television (106.5 articles to 22.5 stories); both mediums predominantly used strategy frames, with newspapers using issue frames slightly more often and no discernable difference between the mediums with personal frames. Television news and newspapers, then, vary greatly in quantity of content but not necessarily in terms of content. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, however, the amount of “limited agenda space” (Boydston, 2013, p. 16) prevents some issues from becoming agenda-driven, and others from gaining traction in the public sphere. Hence, it is important to examine both modalities to ascertain quantity, content, and information processing differences. Both television and print media provides an opportunity to gain more robust insight and possible thematic overlaps in how frames are used – or not used – depending upon source type and partisanship. Print media was the dominant news source since its inception in the late 1800s; the introduction of television as a mass medium in the 1950s introduced the world to the possibility of visual representations of factual data. An analysis of the juxtaposition between the

historical precedent and longevity of news sources such as *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and the power of television to reach disparate media audiences through original “Big 3” networks like NBC and contemporary channels like CNN and Fox, yields the greatest likelihood of obtaining a deeper extrapolation of how the gender wage gap issue is positioned in the media messaging landscape.

3.5.1 Corpus: Print Media

Much has been said about the decline of print media over the past several decades. Newspapers comprise a unique medium insofar as they have had historical relevance since first becoming a mass medium in the late 1890s and expanding their reach through the efforts of publishers Hearst and Pulitzer in the 1900s (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2013). The Pew Center’s State of the Media Report 2014 shows “newspapers increased their total circulation by 3% daily and 1.6% Sunday.” Overall revenue (2013) was \$37.6 billion, a 2% decrease from the previous year, and circulation revenues increased 3.7%, nearly a full percentage point above the previous year. There is still considerable merit in studying media framing using newspapers as a corpus. Digital (online) editions count for a growing percentage of total circulation (19.3% in 2013, an increase of 5.1% from 2013), although for purposes of this study I did not distinguish between print and online news articles as both are included in overall circulation figures.

The newspaper data set for this study was assembled through database searches on LexisNexis Academic and the ProQuest Historical Newspaper database, again referencing the five previously selected coding terms. Text selection was limited to the top three newspapers in national U.S. circulation: the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ, conservative) and the *New York Times* (NYT, liberal), and *USA Today* (centrist), with 2.29, 1.71, and 1.61 million by daily circulation

(Pew Research Center; State of the News Media, 2013). Only hard news stories were included; op-eds and letters to the editor were eliminated due to their subjective nature and unknown degree of influence.

In a given week, newspapers with *weekly* circulation rates above 200,000, which the top three easily exceed given their daily readership is in the millions, average 1,137 total stories per week. The total number of news articles include (Ns in parentheses): *WSJ* (N=103), *New York Times* (N=64), and *USA Today* (N=36), for a total of 203 transcripts with a date range from January 1, 1980, to April 30, 2014, with exception of *USA Today*, which first came into circulation in 1982 (<http://www.usatoday.com/about/>). Interestingly, the *Wall Street Journal's* coverage of the wage gap, an “iconic liberal issue,” is more than four times that of the *New York Times*.

A recommended sampling ratio for circulations of this size is 50%, so total stories for analysis would ideally have been between 568 (50% of 1,137) (Lynch & Peer, 2002). However, in a meta-analysis of media framing studies conducted by Matthes (2009), the number of analyzed articles ranged from 1 to 42,965, with 53% examining newspaper coverage and 10% examining both newspapers and television (p. 354). My total sample size was ultimately reduced to 291 articles total (25% of the recommended sample size, 1137), based solely on the availability of articles associated with the *a priori* codes (Stroud & Higgins, 2011). This information is illustrated in Table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES (LexisNexis Academic and ProQuest Search Results by Source and Search Terms), JANUARY 1, 1980–APRIL 30, 2014

	'Gender Wage Gap'	'Wage inequality' + 'women'	'Salary Gap between men and women'	'Equal Pay' + 'women'	'Paycheck equity'	TOTAL
WSJ	19	20	26	35	3	103
NYT	6	21	15	12	10	64
USA Today	12	8	6	7	3	36
TOTALS	37	49	47	54	16	203

3.5.2 Corpus: Electronic Media (Television Broadcast transcripts)

According to a 2013 Gallup Poll, 55% of Americans turn to the television as their primary source of news consumption, followed by the Internet (21%), print media/newspapers and magazines (9%), and radio (6%). Of the 55% who rely on TV, 71% of U.S. adults (18–49) watch *local* television news daily via networks (including NBC), including 38% who access their news through *cable* networks (including CNN and Fox). Viewing habits between local/network and cable audiences differs radically: the latter spend twice as much time accessing cable as their primary news source as local and network news viewers spend on their broadcast news platforms

(Pew Research Center, 2013). Cable viewers average 72 minutes on daily news consumption, in contrast with the heaviest (top-third) of network news consumers at 32 minutes a day viewing news programs, while the next third spends one-sixth, or five minutes, of the time in this activity. The type of news consumed also varies: For national government and political issues, 28% of Americans watch 24-Hour TV news, followed by 18% unspecified network stations, and 7% local TV; these figures are 21%, 10%, and 10% respectively for topics on business and the economy (NORC/API Media Insight Project, 2014).

To control for partisanship while also including large audience viewership, my selection of news stories was limited to those presented on two cable networks—CNN (liberal), Fox News Channel (conservative)—and one mainstream network channel, NBC. CNN is currently in second position for overall daytime cable ratings with 578,000 viewers (7% of U.S. adults), and the Fox News Channel has maintained the number-one cable television news position for 47 consecutive quarters (as of 2003) and 141 months, averaging 1.78 million viewers in primetime (Nielsen, 2013). It is the main source of government and economic news for those who are consistently conservative (Pew Research, 2014). NBC was the most highly viewed mainstream network news channel, with 9.08 million viewers in April 2014 (Nielsen, 2014).

The dataset for this study was obtained through database searches on LexisNexis Academic for television broadcast transcripts referencing the five search terms (see Table 3.2). The data for the television broadcast transcripts came from LexisNexis under broadcast transcripts. These include (Ns in parentheses); CNN (54), Fox News Network (36), and NBC News (35), for a total of 121 transcripts with a date range from 1983 to April 30, 2014. No transcripts were available for any of these sources prior to 1983 as they were not yet in existence.

Table 3.3 describes all relevant broadcast transcripts using the search method outlined above across the three media sources (CNN, FNN, NBC) and five established search terms (gender wage gap, wage inequality + women, salary gap between men and women, equal pay, and paycheck equity), which yielded 121 total transcripts. The highest number of transcripts was CNN (N=48), followed by Fox (N=38) and then NBC (N=35). The code that gained the most coverage, as noted in “Totals by code” line, was: “gender wage gap” (48 instances of this frame), followed by “equal pay + women” (44) and “wage inequality + women” (3). Neither codes “salary gap between men and women” nor “paycheck equity” received any media coverage as worded. All three sources (CNN, Fox, and NBC) employed the frame code “gender wage gap” more than any other code.

TABLE 3.3

TELEVISION BROADCAST NEWS TRANSCRIPTS (LexisNexis Academic Search Results by Source and Code), JANUARY 1, 1980–APRIL 30, 2014

	‘Gender Wage Gap’	‘Wage inequality’ + ‘women’	‘Salary Gap between men and women’	‘Equal Pay’ + ‘women’	‘Paycheck equity’ **	TOTAL NUMBER OF TRANSCRIPTS (N):
CNN	22	16	0	10	0	48
Fox News Network (FNN)	14	12	0	12	0	38
NBC News	13	8	3	11	0	35
TOTALS	49	36	3	33	0	121

3.5.3 Source Partisanship/Media Bias

Research question three (RQ3) necessitates an explication of source partisanship and media bias. When I presented the preliminary research design at a MAPOR (Midwest Association of Public Opinion Research) conference in November 2014, one of the audience member's very astute question was "How does one find out which media source is conservative or liberal?"

This is a valid question for this study, given one of its objectives is to ascertain if source partisanship contributes to the tone and pattern of media framing. Gentzkow and Shapiro (2006) write, "By selective omission, choice of words, and varying credibility ascribed to the primary source, [news accounts] . . . convey[s] radically different impressions of what actually happened. The choice to slant information in this way" represents media bias. Media bias is driven by a number of factors. The ideological preponderance of a market audience correlates significantly with slant, accounting for approximately 20%, whereas media source ownership does not (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006). Language selection—whether by journalists, editors, or politicians using persuasive rhetoric—is a key indicator of slant, as are popular perceptions of a newspaper's political leanings.

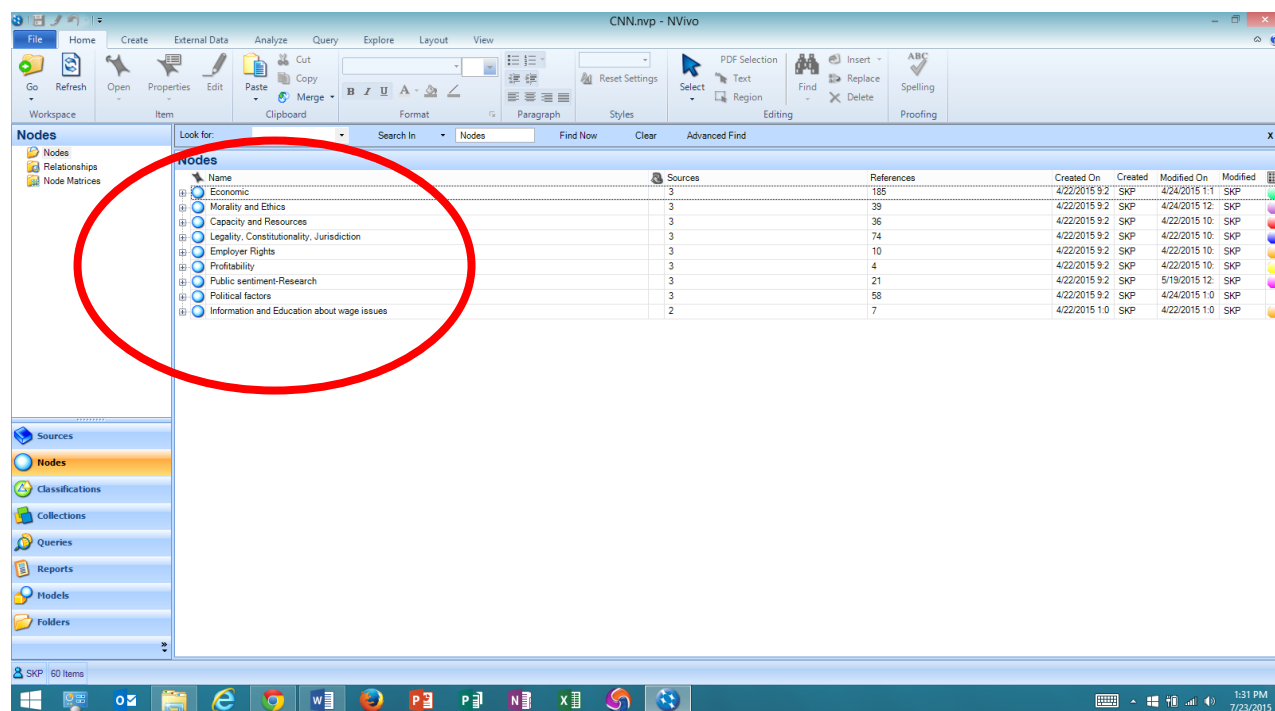
A recent Pew Center Report (April 2014) places the ideological placement of the audiences for *New York Times* as liberal, *USA Today* as centrist (slightly more liberal than the average survey respondent), and—surprisingly—the *Wall Street Journal* as centrist as well. In the past, *The Wall Street Journal* has been perceived as providing a conservative interpretation of media events based on editorial influence (Vetter, 2006). CNN (mostly liberal) and NBC

(centrist) are viewed by audiences who are respectively more ideologically left-leaning or moderate, whereas Fox News Network is situated squarely in the staunchly conservative camp. Ideological placement and audience confidence in media sources is reflected in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 in Appendix A.

3.5.4 Selecting Media Frames

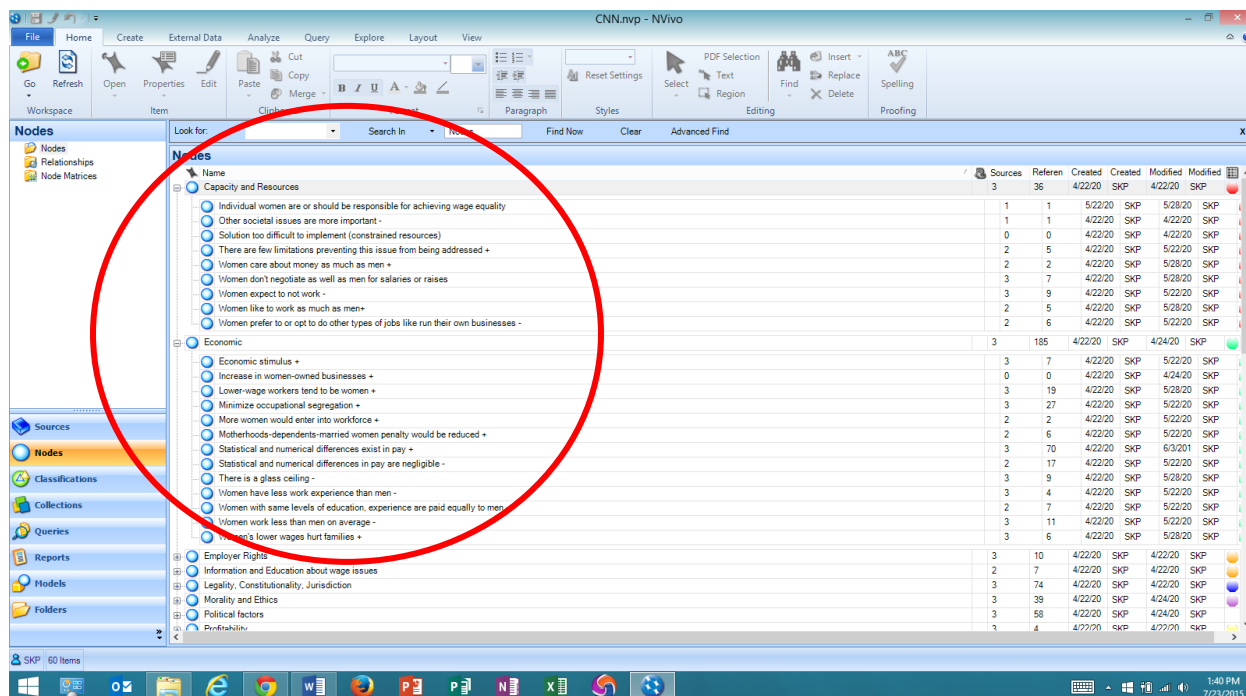
Using Chong and Druckman's previous work on identifying political frames (2008), I created a preliminary coding structure with examples to illustrate each (see Appendix B). This included a total of nine media frames (referred to in NVivo as nodes): (1) *Economic*; (2) *Morality and Ethics*; (3) *Capacity and Resources*; (4) *Legality, Constitutionality and Jurisdiction*; (5) *Employer/Organizational Rights*; (6) *Profitability*; (7) *Public sentiment-Research*; (8) *Political Factors and implications*; and (9) *Information and Education* about wage issues (see Chapter 1 and Appendix B). Below in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 are sample screen shots taken from NVivo for one set of the CNN news transcripts.

Figure 2. NVivo screen shot for CNN articles (sample)



The circled section lists the nine media frames as identified above. Figure 3.4 expands the positions and tone for each frame—either positive (pro) or negative (con)—as indicated in coding protocol (Appendix B). For illustration purposes, the figure only expands for the first two frames or nodes, *Economic* and *Capacity and Resources*.

Figure 3. CNN only – Expansion of codes for Capacity and Resources, Economic Frames (Sample approach used for each source)



Nodes	Sources	Referen	Created	Created	Modified	Modified
Capacity and Resources	3	36	4/22/20	SKP	4/22/20	SKP
Individual women are or should be responsible for achieving wage equality	1	1	5/22/20	SKP	5/28/20	SKP
Other societal issues are more important -	1	1	4/22/20	SKP	4/22/20	SKP
Solution too difficult to implement (constrained resources)	0	0	4/22/20	SKP	4/22/20	SKP
There are few limitations preventing this issue from being addressed +	2	5	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Women care about money as much as men +	2	2	4/22/20	SKP	5/28/20	SKP
Women don't negotiate as well as men for salaries or raises	3	7	4/22/20	SKP	5/28/20	SKP
Women expect to not work -	3	9	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Women like to work as much as men+	2	5	4/22/20	SKP	5/28/20	SKP
Women prefer to or opt to do other types of jobs like run their own businesses -	2	6	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Economic	3	185	4/22/20	SKP	4/24/20	SKP
Economic stimulus +	3	7	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Increase in women-owned businesses +	0	0	4/22/20	SKP	4/24/20	SKP
Lower-wage workers tend to be women +	3	19	4/22/20	SKP	5/28/20	SKP
Minimize occupational segregation +	3	27	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
More women would enter into workforce +	2	2	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Motherhood-dependents-married women penalty would be reduced +	2	6	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Statistical and numerical differences exist in pay +	3	70	4/22/20	SKP	6/3/201	SKP
Statistical and numerical differences in pay are negligible -	2	17	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
There is a glass ceiling -	3	9	4/22/20	SKP	5/28/20	SKP
Women have less work experience than men -	3	4	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Women with same levels of education, experience are paid equally to men -	2	7	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Women work less than men on average -	3	11	4/22/20	SKP	5/22/20	SKP
Women's lower wages hurt families +	3	6	4/22/20	SKP	5/28/20	SKP
Employer Rights	3	10	4/22/20	SKP	4/22/20	SKP
Information and Education about wage issues	2	7	4/22/20	SKP	4/22/20	SKP
Legality, Constitutionality, Jurisdiction	3	74	4/22/20	SKP	4/22/20	SKP
Morality and Ethics	3	39	4/22/20	SKP	4/24/20	SKP
Political factors	3	58	4/22/20	SKP	4/24/20	SKP
Profitability	1	4	4/22/20	SKP	4/22/20	SKP

How were these specific frames selected? I consulted Chong and Druckman's initial typology, in addition to prior academic research and popular literature, and some basic news coverage of the gender wage gap issue. I also examined Boydston's Policy Frames Codebook (Boydston, 2014), based on Baumgartner and Jones' 2006 Codebook, for a list of "general dimensions that could be used to frame any policy issue" (p. 1). This process yielded an initial list of eight frames. I then did a small sample coding of 25 selected print articles and 25 selected

television broadcast transcripts from the larger sample size of 416, to determine if any other frames (codes/nodes) should be added to the primary list, resulting in the addition of the “Information and Education about wage issues” frame to the list for a total of nine frames.

Because Chong and Druckman’s framing analysis categorizes policy issues as conflictual and subjects of debates with oppositional public perspectives (2008, p.14), “each frame was defined by its emphasis on a certain aspect of the issue, usually (but not always) a rationale for either supporting or opposing one side of the issue” (p. 17). This pro–con dichotomy is identified in the Coding Protocol in Appendix A as “Layer 1: Positions & Tone.” Creating a typology that uses oppositional categorization was important because most news stories contain multiple and often competing frames that overlap, interlock with, and challenge each other. Journalists and editors rely on “news judgment . . . the faculty of determining what is a story, what’s an interesting story, what’s new and different and what’s been said before” (Sippres, 2009, in Boydston, 2013, p. 31). They must consistently decide factual relevance and which themes of the new narrative to emphasize or sublimate to portray what is really “at issue” (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Simply put, conflict news frames (Lee et al., 2008) tend to be episodic to draw an audience. According to Bzdek, editorial decisions are based upon issues that resonate “at the moment” (in Boydston, p. 41), “what will inform the public as well as what will sell papers” (p. 41). As Entman (2009) notes:

A good example of the news following the conflict script was the coverage journalists gave to affirmative action, a hot-button issue in the 1990s. Far from making probative arguments about problems, causes, and remedies, then, these and other nonprobative scripts that shape the news can create voids or distract the audience from the policy-specific attributes of political messages. (p. 27)

Layer 2 of the typology was comprised of the nine major media frames. Each of the nine frames was subsequently elaborated upon by specific examples of what I or other researchers might find in the media samples as representative of either a “pro” or “con” argument pertaining to that frame. For example, under the Economic frame, a pro or positive statement related to the economic discourse around the gender wage gap included “closing the gender wage gap would create a significant economic stimulus.” This example provides clear support in favor of minimizing the gap. By contrast, the statement “Wage gaps are smallest for those women who have never had children/dependent care; when adjusted for differences in human capital and other variables, these gaps become nearly insignificant” suggests that factors other than gender discrimination contribute to the wage gap (e.g., personal choice to take time away from the work force, for example). *These examples became codes under each framing dimension.*

The *economic* and *capacity and resources* frames had the greatest number of examples (thirteen and nine respectively); the *profitability* and *information* and education about wage issues frames the least with two each. The number of pro/con codes for each frame is *not* indicative of the valence or relevancy of a frame; rather, it exemplifies the greater or lesser variety of arguments applied to each side of the debate based on common discourse. Because we are discussing the gender wage gap as a highly contested *economic* issue that correlates closely with *distribution of resources and capacity of institutions or individuals to allocate resources*, it makes sense that most examples cluster around these frames, with *morality/ethics* and *political factors* coming in second.

3.5.5 Coding

Coding was conducted between February and May 2015. In April 2015, two coders were provided a detailed three-hour training session during which a project overview was provided and the coding protocol was explicitly reviewed. Prior to the training, each coder was asked to load the NVivo software on to their respective laptops for coding purposes. During the training itself, coders were asked to type in the eight identified frames and corresponding examples/statements (note: the ninth frame, *Information and Education* about the wage gap, had not yet been added to the coding protocol as it emerged after data analysis began). To test reliability and ensure each coder interpreted coding content with consistency, coding was divided randomly by source, with one coder assigned all *NYT*, *CNN*, and *NBC* articles/transcripts, and the other all *WSJ*, *USA Today*, and *Fox* articles/transcripts, via PDF and Word files and uploaded to their respective NVivo software instances. Each coder proceeded to code their assigned articles, after which the researcher and coder compared the coded content. This resulted in an initial inter-coder agreement which averaged 81% (Krippendorff's alpha 0.8091) for newspaper coverage and 84% (Krippendorff's alpha 0.8423) for broadcast coverage, which are considered statistically reliable (Krippendorff, p. 241-243).

After training was completed, each coder worked on content coding independently for a three-week period from May 1 to May 21, 2015. During this time, the coders periodically contacted the researcher with questions around certain nuances in the content, particularly in cases where coding was co-occurring or “where the same lines or segments of text may have more than one code attached to them.” Multiple codings were resolved by a shared NVivo archive and document repository on Google Plus, allowing me to calculate inter-coder reliability.

The unit of analysis coded was word or word phrases that contained the words related to the gender wage gap topic in each media source. These included “gender wage gap,” “wage inequality” with “women,” “salary gap between men and women,” “equal pay and women,” and “paycheck equity.” The results of the coding appear in the Coding section above.

3.5.6 Time Period Selection

I chose to confine my examination of media texts to the period beginning in January 1, 1980, and ending April 30, 2014. These time ranges were chosen with two reasons in mind. First, labor force trends indicated that the predominant influx of women entering the workforce in the decade *prior* to the 1980s (1970–1980) reflected the steepest acceleration of growth in the country’s history (Lee and Mather, 2008). In the 1970s, as women and baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) entered the labor force in greater numbers, the pace of growth reached 2.6% annually (Lee and Mather, 2008). This pace slowed to 1.6% in the 1980s and 1.1% in the 1990s. By 1980, women comprised 43% of the labor force; this increased to 45% in the 1990s and stabilized at 47% by the 2000s. In this case, the 1970s could be considered an “outlier” decade reflective of a unique historical period rather than a normative acceleration curve. Therefore, starting analysis from the 1980s onward seemed appropriate. The growth of the labor force is reflected in Table 3.4, which illustrates a near-doubling of women from 1970 to 2012.

TABLE 3.4

SIZE OF THE LABOR FORCE, BY SEX, 1970-2012

Civilian labor force by sex, 1970-2012				
	Number (in thousands)		Percent of the labor force	
Year	Women	Men	Women	Men
1970	31,543	51,228	0.38	0.62
1980	45,487	61,453	0.43	0.57
1990	56,829	69,011	0.45	0.55
2000	66,303	76,280	0.47	0.53
2012	72,648	82,327	0.47	0.53

Second, the 1960s and 1970s saw a boom of legislative activity centered around civil rights and equal pay (the Equal Pay Act of 1963; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964), as well as the establishment of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1963 and, by 1978, expansion of its oversight regarding the enforcement of federal laws prohibiting workplace discrimination. The transition from Jimmy Carter (U.S. President, 1977-1980, Democrat) to 12 years of a Republican-led country under Ronald Reagan (1981–1988) and George H.W. Bush (1989–1992) heralded a decisive shift from the radical, counterculture movements of the 1960s and 1970s to right-wing conservatism in social, economic, and political

life. The legacy of the Cold War, uncertainty in the Middle East region, Watergate, the Vietnam War, rising oil prices, inflation, crime and unemployment which characterized the 1970s prompted millions of voters to support a change in government stewardship. Reagan's presidency marked the beginning of a return to deregulation, opening of free markets, expansion of states' rights, and minimization of federal government interference, along with disillusionment with civil and social rights issues. Although the Republican party had once been a champion of constitutional equal rights, Reagan refused to support abortion rights, cut the funding of the EEOC by half despite the rise of sex discrimination law suits by 25% during the 1980s (Burk, 2004), publicly derided single mothers raising children with federal assistance as "welfare queens," and spearheaded the only administration in U.S. history to not raise the minimum wage. Given the defined transition from a liberal era encompassing legislation supporting equal rights (1960s–70s) to one marked by conservative political, social, and economic values and vitriol against human rights, the 1980s again seemed to be a logical starting point for analysis.

3.5.7 Significant Milestones

Due to the large volume of news coverage for this time period across print and electronic mediums, however, I additionally focused my corpus selection to specific time periods that correspond to greater *expected* salience (Chong & Druckman, p. 14). I call these "significant milestones"; journalists refer to them as "pegs - critical moments in the ongoing social narrative on abortion that serve as a kind of handle on which to hang stories, providing the opportunity for further commentary" (Grindstaff, 2005). Boydston's recent work (2013) on media news and agenda setting refer to these significant milestones or pegs as a "media storm - a sudden surge in

news coverage of an item, producing high attention for a sustained period.” Closer examination of these “significant milestones” during which policy shifts may influence media framing and political effects, thereby influencing public opinion, has merit. These significant milestones include major federal laws under Congressional consideration/debate, any passage, retractions, or overturning of federal laws about the gender wage gap or abortion rights, and pivotal points during which public discourse, controversy, or debate is occurring (which is often measured by opinion polls).

Conversely, if no or limited media coverage occurred during an event that meets the criteria of a “significant milestone,” this also revealed interesting findings around how, when, and if media employed framing devices. An initial compilation of these significant milestones in 5- to 10-year increments are listed in Appendix C.

3.6 Part II: Public Opinions Polls: Roper & General Social Survey

The second part of the study addresses Research Question 5 (RQ5). I sought to assess how media frames associate with public opinion via examination of public opinion polls. I therefore isolated a series of specific “public attitudes” around each topic in order to determine the relationship between dominant news frames and public opinion (GSS, Roper; Chong and Druckman, 2006). In an electoral democracy, public opinion polls are considered pivotal in the formation of policy (Turgeon, 2009). In existence since the 1930s (Fried & Harris, 2010), their impact is felt today in the realms of political elections, market research, and governmental reform.

Poll samples provide greater representation than elections and referendums (Gallup & Rae, 1940; Verba, 1996). Their results “serve democracy by sending messages to elected officials about what people want and do not want, and elected officials generally respond with tailored policies” (Turgeon, p. 354; Geer, 1996; Stimson et al., 1995). Over time, political agents and the public have come to view public opinion as a “political resource” with polls “used in efforts to construct a view of public opinion that would serve political purposes” (Fried & Harris, p. 324). Because polls represent attitudinal perspectives—what people think and how they behave—based on aggregated responses, criticisms include sampling errors, low response rates, and other sources of bias and distortion, including nonresponses (“I don’t know”) or overrepresentation of individuals considered knowledgeable. Indeed, a 2012 GSS query inquiring “How good is your understanding of the important political issues facing our country: Not at all, a little, somewhat, very, or extremely?” indicated an average of 26% considered their knowledge very good; 44% of respondents “somewhat” good, and 18 percent “a little” (http://thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/GSS12PAN/GSS12PAN_Var506_1.asp).

Polling, however, is relevant insofar as it provides a mechanism for politicians “to discern trends, measure public reaction to high-profile events, and test the success or failure of ongoing legislative and message efforts” (Fried & Harris, p. 349). For a social issue to gain visibility and traction, the dual attenuators of media attention and public opinion polling data allow political realities to come to light and issues under debate to receive attention on one or more political agendas (Boydston, p. 11).

To compare framing patterns to public opinion to determine broad correlations in collective attitudes and behaviors, I tracked public opinion on the frames I associated with the gender wage gap in the Roper Center for Public Opinion and the General Social Survey (GSS)

3.6.1 Roper Public Opinion Polls

The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research provides a rich source of public opinion data. With more than 22,000 data sets that contain millions of national poll and survey responses on a variety of topics (<http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/polls/dataset-collections>), the Roper Center focuses on surveys conducted by commercial firms and news media. It includes public opinion polls from a wide variety of survey sources across various demographic audiences.

For this study, an initial search via iPoll of my five pre-identified units of analysis (“gender wage gap,” “wage inequality + women,” “salary gap men and women,” “equal pay women,” and “paycheck equity”) yielded 220 polls. I added five additional search terms to ensure a robust selection of polls as well as take into consideration the changing lexicon related to the gender wage gap issue over time. For example, the term “comparable pay” was dominant in media discourse only in the 1980s and 1990s; by the end of the 1990s, “equal pay” had subsumed it and created a different meaning around the issue, thus an additional search using both terms better reflected changing social realities.

I then eliminated nearly three-quarters (72%) of these polls due to redundancy (the results yielded the same polls repeatedly) or were inapplicable (the polls did not directly pertain to the gender wage gap issue, but instead related to the wage gap or minimum wage controversy. This yielded 62 remaining polls, with the distribution across the decades of analysis as follows: 1980s

(N=29); 1990s (N=13); and 2000s (N=20). Table 3.5 provides a detailed illustration of these figures.

TABLE 3.5

ROPER PUBLIC OPINION POLLS – QUESTIONS RELATED TO GENDER WAGE GAP

ISSUE

Search Terms	Initial search on Number of polls	Final Number of polls <i>(redundant and inapplicable polls eliminated; N and year of poll in parentheses)</i>
“Gender wage gap”	1	0
“Wage inequality + women”	0	N/A
“Salary gap men and women”	0	N/A
“Equal pay women”	128	52 2000-14 (N=20): 1 (2014); 6 (2013); 2 (2012); 2 (2008); 2 (2007); 1 (2006); 1 (2003); 1 (2002); 4 (2000) 1990-99 (N=11): 1 (1999); 2 (1998); 1 (1997); 2 (1996); 1 (1995); 3 (1992); 1 (1991) 1980-1989 (N=21): 2 (1989); 1 (1987); 1 (1986); 5 (1985); 6 (1984); 3 (1983); 3 (1982)
“Paycheck equity”	1 (not relevant to topic; focus on	0

	housing equity; NOT INCLUDED)	
“Equal pay”	63	0
“Equal wages”	11	2 (March 1995; January 1986)
“Equal wages men and women”	1	0
“Comparable pay”	11 (8 in 1980s; 3 in 1990s)	8 (7 in 1980s; 1 in 1990s)
“Comparable pay women”	5	0
TOTAL:	220	62

In further examination of the remaining 62 polls, I isolated only those poll questions that were repeated over a period of time in order to conduct a trend analysis of public opinion shifts and pinpoint when and to what degree they occurred. Ultimately, only five poll questions of the 62 were repeated with some regularity, but they display some surprising results, which I elaborate upon in Chapter 4. The five questions were:

1. You mentioned several issues you think should be a top priority for a women’s movement. Which one of these is most important to you personally?...Equal pay, domestic violence and sexual assault, child care, women’s health care, time off from work to care for family members, electing women to political office, drug and alcohol addiction, women in other parts of the world, more women in math, science and technology, sexual harassment, abortion or more girls in sports?

2. Thinking about issue affecting women as women, which of the following would you say are major problems facing women today, and which are not major problems?...Equal pay for equal work
3. Many of those who favor women's rights favor the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. Those who favor ERA argue that unless it is passed, women will continue to receive lower pay for the same work, receive fewer promotions to better jobs, and be discriminate against financially. Opponents argue that the special laws that now exist to protect women are sufficient and no new law is needed. Do you strongly favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the Equal Rights Amendment?
4. Compared to men, do you feel that women have, less or equal opportunities in the following areas?...Salary
5. And how about income and wages—compared with men who have similar education and jobs—are women in general paid better or worse than men?

3.6.2 The General Social Survey (GSS)

The GSS has been implemented by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) every year since 1972 (excepting 1979, 1981, and 1992) and in two-year increments starting in 1994. It features thousands of polling questions on a variety of social issues (the environment, political involvement, healthcare system), general status questions (overall health, happiness), economics (personal income, wealth gap, financial independence and economic security) with a “rolling panel design.” It allows data aggregation across decades by keyword search.

With this in mind, I accessed the GSS Data Explorer website (<https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org/>) and ran a series of cross-tabulations on 13 variables related to

gender, work, occupational roles, and salary/earnings. I selected those variables based on searches that correlated to the topics of women and wages, income, societal perspectives on wage earners by gender, confidence levels of the public in government institutions, and media institutions (the press), income equality, political partisanship, knowledge of and interest in political and economic issues, and individual influence on political reform. Table 3.6 illustrates the primary question topics and corresponding GSS variables (identifiers). The complete set of questions associated with each of the 13 variables are noted in Appendix B.

TABLE 3.6

RELEVANT QUESTIONS IN THE GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY, (1972-2014)

Question topic	Poll Questions by Variable (identifier)
Confidence in Press Main source of information in the news (where do you get your news from?)	CONPRESS NEWSFROM
Confidence in government (Executive Branch) Trust government to do what's right	CONFED GOVDOOK
Working mother (morality frame: rights of mother vs. social good; gender equality frame: women better off in household as caretaker women should or should not work)	FEFAM FEWORK FEPRESCH FAMSUFFR HOMEKID HUBBYWK1
Income/compensation	TWOINCS1
Individual political views (extremely liberal to	POLVIEWS

extremely conservative)	
Citizen influence on politics	POLEFF3

Of these variables, *confidence in elites* (government, press) and *citizen influence* merit a more detailed explanation as it is not perhaps immediately obvious why these questions have relevance in this study.

Burnstein (2003) notes public confidence in government is key, because individuals have higher trust in their political entities who incorporate public sentiment and opinion as a foundation for legislative decision-making. Higher issue salience (Epstein and Segal, 2000), or the degree to which an issue is more prominent and relevant to the public correlate with great democratic responsiveness. If media does not cover a given issue or minimizes news coverage, this directly influences how much traction that issues gains in the political sphere. Likewise, if citizens feel limited confidence in their political entities to shape reform, issue resolution cannot occur. Dalton (2007) writes:

Unless citizens participate in the deliberation of public policy, and their choices structure government action, then democratic processes are meaningless. Often this presumes participation in free and fair elections that select government officials, but the range of political participation can be, and should be much broader. Thus, the norm of political participation should be an essential element of democratic citizenship.

Indeed, public policies may structure and shape elements of political participation. An example would be the feminist movement which gained traction after the inclusion of the word “sex” in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 enabled constituents to mobilize against sex discrimination

(Mettler & Soss, 2008). Citizens who feel more engaged in the political process better understand their “rights and responsibilities as members of a political community,” subsequently affecting their sense of agency and status within political, economic and social systems. Greater engagement around the gender wage gap issue reflects higher issue salience and, as reflected in these questions, can correlate with issue resolution.

3.7 Summary

The combination of Roper polls and GSS questions provide a picture of public opinion trends regarding the topic of the gender wage gap. By examining them concurrently, we gain clearer insights into changes in social perspectives around gender and compensation, the changing role of women in the workforce and as primary or secondary breadwinners, the levels of public confidence in elites (media, government) regarding news information and reform, and the degree to which individual citizens believe they serve as agents of influence in the political arena. These are critical observations in the examination of media framing and public opinion.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Study Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine the role *media framing* plays in public discourse, public opinion, and policy formation related to the contemporary U.S. gender wage gap issue. The process of media framing allows some aspects of news stories to be more highlighted than others, thereby influencing audience reception. This is differentiated from agenda-setting, or “the interaction between media frames and individuals’ prior knowledge and dispositions” (deVreese, 2005, p. 52). While both are cognitively-oriented psychological endeavors, framing includes a broader range of these processes, allows for more expansive focus on key linguistic patterns, themes, and rhetoric over a period of time, and drives audience applicability (individual relevancy of the news story/issue to the reader/viewer), making it potentially more influential. In examining these frames, I considered the linkages between salience of media messages, changes in public opinion (attitudes) over the period of time from 1980-2014, and partisanship in formulating public policy (behaviors). Is what media says about the gender wage gap relevant in influencing audience/reader/viewer behaviors around public policy reform, based on public opinion polls? How do these differences manifest, if at all, between print and broadcast media sources with different partisanships? This study is the first of its kind to interpret the gender wage gap issue in the United States employing these queries.

My examination of the gender wage gap issue was done using Chong & Druckman’s 2006 framing analysis approach and coding typology, in which I analyzed emphasis (i.e., issue or values) frames. I developed a typology of nine economic, social and political frames that categorize the gender wage gap issues on these continuums as having oppositional public

perspectives, expressed as “pro” (supportive of policy reform, equal pay) or “con” (opposed to policy reform leading to equal pay). The nine frame dimensions included: 1) *Economic*; 2) *Morality and Ethics*; 3) *Capacity and Resources*; 4) *Legality, Constitutionality and Jurisdiction*; 5) *Employer Rights*; 6) *Employer Profit*; 7) *Public Sentiment*; 8) *Political Factors*; and 9) *Information and Education*.

My initial search of news articles in *LexisNexis* and *ProQuest* (for the *Wall Street Journal*) was coded from a search developed using the five search terms “gender wage gap,” “wage inequality + women,” “salary gap between men and women,” “equal pay + women,” and “paycheck equity,” between January 1, 1980-April 1, 2014. This search yielded a corpus of news articles and television broadcast transcripts, which included N=203 print/newspaper articles (*Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*) and N=121 broadcast news stories (CNN, NBC, Fox) media, for a total of N=324.

I systematically analyzed the content presented in the 324 news articles with the goal of identifying associations to the nine media frames. Moreover, I sought to ascertain if message tone, topic, and linguistic structures varied based on partisan affiliation of media sources or type (print vs. broadcast news). This yielded differences in several instances based both on source affiliation and type; these are elaborated upon below.

In addition, I examined 17 “significant events or milestones” (Boydston, 2013) of a legislative, political or economic nature related to the gender wage gap that occurred during this time period, as well as Roper opinion polls (five questions) and 13 General Social Survey variables that measure public opinion over time. I selected these milestones based on an initial search of key legislative, political and economic-based events that took place in the following

decades: 1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009, and 2010-2014. On the one hand, these milestones included lawsuits—many class-action—in which Plaintiffs were former employees of Fortune 500 companies who were Defendants; on the other hand, many were notable for Congressional debate or the passage of laws related to pay equalization. All were anticipated to be large enough in scale and scope as to gain the attention of the media and the public, and potential influence public opinion.

The overall objective of this study was to solicit answers to the following five research questions:

- *RQ1: How has print media framed the U.S. gender wage gap debate from 1980-2014?*
- *RQ2: How has broadcast news media framed the U.S. gender wage gap debate from 1980-2014?*
- *RQ3: How do these frames vary based upon partisan affiliation and type (print or broadcast news) of each source?*
- *RQ4: How do these frames vary around significant milestone points?*
- *RQ5: In what ways does news media framing of the U.S. gender wage gap issues correlate with variations in public opinion (attitudes) and policy formation (behavior)?*

I discuss findings for RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 in Chapter 4, and follow with findings for RQ4 and RQ5 in Chapter 5.

4.2 Overall Key Findings

A number of interesting and surprising findings were illuminated in this study. **First, media sources use astoundingly similar frames, and vary little despite partisan affiliation.** The *Morality and Ethics* frame, an essential component of an effective collective action frame, is used sparingly by most sources, and regularly only by NBC in nearly one-third of its broadcasts on this topic. Findings revealed the framing messages used by media across all print and broadcast sources, regardless of the source's affiliation, are more similar than different. A total of five from the possible nine frames were consistently invoked: *Economic*, *Legality and Constitutionality*, *Capacity and Resources*, *Political Factors*, and *Morality and Ethics*). The remaining four (*Employer Rights*, *Profitability*, *Public Sentiment*, and *Information and Education*) got limited press. The most dominant media frame was *Economic*, but it was always accompanied by secondary and tertiary frames. These, I argue, are perhaps more relevant in their partnership with the *Economic* frame, in effect linking the *Economic* frame incontrovertibly with the secondary and tertiary frames. In the case of print media, secondary frames evolved around *Legality and Constitutionality*; for broadcast news, only CNN invoked this frame. Other broadcast news sources (Fox, NBC) relied upon *Political Factors*, and *Capacity and Resources* as alternate frames.

The frame appears in only one of the six sources as a dominant frame: only NBC employed the *Morality and Ethics* frame as part of its coverage, and even then to a limited degree. Yet, of the top five dominant frames, it is the *only* frame used that links the language of gender equality as a human right and moral consideration to pay equity as a fundamental right. It also highlights institutionalized gender bias predicated on the belief that individuals are or are

not equal. As the research on competing social movements shows, however, *it is this frame that has the potential to be the motivational driver necessary to narrow the gender wage gap, but is rarely invoked*. We are attempting to change a social issue through economic, political, and legislative action, yet the assumption of human beings as equal regardless of sex or gender and thereby morally deserving of wage equality is not regularly employed in media discourse. Without that motivational underpinning, I argue, the gender wage gap issue cannot be rectified. It explains why there remains a gap between the recognition of a problem and the moral force necessary for enacting legislation that would address it. It likewise contributes to the explanation as to why the gender wage gap issue continues to remain “unresolvable”: if the media repeatedly applies pro-sided arguments to end the gap, yet the gap persists, the potential for the *Morality and Ethics* frame to symbolically and procedurally represent more weight and influence increases. **Second, media rely two to three times more heavily on utilizing “pro”-sided frames than “con”-sided ones, regardless of source type (print vs. broadcast) or partisanship, indicating tacit support for pay equity.** Partisanship has a slight influence for the print conservative and liberal sources, but is more skewed for television. *USA Today* is positive but more balanced (56 v. 44) as is NBC (54 v. 46), whereas Fox and CNN are more skewed (45 v. 55, and 65 vs. 35 respectively).

Why might this be the case? One explanation might be the lack of variability in content production between sources due to institutional mandates such as editorial decisions based on the most resonant news topics (Boydston, 2013), which results in news sources competing with each other yet producing complementary content. A comparative study of news outlets by Boydston, Moody and Thomas (2010), find that news sources such as *The New York Times* and *ABC* may

serve as proxy news sources for other media within similar “groups” (international and domestic focus around six key topical areas of content). A second explanation might be that the reporters rely upon and reproduce the dominant *Economic*, *Legality and Constitutionality*, *Political Factors*, and *Capacity and Resources* frames without conscious intention or awareness that they are doing so. But they do so without invoking a more committed moral frame that might lend motivational force to what is otherwise a detached, abstract debate. Because it is employed in only one of the six sources, however, as a dominant frame, the discourse on the gender wage gap continues to focus on *Economic* and *Legality and Constitutionality* frames.

Third, findings showed that only five (of 17) significant milestones correlate with increased media coverage, and that media coverage does some correlation with increasing public support to eliminate the gender wage gap if specific variables are present. These significant milestones become relevant only if a “perfect storm” of certain variables occur simultaneously. These include: 1) legislative debate at the highest political levels (Congress) over an extended period of time (sometimes years) so the issue gains traction in the media and public eye; lawsuits do not carry as much traction or extended media coverage; 2) intended executive action by the President that will either ratify, enact, or pass legislation (an Act, Law, Executive Order) related to the gender wage gap issue; and 3) an increase in media coverage that corresponds to the significant legislative or executive event. A corollary to this is the usage of the Morality and Ethics frame with greater consistency.

Media frames do indeed matter in debunking the “myths” surrounding the gender wage gap issue, but it is really legislative and executive action, coupled with increased media coverage *around significant milestones* that drive shifts in public opinion. Solving the issue of the gender

wage gap, however, necessitates the repeated use of the *Morality and Ethics* frame to one driving public opinion so relentlessly in its favor that it influences political (executive) reform.

4.3 **Additional Relevant Findings**

In addition to these key findings, there are some additional findings to note that correspond to each research question. These are listed below and explained in greater detail in the rest of the chapter.

RQ1: How has print media framed the gender wage gap from 1980-2014? and RQ2: How has broadcast media framed the gender wage gap from 1980-2014?

Finding 1: The top frame used by print media sources was the *Economic* frame, followed by the *Legality and Constitutionality* frames. Tertiary frames for the *WSJ* and *NYT* were the same (*Political Factors*) and *Capacity and Resources* for *USA Today*. (RQ1)

Finding 2: Broadcast news used a greater variety of frames than print sources, regardless of broadcast news source partisanship. (RQ2)

RQ3: How do these frames vary based upon partisan affiliation and type (print or broadcast news) of each source?

Finding 3: Media sources were surprisingly consistent in the frames they invoked, both across decades and within frame dimensions. They are, in fact, more similar than different in regards to the gender wage gap issue, regardless of partisanship. *Economic* frames that focus on compensation considerations were used by all of the examined media outlets (*WSJ*, *NYT*, *USA Today*, *Fox*, *CNN*, and *NBC*). The secondary and tertiary frames are truly where the “meat” of the context comes to bear, however, as they shape the nuances of the arguments within this debate. (RQ1, RQ2)

Finding 4: Overall, there were more “pro” versus “con” codes evoked in a majority of the media frames, regardless of media source, with the exception of Fox. Four of the five frames (*Economic*, *Legality and Constitutionality*, *Political Factors*, and *Morality and Ethics*) had two to three times as many “pro” as “con” arguments. The remaining frame, *Capacity and Resources*, leveraged “con” arguments more frequently for three of the six sources: conservative Fox, centrist *USA Today*, and centrist NBC.

I will now discuss key findings around print sources in Section 4.4 and broadcast news transcripts in Section 4.5.

4.4 Key Findings: Print Sources

RQ1: How has print media framed the U.S. gender wage gap debate from 1980-2014?

To assess framing over this 34-year period, I looked at framing frequency, the number of times a particular frame was coded across the 324 articles/transcripts. Higher percentages indicate a greater use of a particular frame.

Finding 1: The top frame used by print media sources was the *Economic* frame, followed by the secondary *Legality and Constitutionality* frames. Tertiary frames for the WSJ and NYT were the same (*Political Factors*) and *Capacity and Resources* for USA Today. All three print sources invoked the same top two frames, regardless of their respective partisanship affiliations. This was a surprising finding, given the expectations that media are unique in their message constructs and tailor frames more closely to align with their audiences’ ideological leanings.

TABLE 4.1
FRAMING FREQUENCY, PRINT SOURCES

Sources	Total	Economic	Morality	Capacity & Resources	Legality	Employer Rights	Profit	Public Sentiment	Political Factors	Info & Education
WSJ	741	302 (40.8%)	22 (2.9%)	71 (9.6%)	162 (21.9%)	22 (2.9%)	19 (2.6%)	29 (3.9%)	102 (13.8%)	12 (1.6%)
NYT	342	150 (43.9%)	24 (7%)	35 (10.2%)	58 (17.0%)	8 (2.3%)	2 (.06%)	11 (3.2%)	46 (13.5%)	8 (2.3%)
USA Today	153	63 (41.1%)	14 (9.2%)	16 (10.5%)	24 (15.7%)	8 (5.2%)	4 (2.6%)	7 (4.6%)	15 (9.8%)	2 (1.3%)

TOP THREE FRAMES (bolded in the table):

WSJ – 1) Economic; 2) Legality/Constitutionality; 3) Political Factors

NYT – 1) Economic; 2) Legality/Constitutionality; 3) Political Factors

USA Today – 1) Economic; 2) Legality/Constitutionality; 3) Capacity and Resources

Table 4.1 illustrates the frequency of framing references, segmented by the nine framing dimensions, and by source (WSJ, NYT, USA Today). The top two most-frequently coded frames for all three sources are the same: *Economic* and *Legality/Constitutionality*, and are similar in magnitude: 1) *Economic*: WSJ (40.8%) vs. NYT (43.9%) vs. USA Today (41.1%); *Legality/Constitutionality*: WSJ (21.9%) vs. NYT (17.0%) vs. USA Today (15.7%). The third most-employed frame for the WSJ and NYT is *Political Factors*, 13.8% and 13.5% respectively; whereas for USA Today, it is *Capacity and Resources* at 10.5%.

Both the conservative (WSJ) and liberal (NYT) print sources used not only the same top three frames (*Economic*, *Legality/Constitutionality*, *Political Factors*), but the percentage differentials for each frame was consistent between the two sources, with *Economic* frames nearly double that of *Legality and Constitutionality* and approximately three times as great as *Political Factors*. Centrist USA Today had similar results, with the *Economic* frame leading

Legality by nearly three times as much (41.1% vs. 15.7%), and *Capacity and Resources* by four times (41.1% vs. 10.5%). Notably, the morality and ethics frame was tied for last in the WSJ and came in at fifth place in the NYT and USA Today.

4.4.1 **“Pro” vs. “Con” positions, by Source, within Frames**

Each of the nine framing dimensions contains several codes (see Appendix B for full list of nine frames and applicable codes). To ascertain the positionality (“pro” or “con”) of each message, each code within the top three frames for each media source (print and broadcast news) was examined to identify which codes were most used within each frame. Table 4.2 provides an overview, across all six media sources, of the percentage of “pro” vs. “con” arguments.

TABLE 4.2

NUMBER OF ARTICLES USING PRO/CON ARGUMENTS BY FRAME ACROSS ALL SOURCES

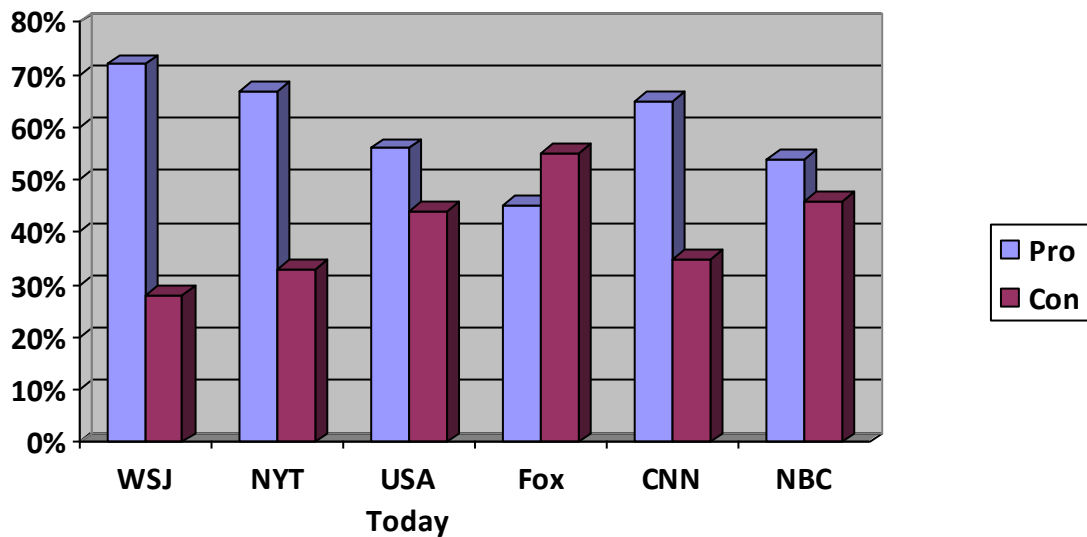
SOURCE	WSJ		NYT		USA Today		Fox		CNN		NBC	
FRAMING	Pro	Con	Pro	Con	Pro	Con	Pro	Con	Pro	Con	Pro	Con
Economic	23	19	23	10	10	8	9	8	17	8	10	6
Legality and Constitutionality	30	5	10	4	9	3	0	0	8	3	0	0
Political Factors	21	5	10	7	0	0	6	5	6	6	0	0
Capacity and Resources	0	0	0	0	1	5	2	8	0	0	0	8
Morality and Ethics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	2
TOTAL N	103		64		36		38		48		35	
Percent	71.8%	28.2%	67.1%	32.9%	55.6%	44.4%	44.7%	55.3%	64.6%	35.4%	54.3%	45.7 %

In analyzing the media frames across all the sources, it is important once again to note that while each source employs slightly different approaches in their media messages, they still operate within a very limited and constricted range that mimics and mirrors the messages of their counterparts. Though the conservative and liberal sources may frequently be at odds with each other about certain points, the overall consistency across their messages is easily seen, and remains relatively constant as evidenced by the consistency in “pro” versus “con” percentages. The surprise here is that the conservative *Wall Street Journal* seems to be as in favor of eliminating the gender wage gap as the liberal *New York Times*, based on the number of “pro” vs. “con” percentages (71.8% vs. 67.1% respectively). As expected, centrist USA Today and NBC employ more equitable distributions of pro/con messages, while Fox and CNN mirror each other on partisan coverage, with conservative Fox employing the least amount of “pro”-sided frames of any source.

4.4.2 Pro/Con Analysis by Source (WSJ, NYT, USA Today)

The *Wall Street Journal* dedicated the greatest amount of news space to covering this issue (N=103); NBC, the least (N=36). In terms of pro/con arguments, Figure 4 illustrates that the greatest percentage of “pro” arguments in support of gender wage gap equality appeared in the conservative *Wall Street Journal*—nearly 72%—and the most equally distributed percentage in centrist sources *USA Today* and NBC. The former is a surprising result, given the assumption that conservatively-oriented news sources would employ a larger percentage of contrary arguments against wage parity. In fact, every news source analyzed, with the exception of Fox News utilized more arguments in favor of eliminating or reducing the wage gap.

Figure 4. Number of articles across all sources, by Pro/Con percentages



Tables 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 give greater details within each frame dimension, “pro” and “con” codes as to which media frames are invoked in print sources. The numbers in parentheses following each code indicate the number of times the code appears in the source, and in how many articles it appears. For example, of the N=103 Wall Street Journal articles, the first code under the *Economic* frame is “Statistical difference in pay exists”. The “(93/8)” designation represents 93 references to this code, in 8 of the 103 total articles. This process is repeated for each source, frames, and codes.

TABLE 4.3

FREQUENCY OF CODE BY FRAME, WSJ (N=103 articles)

Frame Dimensions (Top 3)	Top Codes – Pro (# of times code is used)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)	Top Codes – Con (# of times code is used)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)
Economic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists (93/8) 2. Lower-wage workers tend to be women (26/7) 3. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less (20/8) <p>Zero (0/0) references made to code 'closing gap increases women-owned businesses'</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women work less than men on average (36/7) 2. There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality) (34/6) 3. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible (23/6)
Legality and Constitutionality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual and class action law suits around employment discrimination in the past have resulted in material appropriation for victims of discrimination (63/7) 2. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the wage gap (41/8) 3. Current laws are too limited and do not enforce equality (22/8) 4. Equal Pay signed in to law in 1963 protects against discrimination and should be upheld (19/7) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity (13/5)
Political Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections (38/7) 2. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party (37/8) 3. Most equal rights' groups support gender wage equality (16/6) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keeping laws in place benefits one political party (8/3) 2. There is little political gain to be made for political entities if wages are equalized (3/2)

As illustrated in Table 4.4, once again, in the *NYT*, the “con” position framing women as working less than men on average appeared more frequently than the “pro”-sided stance that lower wages earned mainly by women hurt families (nine as opposed to eight times), although the latter was present in twice as many articles (four vs. two). A quote from the April 14, 2014 *New York Times* asks, “Are women paid less than men because they choose to be, by gravitating to lower-paying jobs like teaching and social work? That is what Republicans who voted down the Equal pay bill this month would have you believe.” This exemplifies the use of a pro-oriented codes (lower-wage workers tend to be women, occupational segregation). The article continues by providing substantive research-based data suggesting the “majority of the pay gap between men and women actually comes from differences within occupations – not between them,” according to Harvard University economist, Claudia Golden (Miller, 2014).

TABLE 4.4

FREQUENCY OF CODE BY FRAME, NYT (N=64 articles)

Frame Dimensions (Top 3)	Top Codes – Pro (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)	Top Codes - Con (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)
Economic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists (36/5) 2. Lower-wage workers tend to be women (19/5) 3. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less (18/5) 4. Married women/women with dependents tend to experience wage penalty (12/4) 5. Women's lower wages hurt families (8/4) <p>Zero (0/0) references made to code 'closing gap increases women-owned businesses'</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality) (11/5) 2. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible (11/3) 3. Women work less than men on average (9/2)
Legality and Constitutionality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the wage gap (21/4) 2. Individual and class action law suits around employment discrimination in the past have resulted in material appropriation for victims of discrimination (13/3) 3. Current laws are too limited and do not enforce equality (10/3) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity (5/4)
Political Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party. (15/4) 2. Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections (11/3) 3. Most equal rights' groups support gender wage equality (11/3) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party (15/4) 2. Keeping laws in place benefits one political party (7/3)

Table 4.5 quantifies codes used within news articles from USA Today. Once again, the *Economic* frame leads with the highest number of references. A key difference in the percentage of “pro” versus “con” codes in *USA Today* in comparison to the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* is that *USA Today*’s “con” codes were more prevalent or equaled the amount of “pro” codes in two frames: *Legality and Constitutionality* and *Capacity and Resources*. With the former frame, articles employed the “con” code suggesting that laws already exist to minimize pay inequity, more frequently than the “pro” code indicating lawsuits are critical as they have been successful in gaining restitution for anti-discrimination victims. In the case of the latter frame, three of the four “con” codes are more regularly present and appear in more articles than the single “pro” code which argues limited barriers exist preventing the resolution to the gender wage gap issue.

TABLE 4.5

FREQUENCY OF CODE BY FRAME, USA Today (N=36)

Frame Dimensions (Top 3)	Top Codes - Pro (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)	Top Codes - Con (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)
Economic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists (18/4) 2. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less (7/1) 3. Women's lower wages hurt families (5/3) 4. Lower-wage workers tend to be women (5/2) <p>Zero (0/0) references made to three codes: 'Married women experience a motherhood penalty in the workplace. Wage gaps are smallest for those women who have never had children/dependent care', 'women care about money as much as men', or 'women like to work as much as men'</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible (5/2) 2. Women with same levels of education, experience are paid equally to men (5/2) 3. Women have lesser amounts of labor experience than men (5/2) 4. Women work less than men on average (5/2)
Legality and Constitutionality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the wage gap (8/3) 2. Equal Pay signed in to law in 1963 protects against discrimination and should be upheld (5/4) 3. Individual and class action law suits around employment discrimination in the past have resulted in material appropriation for victims of discrimination (3/2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity (4/3)
Capacity and Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are few limitations preventing this issue from being addressed (2/1) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women prefer to or opt out to do other types of jobs like run their own businesses (6/1) 2. Women expect to not work (4/2) 3. There are other societal issues that are more pressing/deserve greater attention (2/2) 4. Women don't negotiate as well as men for salaries or wages (2/1)

Table 4.6 portrays the top “pro” and “con” codes across all three sources, based on highest frequency of references and number of articles in which the codes are cited. In summary: 1) variations in frame selection across the three print sources are considerably less than similarities in frame selection between the three; 2) with few exceptions, a majority of codes selected by each print source leverage similar “pro” and “con” positions. For example, the leading “pro”-valenced codes under the *Economics* frame for all three sources, in sequential order:

- 1. Statistical and numerical differences in pay exist.**
- 2. Lower-wage workers tend to be women. Women are more likely to remain poor/be in poverty due to wealth inequality. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women.**
- 3. Occupational segregation could be minimized (occupations staffed predominantly by men tend to pay more than those staffed predominantly by women).**

Another example is evident under the *Legality and Constitutionality* frame. All three sources (*WSJ*, *NYT*, *USA Today*) used the following “pro” codes:

- 1. Individual and class action lawsuits around employment discrimination in the past have resulted in material appropriation for victims of discrimination.**
- 2. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) is needed to address the wage gap.**

Both the *WSJ* and *NYT* additionally employed the “Current laws are too limited and do not enforce equality” as a “pro” code; and the *WSJ* and *USA Today* used the Equal Pay Act

(signed into law in 1963) as an argument in favor of upholding anti-discrimination legislation.

Concomitantly, all three sources applied the code of current legislation already in place and sufficient as a “con’ position against wage equalization. By employing both “pro” and “con” legality frames, these print media sources suggest that present laws are adequate in their current states to not warrant additional changes.

TABLE 4.6

**CODE FREQUENCY ACROSS PRINT SOURCES WITHIN TOP FOUR FRAME
DIMENSIONS**

(N = number of articles total in which frame occurs)

Frames	Positions	WSJ	NYT	USA Today
Economic	PRO	1. Statistical difference in pay exists 2. Lower-wage workers tend to be women 3. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less N = 74	1. Statistical difference in pay exists 2. Lower-wage workers tend to be women 3. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less N = 23	1. Statistical difference in pay exists 2. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less 3. Lower-wage workers tend to be women 4. Women’s lower wages hurt families N = 10
	CON	1. Women work less than men on average 2. There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality) 3. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible N = 29	1. There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality) 2. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible 3. Women work less than men on average N = 10	4. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible 5. Women with same levels of education, experience are paid equally to men 6. Women have lesser amounts of labor experience than men 7. Women work less than men on average N = 8

Legality and Constitutionality	PRO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Material appropriation for victims of anti-discrimination 2. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the wage gap. 3. Current laws too limited 4. Equal Pay Act (1963) should be upheld N = 30	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the gender wage gap 2. Material appropriation for victims of anti-discrimination 3. Current laws too limited N = 10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the gender wage gap 2. Equal Pay Act (1963) should be upheld N = 9
	CON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity N = 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity N = 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity N = 3
Political Factors	PRO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections 2. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party 3. Most equal rights' groups support gender wage equality N = 21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party 2. Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections. 3. Most equal rights' groups support gender wage equality N = 10	Code was not present N = 0
	CON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keeping laws in place benefits one political party 2. There is little political gain to be made for political entities if wages are equalized N = 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party 2. Keeping laws in place benefits one political party N = 7	Code was not present N = 0
Capacity and Resources	PRO	Code was not present	Code was not present	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are few limitations preventing this issue from being addressed

Similar to Table 4.1, Table 4.7 illustrates the frequency of framing references, segmented by the nine framing dimensions, across three **broadcast news sources** (Fox, CNN, NBC). Once again, the *Economic* frame is the most utilized across all three sources, at fairly similar percentages to that of the print sources: Fox (35.3%), CNN (42.7%) and NBC (48.8%). The *Economic* frame is, by far, the most popular frame utilized, appearing nearly two to three times more frequently than the second most popular frames for any sources (35.3% vs. 20.5% for Fox; 42.7% vs. 17.0% for CNN, and 48.8% vs. 15.4% for NBC).

TABLE 4.7

FRAMING FREQUENCY (NUMBER; PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL) ACROSS BROADCAST
NEWS SOURCES BY FRAME DIMENSION

Sources	Total	Economic	Morality	Capacity & Resources	Legality	Employer Rights	Profit	Public Sentiment	Political Factors	Info & Education
Fox	215	76 (35.3%)	15 (7%)	31 (14.4%)	21 (9.8%)	10 (4.7%)	7 (3.3%)	11 (5.0%)	44 (20.5%)	0 (0.0%)
CNN	434	185 (42.7%)	39 (9.0%)	36 (8.3%)	74 (17.0%)	10 (2.3%)	4 (1%)	21 (4.8%)	58 (13.3%)	7 (1.6%)
NBC	117	57 (48.8%)	18 (15.4%)	18 (15.4%)	11 (9.4%)	5 (4.3%)	1 (.08%)	1 (.08%)	6 (5.1%)	0 (0.0%)

TOP THREE FRAMES (bolded in chart):

FOX— 1) Economic; 2) Political Factors; 3) Capacity and Resources
 CNN – 1) Economic; 2) Legality/Constitutionality; 3) Political Factors
 NBC – 1) Economic; 2) Morality and Ethics; 3) Capacity and Resources

The biggest variety was apparent in the second and third-choice frame selection, because all three sources used different frames.

In the case of the second frame, for Fox, it is *Political Factors*; for CNN, it is *Legality and Constitutionality*; and for NBC, it is *Morality and Ethics*, **the first and only time this**

dimension falls within the most-highly used frames (albeit in second place) across all six sources. NBC varied its frame use considerably by introducing messaging around the moral imperative and necessity to equalize the gender wage gap as the “right” thing to do”. Notes White House Advisor Valarie Jarrett in a July 20, 2010 interview, “Women deserve equal pay. It’s a very fundamental right.” She then ties the assertion of equal rights in with the *Legality and Constitutionality* frame the criticality of supporting the Paycheck Fairness Act (being introduced at that point in 2010): “It’s fair, balanced, and reasonable”.

Interestingly, *Legality and Constitutionality* is only employed as a significant frame by CNN; this is in stark contrast to the print sources which all identified this as their second most-dominant frame. Fox and NBC only employ this frame roughly ten percent of the time (9.8% and 9.4% respectively). *Political Factors* remains an important frame for both conservative Fox and liberal CNN; *Capacity and Resources*, likewise, show up in Fox and NBC reports.

It is also interesting to note that conservatively-oriented Fox, which one would suspect would have relied heavily upon laws, jurisprudence, and policies as paramount frame messaging devices did not employ the *Legality and Constitutionality* frame to any significant degree, and instead predicated its framing on *Political Factors*, which emphasize how changes in laws can benefit or hinder the electoral and voting processes, and political party advancement.

Pro/Con Analysis by Source (Fox, CNN, NBC)

Using the same approach applied in Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 for the print media sources, Tables 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 illustrate the frequency of code use in either the “pro” or “con” position by each broadcast source. Table 4.8 displays coding results for Fox.

TABLE 4.8

FREQUENCY OF CODE USE BY FRAME AND SOURCE FOX (N=38)

Frame Dimensions (Top 3)	Top Codes - Pro (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)	Top Codes - Con (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)
Economic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists (19/3) 2. Lower-wage workers tend to be women (9/2) 3. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less (7/2) 4. More women would enter the workforce as a result of pay equity (3/2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible (11/3) 2. Women work less than men on average (9/2) 3. Women have lesser amounts of labor experience than men (5/3)
Political Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party (21/3) 2. Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections (17/3) <p>Zero (0/0) references to support of equal rights' groups regarding gender wage equality</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party (21/3) 2. Keeping laws in place benefits one political party (6/2)
Capacity and Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are few limitations preventing this issue from being addressed (3/2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women expect to not work (10/3) 2. There are other societal issues that are more pressing/deserve greater attention (2/2) 3. Individual women are responsible for achieving equality (6/3)

This is the first time we see the “pro” argument in the *Economic* frame around women entering the workforce if pay equality were achieved employed as a frame to a significant degree, in any source. This invokes both a supply-side oriented political discourse (women have the individual choice to enter the workforce, which is a benefit to society and should thusly be encouraged) and a demand-side political theme suggesting there are limited barriers preventing women from doing so. Under the *Political Factors* frame, it is not surprising that zero references were made to the support of gender wage equality by most equal rights’ groups. In an article not specifically accessed for purposes of this study, but focused on Fox News’ perspectives on gender pay inequality, “a new report than ranked the United States 65th in the world on gender pay equality discredits Fox News’ continuing campaign to dismiss the gender pay gap” (Media Matters, October 29, 2014). In an April 23rd, 2014 discussion with Republican Strategist, Kate Obenshein, Fox’s Bill O’Reilly opined that a study commissioned by the National Bureau of Economic Research from 2013 found that mate selection was related to economic decisions. Obenshein pointed out that the study was not sanctioned by “a right wing group”, in order to dismiss any possible bias perception that the data analysis was conservatively-skewed.

This is the first instance of a *Capacity and Resources* frame using the “con” supply--side argument that individual women are responsible for achieving equality, essentially negating the demand-oriented argument that this issue is systemic in nature and is solely dependent upon an individual woman’s wherewithal to succeed. In a February 28, 2014 broadcast, O’Reilly asked conservative financial reporter Maria Bartiromo about how her experience with discrimination: The exchange is an example of an individual effort (supply-side) argument, a “con” version of the *Capacity and Resources* frame.

O'REILLY: Now you, Maria Bartiromo, everyone, you went into a male-dominated field a while back and were you ever discriminated against because you were down on the floor, the stock exchange floor, did you run in to any of these problems?

BARTIROMO: When I first got down to the floor, and that's about 20 years ago, yes, when I first got down to the floor there was a small handful of people who did not want me there and only because it wasn't just because I was a woman but it was also I was the media, because I was the first person to bring a camera down on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. **But, I've never played the woman card, you know, I've never had issues beyond that first week when I was on the floor of the New York Stock exchange and no one had ever done it before. For the most part, any time I would run into a challenge, I would say to myself 'okay I have to study, study, study, do my work, make sure I know my stuff, and kill it tomorrow.'** And that served me very well actually, just **working hard** [emphasis added].

Table 4.9 lists the top codes employed within CNN news stories.

TABLE 4.9

FREQUENCY OF CODE USE BY FRAME CNN (N=48)

Frame Dimensions (Top 3)	Top Codes - Pro (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)	Top Codes - Con (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)
Economic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists (70/3) 2. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less (27/3) 3. Lower-wage workers tend to be women (19/3) 4. Closing the gender wage gap would create a significant economic stimulus (7/3) 5. Women's lower wages hurt families (6/3) 6. Motherhood penalty in effect (6/2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible (17/2) 2. Women work less than men on average (11/3) 3. There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality) (9/3)
Legality and Constitutionality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the wage gap (29/3) 2. Equal Pay signed in to law in 1963 protects against discrimination and should be upheld (14/3) 3. Current laws are too limited and do not enforce equality (13/2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity (9/3)
Political Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party (25/3) 2. Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections (22/3) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party (25/3) 2. Keeping laws in place benefits one political party (8/3)

Once again, new codes are introduced under the *Economic* frame, including the idea that closing the gender wage gap would create an economic stimulus, and that wage gaps are smallest for women who have never had children or dependent care. Marcy Cardona, CNN political

commentator and Democratic strategist, declared “here are facts that actually show that when you fight for women's issues that when women make it economically when they are successful economically the country does better” (September 19, 2014 broadcast). Chris Cuomo, CNN Anchor, echoes this, on a February 6, 2014 broadcast: “We just had Bob Moritz on from PricewaterhouseCoopers. And he did a big study there at the companies that not having diversity in the workplace is one of the biggest things holding back the U.S. economy”.

Regarding the motherhood dependency frame, one news report discussed California’s Silicon Valley as a “prime example of a high-tech job arena where women must make certain sacrifices of home and family to succeed” (May 11, 2000). Another newscast noted, “I mean you look at, for example, experience, the networks women have, shorter tenure, as Jim mentioned, in the same job, off ramps that they take to have children or because they have different priorities. Women are still seen as the caregivers. There's still this legacy of discrimination” (April 8, 2014). A September 7, 1992 news report indicated, “When it comes to benefits, women are also at a disadvantage, especially if they have children. Lawmakers have proposed measures to guarantee family leave, and grant women bigger damages if they can prove discrimination. But many say those initiatives might hurt as much as they help if they discourage employers from hiring women.” These are clear examples of demand-side language that serves to criticize the presence of institutional structures designed to limit women’s full participation in the workforce (shorter tenure, unpaid leave) and stereotypical gender perceptions of inequality (women as caregivers as opposed to primary breadwinners).

TABLE 4.10

FREQUENCY OF CODE USE BY FRAME NBC (N=35)

Frame Dimensions (Top 3)	Top Codes - Pro (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)	Top Codes - Con (# of references)/ (#number of articles in which code is referenced)
Economic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists (19/3) 2. Closing the gender wage gap would create a significant economic stimulus (7/3) 3. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less (7/2) 4. Lower-wage workers tend to be women (9/2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women work less than men on average (4/3) 2. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible (4/2) 3. There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality) (3/1)
Morality and Ethics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human beings are equal and should be treated equally (5/4) 2. Equality is the right thing to do (5/3) 3. Wage equality will benefit families, the country (4/2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women should/should not be in the workplace in certain positions because they are emotionally, physically, and/or mentally incapable of performing as effectively or as well as men (3/2)
Capacity and Resources	Zero (0/0) “pro” arguments identified	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women expect to not work (6/3) 2. Women don’t negotiate as well as men for salaries or wages (5/3) 3. Women prefer to or opt out to do other types of jobs like run their own businesses (4/2)

Of note in Table 4.10 (NBC) are the following findings. First, there is an overall low frequency levels of “con” under the *Economic* frame, in comparison to the frequency with which these codes are invoked by Fox News and CNN, in most cases three to four times as much by these sources.

A second finding of interest centered around the *Morality and Ethics* frame. **The sole “con” code posited that women were in some ways inferior to men and this supposition was reinforced by corporate leadership in salary discussions.** This was based on newscast coverage from October 10, 2014 around Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella’s remarks about women in the workplace. Nadella’s original comment, made as advice to women who were uncomfortable asking for raises: “It’s not really about asking for the raise, but knowing and having faith that the system will actually give you the right raises as you go along. And that, I think, might be one of the additional superpowers that quite frankly women who don’t ask for a raise have, because that’s good karma.”

On the “pro” side of the position, Commentators Anne Thompson and Mika Brzezinski (from MSNBC’s “Morning Joe” program) upheld women’s equality as equal to men referring to outmoded gender stereotypes in an exchange with a call-in guest:

ANNE THOMPSON: It’s somewhat condescending and almost discriminatory?

WOMAN: Yes, I believe so. And I believe that he should learn to keep his mouth shut.

MIKA BRZEZINSKI (Morning Joe): It felt like shades of the 1950s...It’s completely backwards. It is so unbelievable that a CEO in this day and age would tell women, pat them on the head and tell them to behave.

A third observation of note is that *zero* “pro” references were made under the *Capacity and Resources* frame on the “pro” side, but several on the “con” side; NBC did not rely on this frame in any of its 35 broadcasts during this period. “Con” arguments clustered around women either expecting to not work, opting out of the workforce, and being poor negotiators, once again reinforcing supply-side orientation around rational choice for job market entry or exit.

Table 4.11 repeats the same process as Table 4.7 combining frames across the three broadcast news sources. Five key frames are invoked: *Economic*, *Legality and Constitutionality*, *Political Factors*, *Capacity and Resources*, and *Morality and Ethics* frames. Not only are more frames used across broadcast sources versus print sources (five as compared to four), but there is greater invocation of a wider variety of codes within the *Economic* and *Legality and Constitutionality* frames. In the former, the overall contribution of women in the labor force as a lever that stimulates the economy is mentioned. Additionally, the code “Married women experience a motherhood penalty in the workplace is used. Wage gaps are smallest for those women who have never had children/dependent care” is also utilized.

TABLE 4.11

CODE FREQUENCY ACROSS ALL BROADCAST NEWS SOURCES

Frames	Positions /Tone	Fox	CNN	NBC
Economic	PRO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists 2. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less 3. More women would enter the workforce as a result of pay equity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists 2. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less 3. Lower-wage workers tend to be women 4. Closing the gender wage gap would create a significant economic stimulus 5. Women’s lower wages 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical difference in pay exists 2. Closing the gender wage gap would create a significant economic stimulus 3. Occupational segregation: occupations staffed by women tend to pay less 4. Lower-wage workers tend to be women

			<p>hurt families</p> <p>6. Motherhood penalty in effect</p>	
	CON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible 2. Women work less than men on average 3. Women have lesser amounts of labor experience than men 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible 2. Women work less than men on average 3. There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women work less than men on average 2. Statistical differences in pay gaps are negligible 3. There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality)
Political Factors	PRO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party 2. Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party 2. Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections 	Code was not present
	CON	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party 2. Keeping laws in place benefits one political party 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party 2. Keeping laws in place benefits one political party 	Code was not present
Legality and Constitutionality	PRO	Code was not present	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the wage gap 2. Equal Pay signed in to law in 1963 protects against discrimination and should be upheld 3. Current laws are too limited and do not enforce equality 4. DOL/Fair Standards Labor Act ensures wage appropriation 	Code was not present
	CON	Code was not present	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of 	Code was not present

			citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity	
Capacity and Resources	PRO	1. There are few limitations preventing this issue from being addressed	Code was not present	Zero (0/0) “pro” arguments identified
	CON	1. Women expect to not work 2. There are other societal issues that are more pressing/deserve greater attention 3. Individual women are responsible for achieving equality	Code was not present	1. Women expect to not work 2. Women don’t negotiate as well as men for salaries or wages 3. Women prefer to or opt out to do other types of jobs like run their own businesses
Morality and Ethics	PRO	Code was not present	Code was not present	1. Human beings are equal and should be treated equally 2. Equality is the right thing to do 3. Wage equality will benefit families, the country
	CON	Code was not present	Code was not present	1. Women should/should not be in the workplace in certain positions because they are emotionally, physically, and/or mentally incapable of performing as effectively or as well as men

4.6 **RQ3 – Media Polarization – Comparing all media sources and messages**

RQ3: How do these frames vary based upon partisan affiliation and type (print or broadcast news) of each source?

Finding 3: Media sources are surprisingly consistent in the media frames they invoke, both across decades and within frame dimensions. They are, in fact, more similar than dissimilar in their treatment of the gender wage gap issue, regardless of partisanship. There are two exceptions: Fox is still heavily partisan and against gender wage gap equality, and NBC is the sole media source to *use Morality and Ethics* as a dominant frame.

4.6.1 **Consistency of media frames, regardless of partisanship**

Levendusky (2013) notes that “partisan media polarize viewers” and that “balanced setsof arguments can generate attitudinal polarization” (pg.1). Conservatives orient themselves around a single news outlet – Fox, with nearly 47% naming it as their primary source for news (Pew Research Center Report, 2014). On the liberal side, a multitude of outlets vie for audience attention: among consistent liberals, CNN garners 15% and the New York Times, 10%. Moderate or centrists have a similarly diffuse mix of news providers, with CNN at 20% and Fox at 8%.

The news sources audiences rely upon impact their viewing habits, polarization, and political habits, thereby influencing public opinion. In order to examine this within the confines of this study, I compared the top three frames across sources, and found that the WSJ, NYT, and CNN are essentially similar in terms of message content and frequency. CNN is strikingly similar in the **type** of frame dimensions it employs (same top three: *Economic*, *Legality/Constitutionality*, *Political Factors*, in the same order) and the **percentage** of content

dedicated to each frame, to the WSJ and NYT, particularly around the *Political Factors* frame at 13.3, 13.5 and 13.8% respectively). This is illustrated in Table 4.12.

TABLE 4.12
COMPARISON OF PRINT (WSJ, NYT) AND BROADCAST NEWS (CNN)
SOURCES ON TOP 3 FRAMES

Frames / Sources	Economic	Legality	Political Factors
WSJ	302 (40.8%)	162 (21.9%)	102 (13.8%)
NYT	150 (43.9%)	58 (17.0%)	46 (13.5%)
CNN	185 (42.7%)	74 (17.0%)	58 (13.3%)

In analyzing the media frames across all the sources, it is important once again to note that while each source employs slightly different approaches in their media messages, they still operate within a very limited and constricted range that mimics and mirrors the messages of their counterparts. Though the conservative and liberal sources may frequently be at odds with each other about certain points, the overall consistency across their messages is easily seen, and remains constant within each decade. It evolves over time, of course, to mirror political,

executive, and electoral processes occurring at a given moment, but there is still little variation in a theme.

4.6.2 Media Framing Across the Decades: Coverage Frequency

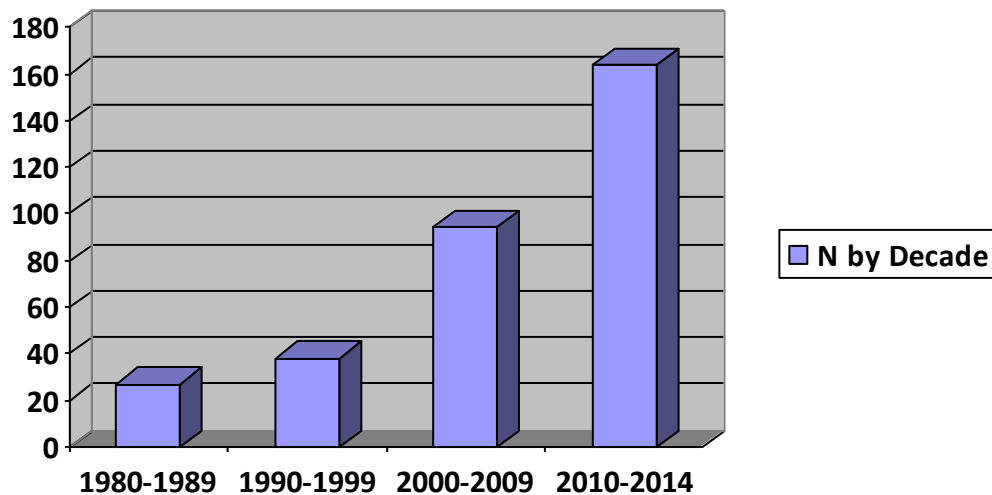
I examined the media messages across all sources as a comparison within and across decades to determine coverage frequency by time – that is, how much coverage was dedicated to the gender wage gap issue by source, decades, and years; and 2) how the variations in message content and tone shifted over time. The results are compiled in Tables 4.13, 4.14 and 4.15 and Figures 5 and 6 and elaborated upon below.

TABLE 4.13

NUMBER OF ARTICLES, ACROSS ALL DECADES

SOURCE	WSJ	NYT	USA Today	Fox	CNN	NBC	TOTALS BY DECADE
1980-1989	12	13	2	0	0	0	27
1990 – 1999	18	15	8	0	7	0	38
2000 - 2009	34	18	11	4	14	13	94
2010 – 2014	49	17	15	34	27	22	164
TOTALS (n = 324)	103	64	36	38	48	35	323

Figure 5. Number of articles by decade, all sources



The data here are telling insofar as 1) they validate the marked increase in the amount of news coverage on the gender wage gap topic across all news sources from the 1980 to 2014, which reflects increasing issue salience; and 2) highlights the historical differences in terms of when each media source began covering the gender wage gap topic. The key take-aways from this analysis are as follows:

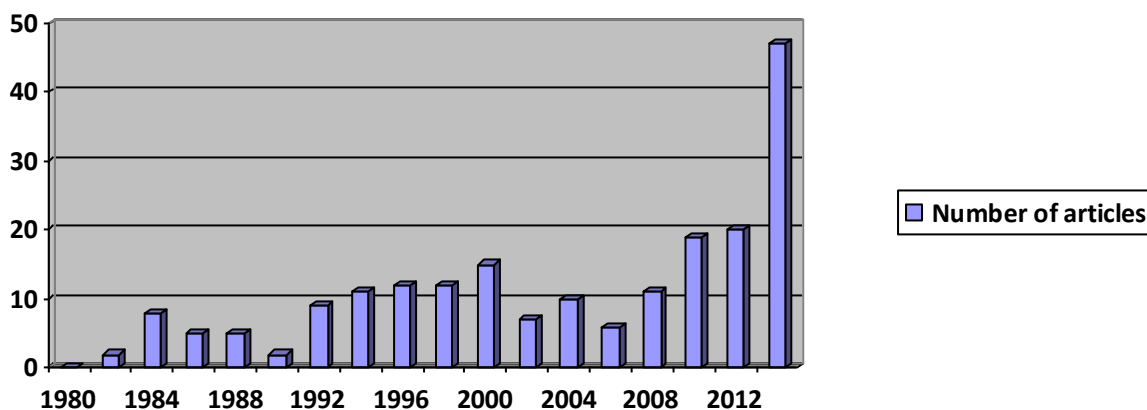
- The greatest number of articles around the gender wage gap issue are present in the 2010-2014 period (N=164)
- The fewest number of articles occurs in the 1980-1989 decade (N=27)
- The numbers of articles that focused on the gender wage gap increased within each source across decades from 27 in 1980-1989 to 164 in 2010-2014.

- All three print sources (WSJ, NYT, USA Today) preceded broadcast coverage on this issue. Broadcast news coverage (Fox, CNN, NBC) did not begin until the 1990s, with CNN. Fox and NBC beginning its coverage in early 2000.

4.6.3 Media Coverage Across All Sources: By Year

In a closer examination of media coverage frequency by year, note the majority of coverage occurs in 2000, followed by a decline from 2002 – 2008 (which coincides with the era of President G. W. Bush and a Republican Congress for most of his tenure, ushering in a decrease in discourse surrounding the gender wage gap). Upon Obama's election in 2009, the number of articles covering this topic increased exponentially from 2010-2014. Indeed, a third of all articles (N=324) appeared in the five-year period between 2010 and 2014. This is illustrated in Figure 6.

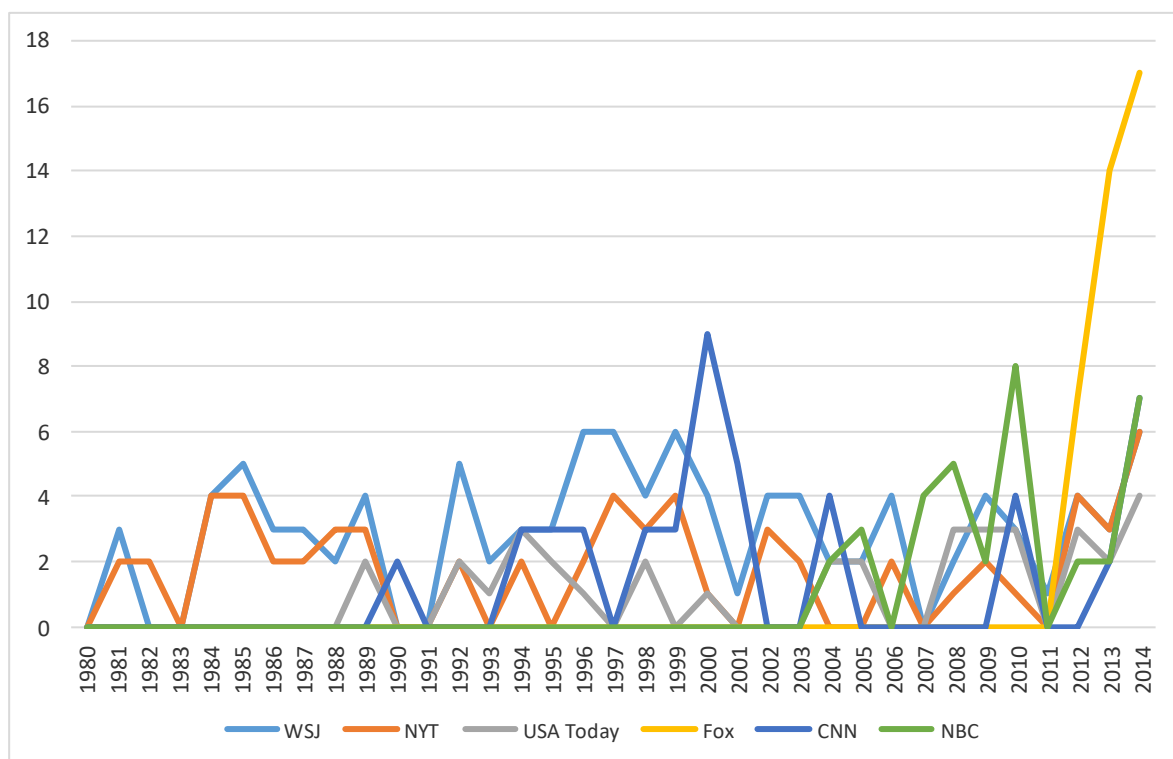
Figure 6. Number of articles across all sources, by year



4.6.4 Media Coverage: Media Source segmentation

An even deeper dive in to the data pinpoints trend lines for media coverage based on media source segmentation. This allows for exploration in to which sources incorporated the greatest or least amount of coverage by year, which can be used to analyze coverage around significant milestones by year. This is illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Number of articles by Source



Critical spikes in coverage occurred in 1991 and 1997 for The Wall Street Journal, 2000 for CNN, and 2011 for Fox. In the case of Fox coverage, this coincided with mid-term elections and introduction of the minimum wage and paycheck fairness debates in Congress, increasing public awareness of the gender wage gap issue. I elaborate upon this further in Chapter 5 with findings on RQ4.

4.6.5 Media Coverage: Pro vs. Con Frames

Finding 4: Overall, there are 2-3 times as many “pro” versus “con” codes evoked in a majority of the media frames, regardless of media source.

Within the (leading) *Economic* frame, there was again little variation in terms of the top codes selected for each position. In most cases, regardless of source, leading “pro” arguments centered on statistical validation that the gap exists, occupational segregation as a factor contributing to less pay for women, and that more lower-wage workers tend to be women. “Con” arguments were predicated largely on the discrediting the empirical information around the gap, and employing the supply-side argument of choice in occupational selection and amount of time women worked (less than men). *USA Today* was a slight outlier in this regard, invoking additional economic “pro” codes that tied lower wages to negative impact on families, and “con” codes to women having less labor experience and that, if they possess similar levels of education and experience, they are paid equally to men (this is, in fact, only true in certain professions and industries).

Next, neither of the centrist sources – *USA Today* or NBC – invoked the *Political factors* frame. They did not use arguments that tied the gender wage to a change in a political administration, an electoral process, or legislative vote.

On average, “pro” codes were employed two to three times as much as “con” codes across four of the five top framing dimensions (*Economic, Legality and Constitutionality, Political Factors*, and *Morality and Ethics*) and all six sources. Media invoked supportive frames with greater variety and frequency than negative or “con” frames, indicating overall support in favor of pay equity.

The remaining frame, *Capacity and Resources*, used “con” arguments more frequently for three of the six sources: conservative Fox, centrist USA Today, and centrist NBC. This is highly interesting for two reasons. First, as a frame, *Capacity and Resources* is the most closely aligned to a central tenet of the gender wage gap debate. Is this an issue of occupational choice, a supply-side argument that posits women make individual choices to enter or exit the labor market, based on skills, qualification, education, career interests, and other priorities (family, dependents), and therefore wages are determined based on market forces irrespective of gender or resource constraints? Or is it a demand-side argument, composed of inherent organizational and institutional structures that systemically contribute to discrimination in compensation market based on gender inequality?

One might assume that more conservative sources (WSJ, Fox) would heavily leverage this frame in favor of a supply-side position. In reality, however, my analysis shows that of the two conservative sources only Fox heavily relied upon this framing dimension, but also that two centrist sources were, in fact, more oriented in this direction. In short, there is considerable support for a supply-side argument against gender wage equality.

Second, the use of a “con” positionality by centrist sources indicated closer alignment between conservative and centrist media outlets than originally assumed. This is echoed in a Pew

Center Research Study from 2014, which indicates that those who ascribe to moderate political ideological leanings tend to rely on a combination of liberal and conservative sources for news. It is possible that centrist news sources like *USA Today* and NBC recognized this, and included conservatively oriented coverage in order to balance their coverage and maximize their audience appeal.

Overall, the six sources are considerably more similar than different, suggesting partisanship may not be as critical a factor related to the gender wage gap issue if we are examining the gender wage gap as a predominantly economic issue. It could also be interpreted in a completely different way. Perhaps the economic frame's use is ritually invoked as a symbolic issue rather than an actionable one by withholding an accompanying moral/ethical frame that would add a motivational component to coverage. It is also telling that the secondary and tertiary frames of *Legality and Constitutionality* and *Political Factors* both represent demand-side positions - 'the system is broken, therefore changes to laws and how political parties vote on this issue is needed' - which the media seems to support given the frequency of the use of "pro" arguments, in some cases 2-3 times as much as "con" arguments.

The demand-side argument was counter-balanced by *USA Today's* and *Fox's* strong inclination to use "con" frames under *Capacity and Resources*, at a 4-5 times greater rate than a "pro" stance. They are clearly indicating via a supply-side position that women have and exercise individual agency, work less than men, opt-in and opt-out as needed, and other demand-side factors are irrelevant ('the system is not broken; rather, individual proclivities guide employment decisions, therefore laws and political factors such as voting or Congressional debate on this issue do not need to change). This, I believe, accounts for the N=0 findings for at

least one of these frames for either source: Fox does not use *Legality and Constitutionality*, and USA Today does not engage *Political Factors* as a frame (N = 0 in both instances).

A final finding of note: with one exception, the *Morality and Ethics* frame rarely appears in coverage. Only NBC used this frame with any regularity, in nearly one-third of its broadcasts (11 of 35). In Chapter 5, I speculate as to why this one frame might be a “game changer” in relation to media framing around the gender wage gap.

4.7 Media Messages Across Decades

4.7.1 1980 – 1989: Comparable Pay; Supply-side arguments – “Just ask for a raise”

From 1980-1989, three sources – the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, and *USA Today* – began limited focus on the equal pay issue as one of comparable pay. During this early period they relied heavily on *Economic* and *Legislative and Constitutionality* frames. The *New York Times* provided a wide variety of frames on the gender wage gap issue, introduced statistical data that both supported and negated the wage gap, introduced the concept of occupational segregation, and discussed lawsuits (Washington State employees) that resulted in remuneration. By contrast, the *Wall Street Journal* debunked a Catalyst Foundation study that found top executive women earning 68% of their male counterparts in the same positions. The Journal quoted Kathleen Hudson, President and CEO of Brady Corporation (who earned \$435,000 annually): “The women on those lists ought to go ask for a raise... the moral for women in general is to learn how executive compensation is done...and make sure you’re fairly treated.” (November 10, 1998). Supply-side individual responsibility for ensuring equitable compensation was a dominant theme during this period of time in the WSJ.

Finally, centrist *USA Today* reported statistical gap data that highlighted wage earning differentials, and pointed to systemic changes are needed based on economic considerations and changing job roles: “The day is gone when employers could justify paying men more because ‘they had families’”.

The *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* also both invoked the *Legality and Constitutionality* frames quite heavily in this decade. They covered the *County of Washington v. Gunther* prison matrons’ case as a precursor to indicating that while lawsuits might move forward in the courts, the likelihood of legislative and executive action on this issue was minimal. Each election year (1982, 1984) produced a *Political Factors* discourse, as each of the Democratic candidates (1982 – Kennedy and Hart; 1984 – Mondale and Ferraro) showed their support for equal pay legislation, and contrasted it with the Reagan Administration’s opposition to comparable pay legislation, characterizing it as an “intrusion into the marketplace”.

Overall, the evolution of lawsuits, settlements and legal actions designed to mete out financial justice to victims of pay discrimination, in combination with individual women’s agency to manage and secure economic equality were the dominant messages of this era. This continued in to the next decade, and was bolstered by executive action from the Clinton Administration.

4.7.2 1990 – 1999: Lawsuits; Executive Discourse/Acts

During the 1990s, news framing focused on economic data, empirical studies, and reports analyzing the precise amounts of the gender wage gap, in addition to legal and legislative support around economic restitution. Interestingly, wage gap numbers are inconsistent and differ from source-to-source reflecting media partisanship: the more conservative sources (WSJ, Fox) say

the gap is 75 cents and emphasize smaller gaps in higher-paid positions such as higher education administration. *The New York Times* and *USA Today* both peg the gap at 77 cents. Media coverage likewise centers on the Harris Bank wage-discrimination lawsuit and \$14 million settlement in favor of the Plaintiffs (employees) which is covered by CNN, and NBC focuses coverage on President Bill Clinton's push to dedicate \$14 million to enforce the Equal Pay Act by hiring additional EEOC enforcement workers and providing education to women via public service announcements about legal options to seek remuneration. All sources, with two exceptions – *Fox News* and *USA Today* – focus much of the discourse on Clinton's legislative actions around bolstering the Equal Pay Act.

4.7.3 2000 – 2009: Equal Pay Takes Center Stage

By the 2000s, coverage of the debate became more nuanced. Media presented economic analyses that linked the wage gap to glass ceilings, sticky floors, and market forces. Supply-side positions centered around women making rational choices (opting in/out of the workforce), and emphasized that the size of the gap was overblown. The *Wall Street Journal* repeatedly noted that the size of the gap was much smaller than claimed, citing supply-side economists such as Blau and Goldin for legitimacy. Demand-side arguments advocated resolving the gap via political action, as Democrats challenged the Republican's dismissal of the gap as a rallying cry for political party change.

In the first half of the decade, the *Capacity and Resources* frame invoked by the *Wall Street Journal* and liberal CNN indicated that most of the gap was attributable solely to the supply-side argument of personal choice to enter or exit the labor force rather than systemic and institutional inequities. While the WSJ noted a desire among women for "...a certain flexibility

of a certain lifestyle...women often choose jobs that have more flexible hours, which can work well with child care,” (Borass, 2009). CNN cited a poll that reported that “Only thirty percent of women say they are discriminated against around salary” (August 30, 2001).

In the latter half of the decade, NBC echoed these themes, reminding readers that women are “not aggressive enough” as negotiators, that women should seek workplace mentors and networks that would facilitate their career ascendancy, and that women should “think like a businessperson – think financially” (NBC, 2007). Centrist USA Today likewise suggested that women failed at successfully negotiating salaries. Except for centrist USA Today and NBC media paid limited attention to the 2009 Lilly Ledbetter Act, Both discussed the implications of the law from the *Legality and Constitutionality* frame. Fox, however, disparaged the Act as another attempt at government intervention designed to limit market forces. Other items of note is the reuse of the *Political Factors* frame to link the gender wage gap issue to the ongoing political contest between the Democratic and Republican parties. Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry builds his campaign on equal pay efforts, and criticizes President George W. Bush: “George W. Bush turned back the clock on equal pay. And today the gap between women and men and earning is actually growing wider, not smaller as it was” (Fox, 2008). The article suggests that Kerry and the Democratic Party is leveraging the issue to the hilt solely to gain the women’s vote.

4.7.4 2010-2014: Minimal partisanship of media sources; heavy focus on Minimum Wage and Paycheck Fairness Act as “human rights’ issues”

The most interesting and heated media discourse took place in the 2010-2014 period. Every source used the *Economic* frame, again citing statistics that show a closing of the gap, the

gap as a ‘non-issue’, or the persistency of it over time despite remediation, and supporting their framing using either demand- or supply-side economists. A mix of liberal and centrist sources (NYT, USA Today, NBC) tied the wage gap issue to its detriment to the American family and society as a whole. Fox, on the other hand, criticizes the sources that have created the economic reports (Maria Shriver’s report is derided as being not only commissioned by the liberal George Soros Foundation, but supported by Hillary Clinton), and lets loose with Bill O’Reilly’s vitriol around the ‘alleged war on women’, commenting that women earn 82 cents on the dollar as compared to men and questioning why there is a problem with that disparity.

The preponderance of media coverage at this time is dedicated to the April 2014 discourse on the Paycheck Fairness Act. This discourse impacts nearly every media frame. As anticipated, the liberal and centrist sources position the Act as one that would “provide needed updates to the Equal Pay Act” (USA Today, 2014), “strengthen equal pay laws”, (CNN, 2014) and provide women with “more tools to fight pay discrimination” (NBC, 2014). Conservative WSJ and Fox position this as a political tool of the Democratic administration to curry the favor of women voters, suggesting that the two executive orders previously enacted by Obama ‘forced’ the hand of federal contractors to bend to the will of the government. “Democrats are trying to convince Americans there is a war on women” and divert attention away from the economy argues news pundit Bill O’Reilly. Fox and the Wall Street Journal also emphasize the *Capacity and Resources* frame repeatedly, commenting that personal choice is the primary dictator for women entering and exiting the workforce, and pursuing careers that are not as highly-paid as men’s. USA Today jumps on the bandwagon, offering both individual-choice (supply-side) rationale as well as demand-side arguments around systemic discrimination.

4.8 Summary

In summary, media coverage on the gender wage gap issue has increased over time from 1980 to 2014. Content and messaging varies from decade to decade, but the preponderance of frames employed cluster around four dominant ones for print media (*Economic, Legality and Constitutionality, Capacity and Resources, Political Factors*) and an additional one for broadcast news sources (*Morality and Ethics*): centrist NBC is the sole source to employ a morality-driven argument as a dominant frame in media coverage. Partisanship, therefore, does not seem to be a factor, a surprising finding given the dichotomous conservative vs. liberal and centrist affiliations.

Media, as a whole, seem to support the elimination of the gender wage gap, as is evidenced by the use of “pro” messages on the demand-side at two to three times greater frequency than “con” messages across all dominant frames. The one exception here is conservative Fox, whose messaging skews heavily towards supply-side rhetoric which reinforce individual agency rather than systemic or institutional discrimination as a contributing influence on the persistency of the gap. As media framing has shifted from the 1980s where comparable pay was the emphasis, towards constructs of equal pay and legislative action to address this issue in the 2000s, one might suspect a resolution to the issue. Despite the growing media coverage and use of “pro”-oriented arguments, the consistency of ritual media messaging around the same dominant frames, coupled with the virtual absence of a motivational action frame that invokes the “human rights” element as an ideological imperative, work in tandem to suppress the potential for reform.

In Chapter 5, I move on to examine whether shifts in media coverage occur around significant milestones, and how media coverage, significant milestones, and public opinion correlate.

5. Significant Milestones, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion

Findings and Discussion (RQ4 and RQ5)

We know now that media coverage has gained some traction over the course of 34 years. The next portion of my analysis delves into media framing around *significant milestones*, which, as Boydstun (2013) notes, are representative of periods of sustained media coverage related to a current news event. It is important to examine media coverage during these events to ascertain whether public opinion, as measured in polls, is reactive in nature to increases in coverage. Not only am I asking does it matter what the media is saying about the gender wage gap, which I explicated in Chapter 4, but when they say it, and does that shape potential policy formation? My findings reveal only a limited correlational effect, focused more heavily around five (of seventeen) milestones in terms of increased media coverage. However, there is continued upward-trending support for eliminating the gender wage gap which is clearly revealed in General Social Survey polls and others examined through Roper polls, paralleling the support demonstrated through “pro” media frames echoing demand-side rhetoric.

I begin by repeating the research questions RQ4 and RQ5, followed by analysis on significant milestones, polls and public opinion.

5.1 **RQ4: Media Framing around Significant Milestones**

RQ4: How do these frames vary around significant milestone points?

Finding 5: Media coverage is most intense around significant milestones that involve executive or legislative action (i.e. laws, Acts, Executive orders, formation of task forces) and considerably less or inconsistently associated with remunerative/judicial events (i.e.

lawsuits, settlements). Furthermore, only five of the seventeen identified significant milestones received substantive media coverage.

For ease of recall, I have repeated the list of significant milestones below in Table 5.1. I have modified this slightly from its predecessor by categorizing each of the significant milestones as either “L” for legislative (a law, Act or Executive Order is enacted/signed/passed), “R” for economic remediation (a strike or employee action results in compensation adjustments/remuneration), or both “L” and “R.”

TABLE 5.1

SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES FROM JANUARY 1, 1980 – APRIL 30, 2014

Time period	Significant Milestones (N=17)
1980–1989	<p>1981 - In <i>County of Washington (Oregon) v. Gunther</i>, the Supreme Court rules that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act applies even if jobs are different. Prison matrons earned only 70% of what male prison guards were paid, though their jobs scored almost the same job evaluation points. This landmark victory brought them up to 95% of what male guards earned. (L, R) (Baird & Walters, 1982).</p> <p>1981 - San Jose (CA) city workers are first workers to strike for pay equity. Their victory brings \$1.5 million in pay equity adjustments (and more in succeeding contracts). (L, R)</p>

	<p>1984 - Advocates battle attack on pay equity by Clarence Pendleton, Chair, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, who calls pay equity “the looniest idea since Looney Tunes.” Yale clerical and technical workers win first major strike in private sector over pay equity. Federal workers pay equity bill passes House 413-6 but loses in Senate 51-47. 20 states conduct pay equity surveys; 4 make pay equity adjustments. (L)</p> <p>1988–1989 - Pay Equity for Federal workers passes House 302-98. National Committee on Pay Equity celebrates its 10th Anniversary, now has 120 organizational members. 24 states have pay equity studies, 20 states have made some pay adjustments. San Francisco completes March 1987 pay equity adjustment agreement made with SEIU and other unions after nine years of struggle. (L)</p> <p>1989: Executive Order 11246 (Harris Trust Savings Bank/11-year race/sex discrimination case) passes. Administrative Law Judge ruled Harris Bank had discriminated against women and minorities in hiring, placement, salary, salary increases, and promotions, based on gender. The ruling resulted in the single largest financial recovery (\$14 million) for thousands of women and minorities. (L, R)</p>
1990–1999	<p>1991: Civil Rights Act enacted. Allowed Title VII Plaintiffs to recover compensatory and punitive damage caps due to intentional pay discrimination. Since 1964 Civil Rights Act of 1964, most comprehensive legislation to pass.</p>

	<p>Attempted to strengthen earlier law; designed to restore employees' ability to successfully sue employers for discrimination. (L)</p> <p>1995: EEOC holds meetings re: wage-based employment discrimination (1995; in 1994, 9,600 charges of wage discrimination were filed with the Commission under Equal Pay Act) (L)</p> <p>1999: Boeing wage-discrimination class action lawsuit settled on behalf of plaintiffs (\$72.5 million to 29,000 female employees) (R)</p>
2000–2009	<p>2001: Dukes v. Walmart; trail representing 1.6 million women in class action lawsuit, alleging discrimination in pay and promotion policies (settled in 2001, in favor of Defendant) (L)</p> <p>2002: Coca-Cola class action lawsuit (wage/race discrimination lawsuits; settled in favor of plaintiffs for \$195.2 million settlement) (R)</p> <p>2004: Wachovia lawsuit (\$5.5 million settlement for underpaying 2,000 female workers) (R)</p> <p>2004: EEOC v. Morgan Stanley & Co.(2004; EEOC obtained \$54 million for employees alleging sex-based discrimination in compensation, promotion, career advancement) (R)</p> <p>2007: Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. case initiated (L)</p> <p>2009: Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act passed 2009. President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act, which allows victims of pay discrimination to file a complaint with the government against their employer</p>

	<p>within 180 days of their last paycheck. Previously, victims (most often women) were only allowed 180 days from the date of the first unfair paycheck. This act is named after a former employee of Goodyear who alleged that she was paid 15–40% less than her male counterparts, which was later found to be accurate. (L)</p>
2010–2014	<p>2010: Formation of National Equal Pay Task Force (L)</p> <p>2013: Fair Minimum Wage Act passed (L)</p> <p>2014: Paycheck Fairness Act introduced in 113th Congress (L)</p> <p>April 2014: Equal Pay Act/Bill enactments – Executive Order/Presidential Memorandum (prevents workplace discrimination, employees gain control over pay, federal contractors required to submit data on employee compensation) (L)</p>

The intent of this research question was to see if a correlation existed between identified significant events and actual media coverage: was there, in fact, an increase in media coverage around any of the seventeen significant milestones associated with legislative/executive action (laws, Executive Orders, Acts) or remuneration (settlements resulting in retroactive pay). Figure 8 illustrates the number of media articles/transcripts associated with each of the seventeen significant milestones.

According to my analysis, the highest level of correlation between significant milestones and media coverage occurred in five years: 1999, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2014. These included increased media coverage around the following:

- (1) Boeing wage discrimination lawsuit (settled in 1999);
- (2) Passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (2009);
- (3) Passage of the Fair Minimum Wage Act (2013); and
- (4) Introduction of the Paycheck Fairness Act (2013)
- (5) Congressional and public discourse on Paycheck Fairness Act (2014).

Four of the five were example of legislative/executive action, and these four occurred from 2009-2014; only the Boeing lawsuit settlement was a clear example of wage reparation.

What is immediately apparent is that increased media coverage seems to occur more regularly when media frames focus on legislative and executive actions in the political realm, versus legal actions such as settlements in the judicial arena. As the Obama administration enacted (Lilly Ledbetter, Minimum Wage) or deliberated around (Paycheck Fairness Act, Equal Pay Bill), media paid attention. Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11 represent media coverage around significant milestones by decade.

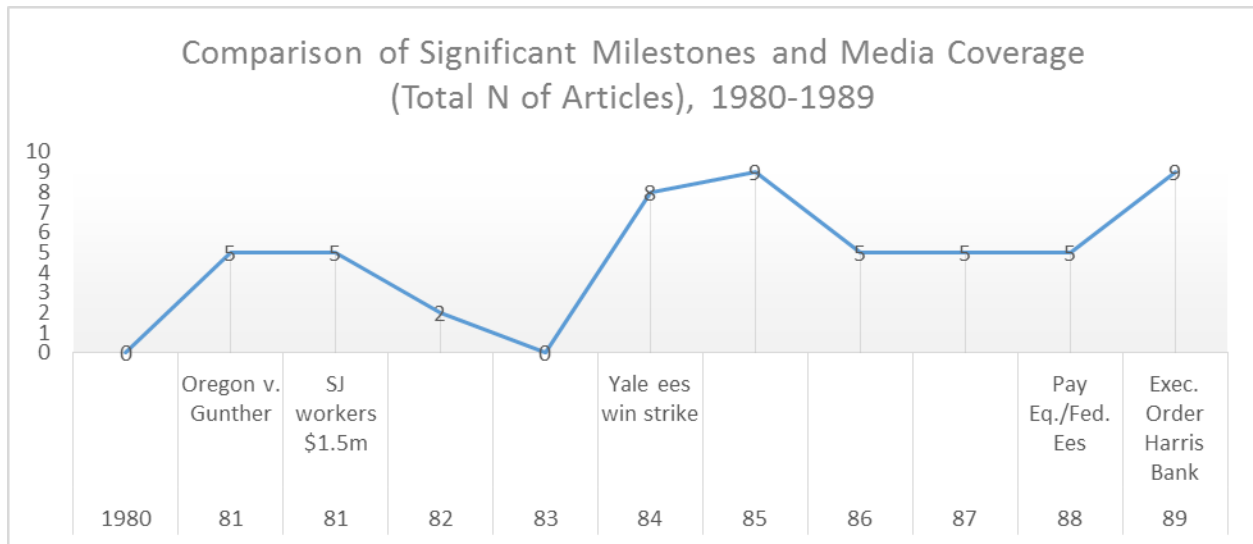
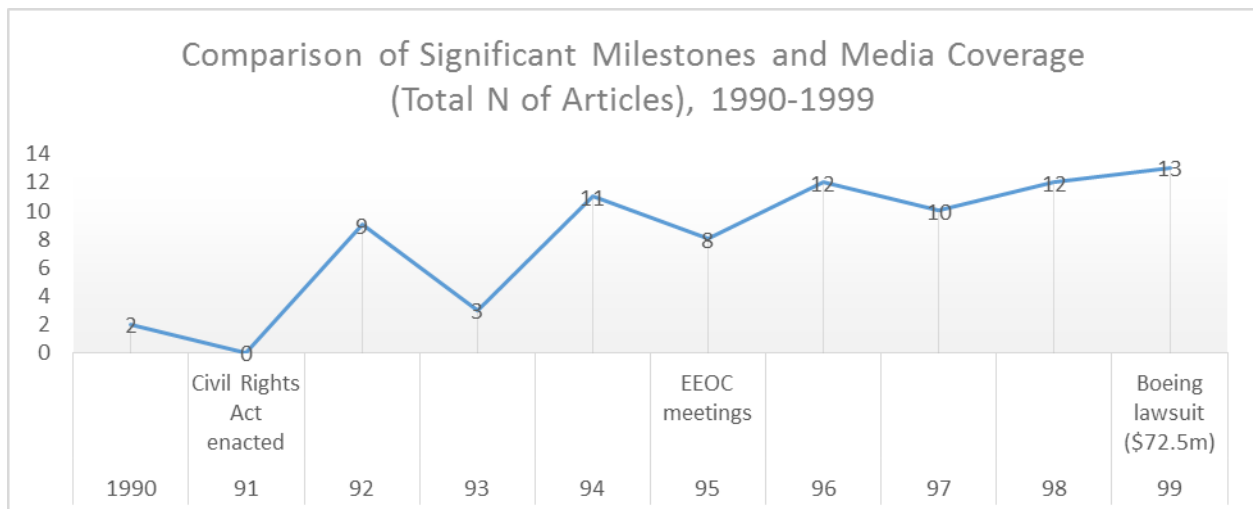
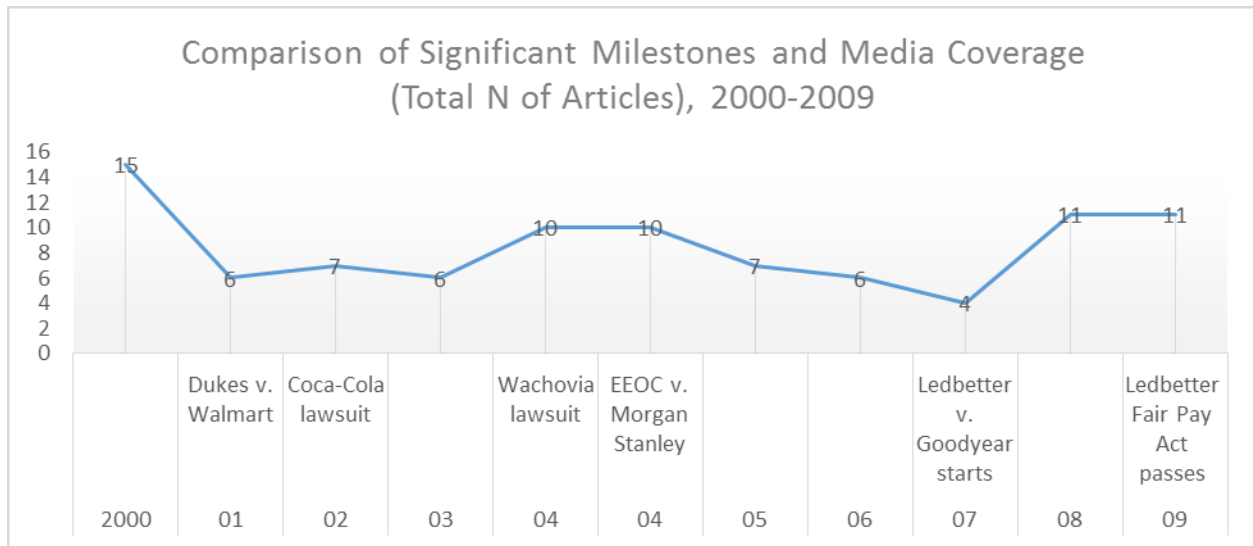
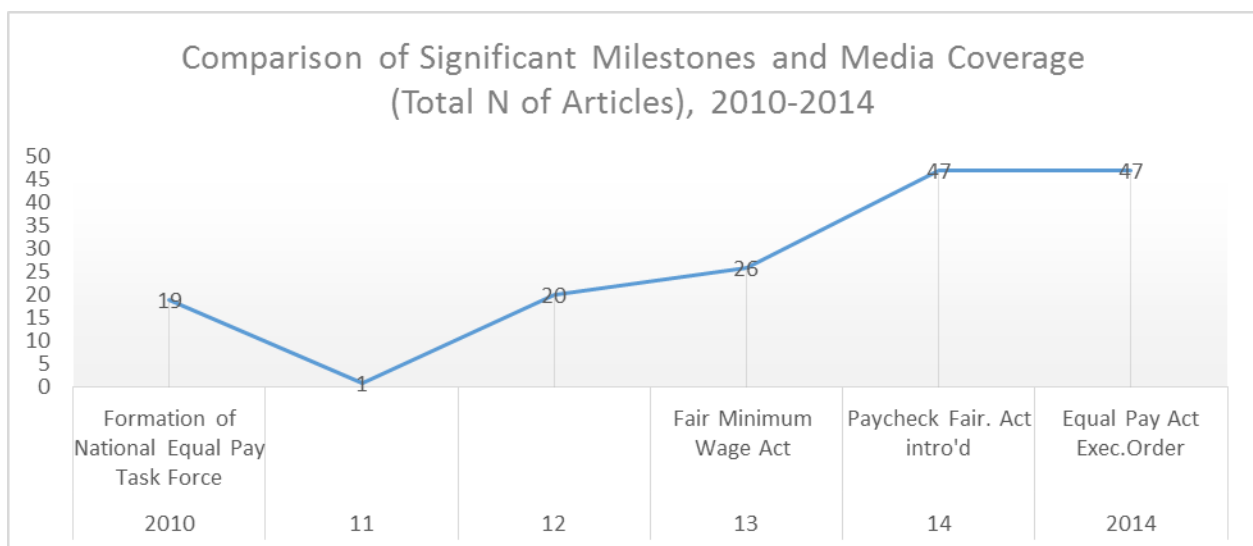
Figure 8. Comparison of Significant Milestones and Media Coverage, 1980-1989**Figure 9. Comparison of Significant Milestones and Media Coverage, 1990-1999**

Figure 10. Comparison of Significant Milestones and Media Coverage, 2000-2009**Figure 11. Comparison of Significant Milestones and Media Coverage, 2010-2014**

In the 1980s, only the *New York Times* wrote articles about significant legislative and judicial events. Specifically, they referenced the *County of Washington (Oregon) v. Gunther* decision from 1981 in five articles. The tone centered on the importance of the Plaintiff's success, disavowed this as a "comparable worth" case as, at the time, the construct of comparable pay was considered controversial (it would remain so until after 1984, the beginning of Reagan's second term in office). In addition, the *NYT* highlighted the support of equal rights' groups: "A number of labor and women's groups hailed the decision today. Judith Lichtman, executive director of the Women's Legal Defense Fund, said, "The door is now open to challenge employers who keep women in the kind of jobs that are low-paid solely because they are traditionally held by women.'" This harkens back to the Economic frame, invoking the "pro" arguments of the existence of occupational segregation and lower wages generally attributable to women (Greenhouse, 1981).

In addition, the *NYT* used the articles as a platform to discuss the case in relation to comparable worth, as well as introduce other court cases as harbingers of change such as *Corning Glass Works*, and the *First Citizens Bank of Billings, Montana*. The *NYT* continued the tradition of reporting on legal cases by discussing a State of Illinois case brought by the Illinois Nurses Association and American Nurses Association. The President of Nurses Association, Eunice Cole, commented, "It culminates many months of ridicule of the principle of pay equity for working women by this Administration" (Pear, 1985). The pay equity movement gained recognition in media coverage during this time, which may be explained by historical

contextualization. Specifically, several key high-visibility judicial actions to which I referred in Chapter 2 occurred in 1981 (*County of Washington v. Gunther*), 1984 (Yale employees strike for pay equity), and, in 1989, the Pay Equity Law for Federal Workers passed. These events precipitated additional media coverage.

In a 1989 article, NYT again discussed the growing support for the pay equity movement, particularly at the grassroots level, and the expanding remunerative successes, referring to the pay equity for federal workers act. “In the last eight years more than \$450 million has been allocated for upgrading the pay in women’s jobs...Twenty states have begun to make pay equity adjustments for government workers and others are in the process of re-evaluation of their job classifications” (Lewin, 1989).

Other media sources likewise paid some attention to significant events. *USA Today* covered the 1994 Fair Pay Act, linking the rationale for passing the link due to the gender bias the 1963 Equal Pay Act had failed to eliminate. “The Fair Pay Act of 1994, introduced Wednesday by Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-D.C., and subject of a House hearing today, takes a needed giant step in going beyond the “equal pay” principle established in 1964.” The article went on to explicate what the Fair Pay Act would achieve in terms of prohibiting discrimination in pay for work in equivalent jobs, requiring the same levels of skills, complexity, working conditions and knowledge, regardless if the actual specific duties are different. It closed with countering potential “con” arguments that fall in the *Employer Rights* and Profit frames, contending that, though “corporate lobbyists will complain that this law will cost employers too

much,” they are “conveniently forgetting the \$100 billion per year the National Committee on Pay Equity estimates wage discrimination costs women” (Burk, 1994).

NBC was the sole media source in the group of six to note the class-action discrimination lawsuit (*Dukes v. Walmart*) filed by 1.6 million women against Walmart, alleging years of discrimination in areas of pay and promotion. The broadcast presented both the Plaintiff’s and Defendant’s position, positioning each side’s attorneys against each other in competing statements, and conveying the statistical premises upon which the Plaintiff’s case was built, using data from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research. The combination of empirical support within the narrative, combined with the prognostication that, should the Plaintiffs’ win, “it will affect millions and millions more all across the country” (Kosinski, April 27, 2010).

The most comprehensively-covered significant event, by far, was coverage of the April 2014 move by President Barack Obama to strengthen equal pay laws by enacting legislation that would prohibit retaliation by federal employers against employees who question compensation or pay equity issues. He also proposed a second law that would instruct the Labor Department to conduct a deeper examination of this issue by reviewing pay levels within public/federal organizations. All six sources dedicated extensive coverage from April 7-12, 2014, the time during which the most intensive debate in Congress occurred.

CNN, Fox, and the *Wall Street Journal* positioned the passage of both of these acts as tantamount to the Obama Administration “forcing” the Paycheck Fairness Act into the electoral spotlight (evidence of their partisanship skewing towards conservative politics, despite CNN’s traditional position as a liberal source). An April 8, 2014, CNN newscast began with Obama’s

quote establishing the tension between the parties in an “us-them” dichotomy: “If Republicans in Congress want to prove me wrong, if they want to show that they in fact do care about women being paid the same as men, then show me. They can start tomorrow. They can join in this, the 21st century, and vote yes on the Paycheck Fairness Act” (Tapper et al., 2014). The newscast then showed two video clips that showcased Senator Marco Rubio (R, Florida) vouching that men and women in his office in the same position “make pretty much the same amount of money. What we do have is a disproportionate number of women in our office who are working at the legislative assistant level, for example, but we’ve also promoted people from that position so is upward mobility within our office.” Genevieve Wood, conservative pundit and senior contributor at the conservative think-tank, the Heritage Foundation, completed this portion of the newscast, arguing against additional legislation as the National Labor Relations Act already prohibited discrimination.

All three sources were adamantly against additional legislation, using the supply-side, human-capital arguments of most labor economists (Gary Becker, June O’Neill). They argued that individual choice serves as the motivator for job selection and advancement, thereby influencing compensation. The *New York Times*, by contrast, downplayed arguments around which variables influence or minimize the wage gap. Instead they used an oppositional political stance using an “us-them” framework similar to CNN’s. Using quotes from leading Republicans and Democrats such as Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, the majority leader, Senator Mitch McConnell, the minority leader, in juxtaposition to each other, NYT provided a brief overview as to what the Paycheck Fairness Act would include and how this would tie into a “broader Democratic strategy to appeal to low- and middle-income voters with pocket-book legislation”

similar to the minimum wage act, neither of which were expected to pass. The article concluded by referring to the vote on the pay equity bill, of 53 to 44, six votes short of a majority vote required to prevent a filibuster. The *Economic, Political Factors* (voting, party partisanship), *Public Sentiment*, and *Legality and Constitutionality* frames are all invoked.

In sum, prior to 2009, there was limited media coverage around the seventeen identified significant milestones with one exception (the 1999 Boeing lawsuit). Increased coverage occurred around the 2009 Lilly Ledbetter Act and 2014 Paycheck Fairness Act, due largely to the need for Congressional approval. Other significant events such as lawsuits gained little media attention, and certainly not enough to merit their consideration as a “significant milestone” with extended or repeated media coverage. This may be an indication that executive orders, which are traditionally accompanied by Congressional discourse, attract higher levels of media attention due to the amplification and ongoing visibility of the issue, increasing public awareness of the issue. Lawsuits, on the other hand, are often drawn-out, extending over a multiyear trajectory before resolution; they do not make for good news unless they are related to astronomical dollar amounts for restitution. An alternate explanation harkens back to Schuman’s, Steeh’s, Bobo’s and Krysan’s (1998) work around why racial attitudes in the U.S. resist change. While in principle the public supports racial equity, implementations and interventions to remedy historically-discriminatory actions cost money. Therefore, congressional debate serves as a signifier of sorts, a symbolic pandering to the public (and the media) that political discourse is indeed taking place to resolve the issue. The gender wage gap issue faces a parallel dilemma. Employers would need to agree as part of a supply-side solution

to compensate women equally for the same positions, which would infringe upon employer “rights” to a free market system that clearly values profit over social good.

I now turn to a discussion on public opinion and media framing.

5.2 **RQ5: General Social Survey and Roper Polls**

RQ5: In what ways does news media framing of the U.S. gender wage gap issues correlate with variations in public opinion (attitudes) and policy formation (behavior)?

In this part of the study, the objective was to compare framing patterns to public opinion in order to ascertain broad correlations in collective attitudes and behaviors related to the gender wage gap issue between 1980 to April 30, 2014. I tracked public opinion from the Roper Center for Public Opinion and questions extracted from the General Social Survey (GSS) (<http://www3.norc.umd.edu/gss+website/>). The fact that these poll questions are repeated over the 34-year period provides a solid foundation to assess attitudinal change and its correlation with significant milestones/media framing.

The difficulty with GSS questions is that they do not directly ask if respondents support wage equality. Instead, the five questions I selected serve as surrogates for questions related to the gender wage gap issue, such as the degree to which women should work outside the home, impact on family and children, and whether men should be primary breadwinners or if a dual-income household is supported. Table 5.2 reflects these five questions.

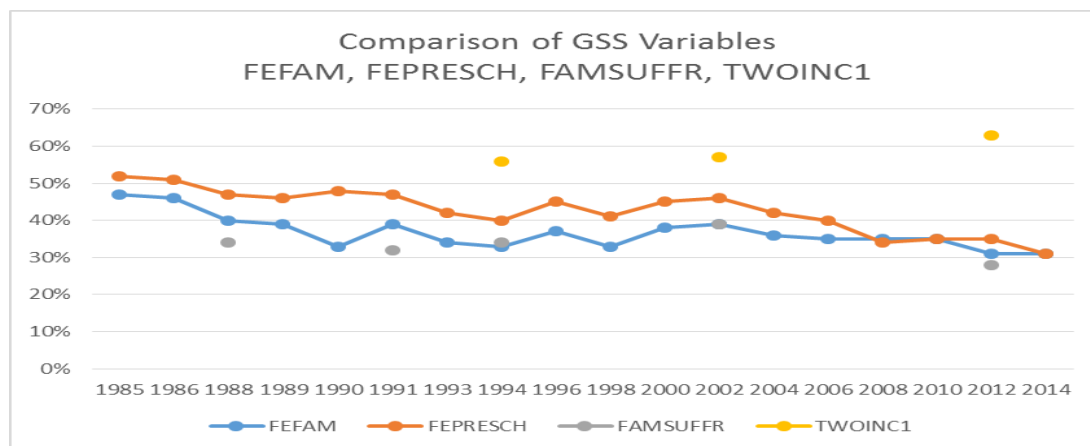
TABLE 5.2
GSS VARIABLE CODES AND QUESTIONS

Question Identifier	Question topic	Poll Question
FEFAM	Working mother (morality frame: rights of mother vs. rights of family and social good; gender equality frame: women better off as primary caretaker and/or in labor force	Now I'm going to read several more statements. As I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. For example, here is the statement: D. It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.
FEPRESCH		Now I'm going to read several more statements. As I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. For example, here is the statement: C. A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.
FAMSUFFR		Do you agree or disagree ... C. All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job.
TWOINCS1	Income/compensation	A. Do you agree or disagree ... both the husband and the wife should contribute to the household income.
POLEFF3	Citizen influence on politics	Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. C. The average citizen has considerable influence on politics.

5.3 Significant findings: GSS

5.3.1 Radical shifts in perceptions of women’s occupational positionality from 1972-2014

GSS poll results indicated increasing support over time for women continuing to work outside the home as either primary or secondary breadwinners. There is a corresponding decline in the belief that a family suffers if a woman takes on an occupational position in the workforce. Finally, the occupational roles of both men and women in society have changed radically from 1970-2014, attributable to a growing number of females in the labor force. This was accompanied by ideological shifts towards expecting pay equality based on performance, and a corresponding decline in expectations around traditional gender roles with men as primary or sole breadwinners. This makes study of the gender wage gap issue even more pertinent, given the overwhelming shifts in the social, political and economic landscapes around gender inequality and what is considered a contemporary woman’s “position” in contributing to society. Since 1972, there have been radical shifts in perceptions around working women, what the public considers to be “appropriate” occupations, gender roles, and women’s contributions to the workforce. The GSS results reflect this transformation, as is shown in Figure 12, which compares four related variables as indicators of support for gender equality.

Figure 12. Comparison of FEFAM, FEPRESCH, FAMSUFFR, and TWOINCS1

Note the **clear downward and parallel trend** for three of the four variables that measure support of the statements that men should be the primary breadwinner and women the primary homemaker (FEFAM), that a preschool child will likely suffer with a full-time working mother (FEPRESCH), and that a family will suffer should a woman work full-time (FAMSUFFR). Conversely, there is a proportional increase in support of the opinion that both a man and woman should contribute to household income (TWOINCS1).

Taken in combination, the trend lines show increasing support for women as active participants in and contributors to the labor market. Recent economic history, particularly after 2008 with the collapse of the mortgage and banking industry, has seen a gender role-reversal in the workforce. As more high-earning males lost positions in the workforce, and women returned to the labor market in predominantly service-oriented positions, those polled

may have had to change child-care practices from mothers as primary caregivers to stay-at-home dads. For example, a September 14, 2010, article in *USA Today* indicated men were losing employment at a faster rate than women “because of troubles in manufacturing, construction and other industries.” In addition, “women have been moving into high-paying professional jobs such as accountants, lawyers, and physicians. At the same time, men have been moving just as fast into relatively low-paying jobs—bank tellers, switchboard operators, librarians—long dominated by women” (*USA Today*, September 14, 2010). Concurrently, their beliefs may have shifted (out of economic necessity) to accommodate women in the workplace while minimizing potential negative outcomes (suffering preschool children).

In summary, the General Social Survey data reflects growing a substantive paradigm shift towards greater gender equality in the labor force.

5.4 Significant Findings: Roper Opinion Polls

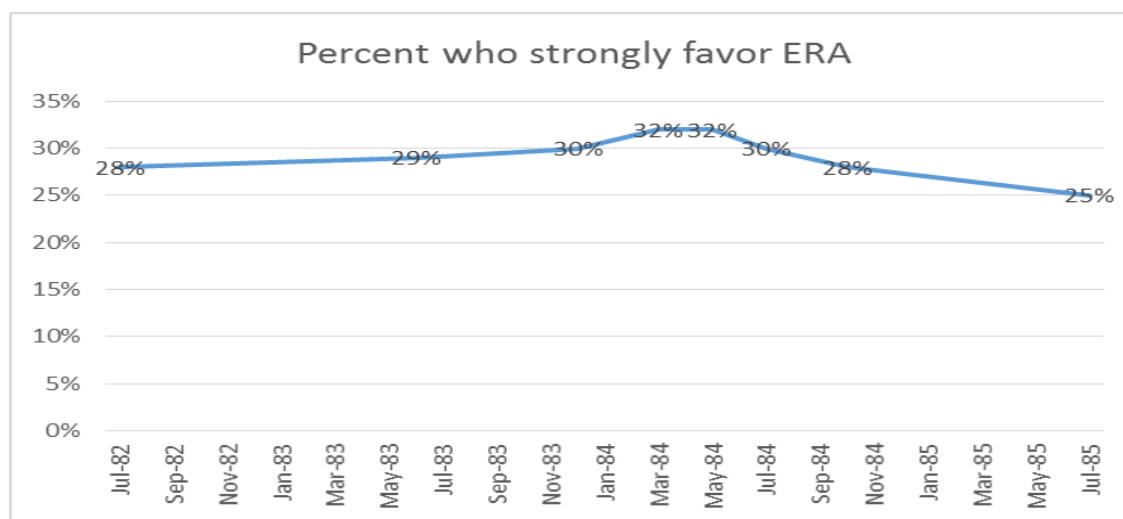
I also examined a total of 62 polls archived in the Roper Center archive. They covered the same period, January 1, 1980, to April 30, 2014. The polls were gathered through the iPoll system available on the Roper Public Opinion website. Of the 62 polls gathered, 29 were from the 1980s, 13 from the 1990s, and 20 from the 2000-2014 timeframe. These included polls from Time/CNN Yankevich, Glamour, Harris, and CNN/Time. To best compare polling data to media frames, polls were selected based on the same search terms used to select the newspaper and broadcast transcript corpus in LexisNexis and ProQuest. These included “gender wage gap,” “wage inequality + women,” “salary gap men and women,” “equal pay women” and “paycheck equity.” Due to the changes in linguistic terminology associated with this issue across multiple

decades, I also searched five additional units of analysis, with two yielding poll results: “equal wages” (N=2) and “comparable pay” (N=8). Ultimately, only five (5) polls contained questions that were repeated with regularity over the period from 1970-2014; it was, therefore, these five poll questions that best exemplified public opinion shifts over time as related to this topic.

An additional important aspect to note when comparing polls across decades is the change in the focus of questions. Polls in the 1980s were heavily invested in ascertaining opinions related to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), closely aligning with the *Legislative and Constitutionality* frame, and the construct of comparable pay. Increasing support in favor of the ERA occurs from July 1982 to May 1984, with a decline from 32 percent to 25 percent by July 1985, as noted in Figure 5.6.

The poll was administered eight times between July 1982 and July 1985. Though the Amendment had failed to receive ratification in 1979, a joint resolution of Congress ultimately extended it to June 30, 1982, but no further states made the move towards ratification (ultimately it was five states’ short of quorum). The timing of this extension is directly correlated with public opinion polls administered at this time. July 1982 is the first instance of the Harris Survey asking respondents the degree of their support or opposition to the ERA. The same poll question was readministered in June 1983, December 1983, March, May, July and October of 1984, and July 1985. The results throughout all eight polls remain stunningly consistent: from 59% to 62% of those surveyed “strongly favor” or “somewhat favor” passage of the Amendment.

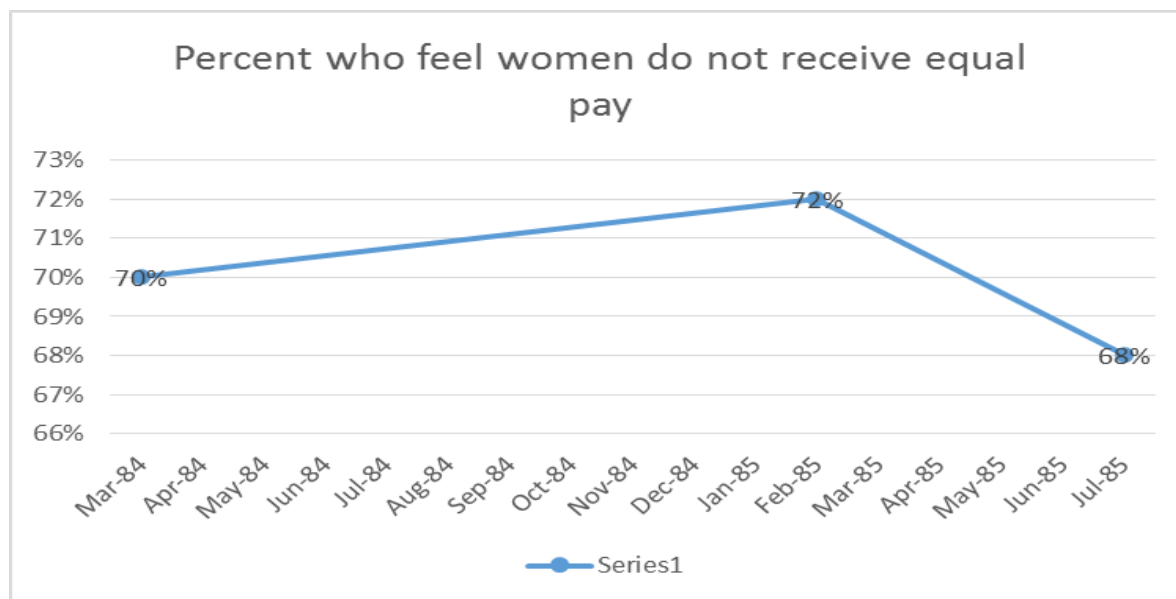
Figure 13. Percent who strongly favor Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), 1982-1985



An ancillary poll by Harris conducted in April 1982 and June 1983, asked if respondents felt it more or less likely that employers would no longer “be allowed to pay women less than men for the same work,” should the ERA be ratified. Respectively, 69% and 63% indicated this would be an expected outcome of the Amendment’s passage. This indicates some attitudinal awareness by the public relating to the tenets of the proposed legislation, tying in to the *Legality and Constitutionality* frame emphasized in this period by news media.

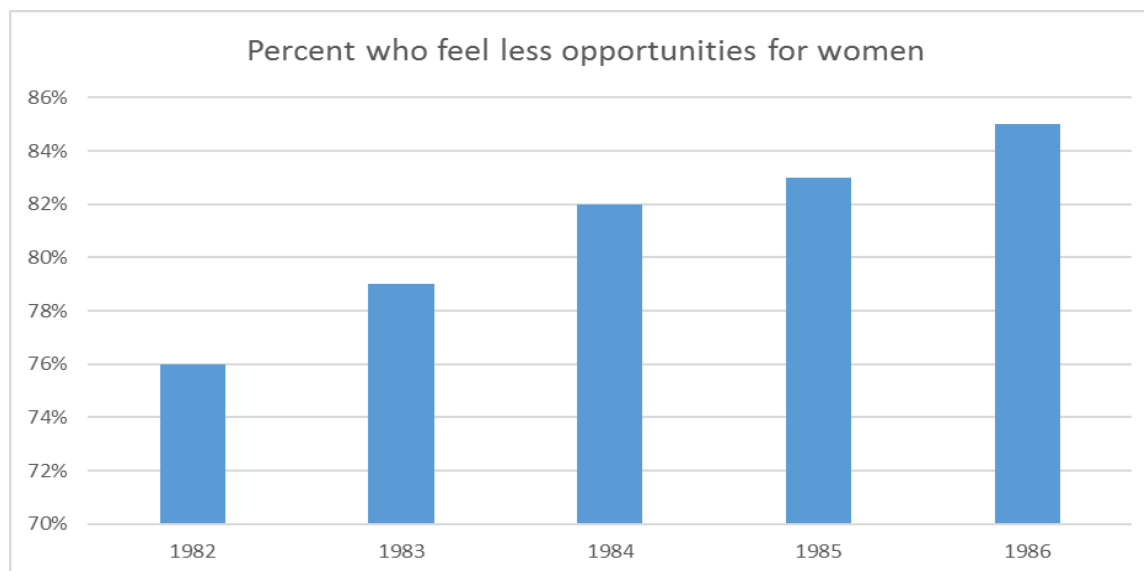
Figure 14 highlights the overwhelming majority—between 68 and 72 %--of the public who felt that women do not receive equal pay in that period. This reflects growing awareness of the economic dimension of the issue, also widely framed and covered by the press.

Figure 14. Percent polled who feel women do not receive equal pay to men, 1984-1985



The attitude echoes the general sentiment that, in comparison to men, women are not privy to the same opportunities as men around salary considerations, which is highlighted in Figure 15. Respondents were asked to evaluate the level of opportunities women have as compared to men around salaries as “more,” “less,” or “equal.” The poll results are telling: as time went on, the percentage of respondents indicating fewer opportunities for women increased, from 76% in the first survey in 1982 to 85% by the 1986 poll.

Figure 15. Percent polled who feel women have less opportunities in regards to salary considerations, 1982-1986

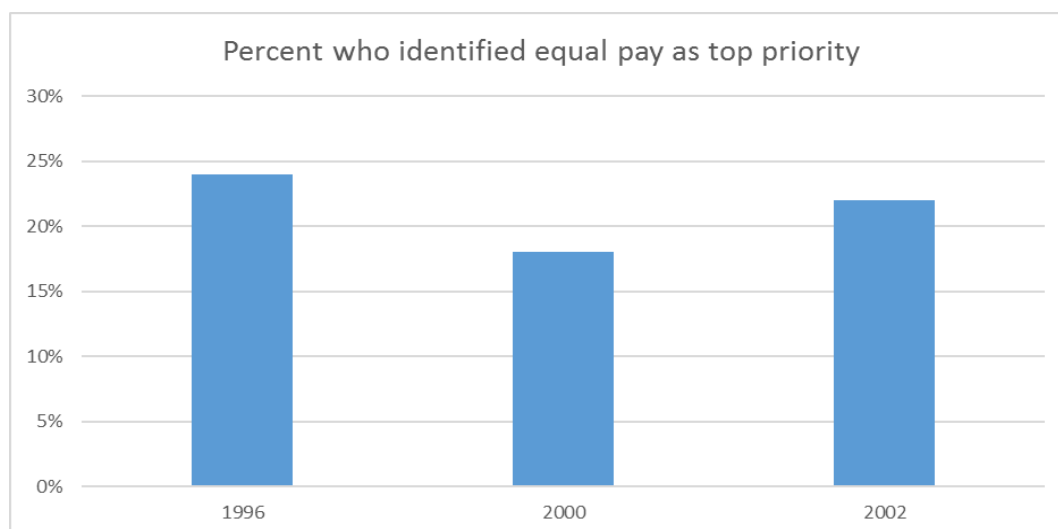


Why were these two poll questions no longer asked after the 1980s? I suspect there are two explanations. First, language related to wages and salaries shifted over time, moving away from the association with the terms “equal” and “equality” towards that of “comparable pay” in the 1990s, and then returning to equal pay only in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This shift in media framing from a supply-side to demand-side argument mirrored the growth in media coverage around the gender wage gap topic, and correspondingly reflected a change in the political landscape from a more conservative political environment under Reagan, to a liberal one under Clinton, a return to conservative values in the early 2000s with G.W. Bush, and a repeated metaphor around “equality for human beings” under Obama’s rhetoric that women are equal and employers must acknowledge that via compensation.

Second, “equal pay” regained a positive connotation in media discourse in the late 1990s and 2000s, in part because of the 1999 Boeing lawsuit, which settled in favor of some 29,000 former female employees to the tune of \$72.5 million, the largest settlement until that point. It also gained from the 2009 Lilly Ledbetter Act and the 2014 Paycheck Fairness Act debate. Undertaken in the Obama administration, these reforms increased Congressional debate, media coverage and subsequent public awareness of the gender wage gap issue. This shifted the language employed in polls to more directly reference political these political and legislative changes.

The issue continued to gain traction and is identified in the polls as a “significant” or “major” issue, a sentiment that has only increased over time. As Figure 16 illustrates, however, only a fifth of the American public consider the lack of equal pay a top priority issue. In summary, although there is a consensus on recognition of the problem, there is little passion to find an immediate remedy. This signifies the absence of a significant motivational component in public opinion, an echo of the absence of a moral/ethical media frame as documented in Chapter 4. The disconnect parallels a similar disconnect in resolving discrimination around racial attitudes, the “principle-implementation gap” that marks a general public consensus for racial equality but markedly less support for measures that would bring it about (Schuman et al., 1997).

Figure 16. Percent who identified equal pay as top priority for nation, 1996 – 2002



5.5 Media Framing, Significant Milestones and Public Opinion

With RQ5, I set to determine whether a correlation existed between media significant milestones, media framing, and public opinion. That is, around periods of heightened media coverage that occur around pivotal events that were economic, political, judicial, or legislative in nature, were there corresponding shifts in public opinion? Which milestones seemed to influence public opinion to a greater or lesser extent?

Of the 17 significant milestones I selected for purposes of this study, 5 appeared to have some correlation with *increased media coverage*, as discussed in Section 5.1. When examining the correlation between significant milestones, increased media coverage, and shifts in public

opinion, however, I found a different story. Although there is ongoing and increasing public support to eliminate the gender wage gap, as noted in my analysis around the GSS variables (FEFAM, FEPRESCH, FAMSUFFR, TWOINCS1) as proxy variables for public support regarding eliminating the gender wage gap, Roper polls, and increased media coverage around select significant milestones reflecting periodic spikes in media attention, there is no accompanying urgency making the gender wage gap a top priority issue.

5.6 Summary

We see evidence of increased media coverage around significant milestones, yet little connection to either judicial (lawsuits, settlements) action to remedy the gender wage gap. Instead, legislative debate becomes highly politicized in the press, with increased media coverage around key moments of discourse in Congress, such as the Paycheck Fairness Act in 2014. This, however, does not seem to sway public opinion towards establishing the gender wage gap as a high-priority issue. As media coverage has shifted from supply-side rhetoric in the 1980s and early 1990s towards demand-side rhetoric under the Obama Administration, we would expect to see the development of a moral and ethical push for wage equality. This has materialized in the minimum wage issue in 2013, but a similar process has not occurred regarding the gender wage gap, in part because of systemic, pervasive, persistent ideological gender biases that infiltrate and reproduce enough supply-side rhetoric in the media to not only counteract demand-side cries for equality, but replicate ideological constructs predicated on gender bias. Once again, the principle-implementation construct shows that, despite public and media support, the concrete actions required to eliminate the gender wage gap have not materialized.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Overview

The purpose of this dissertation was to elucidate the types and dimensions of media frames invoked by select media sources with different ideological predispositions from 1980 to 2014. In addition, this project explored the relationship of significant milestones to media framing discourse. It also investigated potential correlations between media framing, significant milestones, and changes to public opinion. The overall intent was to see if what media say and how they say makes a difference in how the public perceived the gender wage gap issue in the United States during this period.

To accomplish this, the study was executed in two parts. In Part I, I relied upon Chong and Druckman's (2006) approach to media frame analysis and public opinion. Though much has been written about media framing and correlation to public opinion trends, this is the first research that examines media framing and opinion regarding the gender wage gap. Using the authors' typology and Baumgartner and Jones' 2006 and Boydston's 2014 policy code handbook as reference, I created a list of eight frame dimensions that were intended to interpret any policy issue. A ninth frame was subsequently added *a posteriori* as the coding process evolved. For each frame, I developed "pro"-attitudinal and counter or "con"-attitudinal statements reflecting support for or opposition to eliminating the gender wage gap. These statements subsequently became codes that were used to examine positionality, tone, and frequency of media messages within the corpus.

Corpus selection of 203 print media news articles and 121 broadcast news transcripts from the leading conservative, liberal, and centrist sources was done by searching on relevant word targets that correspond to the gender wage gap. This resulted in a total of 324 analyzed new articles. Time selection was limited to 1980 to April 30, 2014, for two reasons. First, the 1980s the end of the steepest growth period in women's employment in history. Examining media framing prior to 1980 would potentially have focused on the labor boom rather than the gender wage gap, thereby defeating the purpose of this study. Second, the 1980s ushered in the political and electoral shift away from left-wing politics towards right-wing neo-conservatism, which was reinforced by the election of Ronald Reagan as President. Women's issues related to employment, occupational titles and positions, and career advancement were, in parallel with other "liberal" issues such as reproductive rights, were coming to the forefront of public scrutiny and media attention.

I then began the coding process, which included involving two other coders to ensure intercoder reliability. We utilized textual analysis in qualitative software to conduct the coding, and ultimately identify how the nine media frames were employed across all six sources. In addition, I examined if and when the 17 significant milestones (legislative, executive, political, legal) I identified were referenced in the news articles, and how they were framed, with the intent of understanding any correlations between the presence of these milestones and media coverage.

The second part of this project examined public opinion polls over the 1980-2014 period with the intent of explicating how media frames associate with public opinion regarding the gender wage gap. The General Social Survey (GSS) and the polls archived in the Roper Public Opinion Archives are leaders in poll administration and analysis, and I was able to extract 13

relevant GSS questions and five other opinion polls from Roper related to the gender wage gap. Over time, not only did the number of polls administered related to this issue increase, but there is evidence of growing public sentiment in favor of eliminating the gender wage gap.

The results of this study clarified critical questions related to the types of media frames utilized, variations across media sources, and the conditions under which a significant milestone can become a harbinger of increased media coverage and public opinion formation. It also revealed how media framing and public opinion are part of a unique partnership that allows the public more access to and familiarity with the gender wage gap issue, thereby affecting and being affected by political discourse and policy formation.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. First, I provide a brief synopsis of the most relevant ideas from Chapter 1, to lay the foundation for the remainder of the discussion. Second, I identify major themes. Third, I address limitations of this study. I conclude with my recommendations for future research.

6.2 Recapping critical frameworks, Introducing new ones

When I set out to research media framing concerning the gender wage gap debate in the United States, and explicate potential correlations between media framing around significant milestone points, variations in public opinion and policy formation, I made some initial assumptions predicated on the work of previous researchers. First, media framing has been conclusively shown to be a strategic process whereby specific attributes of news stories are intentionally highlighted to attract and engage audience attention and focus their observation and information processing. Second, media framing has a long-term impact on public opinion. When media selectively prioritize story selection, promotion and message content, they do so

with the expectation that news indexing and public interest generally align. This is not always the case, however; in several instances to which I referred in Chapter 2, such as the increase in energy prices and presidential campaigns in 2008, media coverage focused three times as much attention on the campaign discourse as on the oil prices, yet public opinion polls reflected reverse numbers (Pew Center, August 8, 2008).

Third, through the framing process, audiences attempt to cognitively categorize issues in terms of *accessibility* via media's agenda-setting approach (which stories come to the forefront of attention), but more importantly engage in the *applicability* aspect, asking what is the relevancy of this story, issue, or event to my individual agency and society as a whole?

Fourth, the types of frames invoked matter because, as Chong and Druckman (2001; 2007) note, framing has a direct influence on public opinion. Public opinion formation is heavily dependent upon which frames are emphasized, thus producing framing effects that contribute to small or seismic shifts in public opinion. Emphasis frames examine to what degree the audiences' cognitive schemas or "mental mapping" about a given issue are activated as part of what Chong and Druckman discuss as a "frame in thought" (2001, p. 105). This dominant perspective will trump all other frames and may influence an implied solution to a policy issue. If a frame is minimally or selectively presented—such as the *Morality and Ethics* frame—there is little opportunity to activate schemas that drive frames in thought and may drive public opinion shifts and policy reform. Conflict-displacing frames (Dardis et al., 2008) allow counterpositional ideologies to coexist among news audiences. By introducing alternate dimensions to the framing of an issue, audiences are potentially able to shift focus from the first dimension to other variables affecting the discourse around the issue, and alter their opinions. I suggest that

the *Economic, Legislative and Constitutionality, Political Factors*, and *Capacity and Resources* frames are not conflict-displacing frames; instead, they work concomitantly and thereby minimize the potential for audience opinion changes.

Fifth, successful social movements are “dependent upon its ability to affect both consensus and action mobilization. That is, movements must drum up support for their views and aims and activate individuals who already agree with those views and aims” (Snow and Benford, 1988). The gender wage gap as an issue has failed to transform in to a full movement in part because media has not framed this as a social problem necessitating moral corrective action.

Sixth, while media discourse on the gender wage gap has been particularly prevalent during the Obama administration, due in part to executive efforts to pass the Lilly Ledbetter Act of 2009 and the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2014, very little research has been dedicated towards a meta-analysis of media frames of this issue.

6.3 Significant Milestones – The Perfect Storm?

Significant milestones are political, legislative, executive and economic moments in time during which legislative action like the enactment of laws or passage of executive order, lawsuits, the formation of institutional governance entities, and other events related to the gender wage gap debate are at play. It might be hypothesized that, if these events are truly significant insofar as they affect public policy, there would be increased media coverage, and correspondingly increased public attention paid to said milestones. *My findings, however, indicate that only 5 of 17 of milestones gained media traction and were dominant in public opinion polls. Furthermore, unless a trifecta of specific variables occurs, which I refer to as a*

“perfect storm,” the type of media framing invoked is relatively insignificant in driving changes in public opinion.

6.4 Key Finding 1: Media frames around the gender wage gap are considerably consistent and similar; media source affiliation has little effect; with the exception of Fox, the media seems to support eliminating the gender wage gap. Media relies heavily upon “pro” framing to reflect this support.

The first and second research questions sought to explore how the leading print media sources, specifically the Wall Street Journal (conservative), New York Times (liberal), and USA Today (centrist), framed the gender wage gap issue over the 34-year period. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this finding was how strikingly parallel media messages are across the three print sources, and how much more variability there was within and among the broadcast news sources in terms of frame usage. Pro frames were used at 2-3 times greater frequency than “con” frames, with the exception of the *Capacity and Resources* frame in Fox, which relied predominantly on the supply-side argument that women elected to participate in or opt out of the workforce as a choice versus an economic necessity.

In the case of print media, all three invoked the same top two frames (*Economic, Legality and Constitutionality*) in approximately the same percentages (around 40% of the messaging used for economic and 18% on average for *Legality*). The conservative WSJ and liberal NYT were the most consistent, as the both employed *Political Factors* as their third frame.

Broadcast news sources also relied upon the *Economic* frame in all three cases. Their secondary and tertiary frames differed considerably, introducing *Political Factors* and *Morality and Ethics* as competing and complimentary frames.

The types of “pro” and “con” arguments each source used were likewise consistent, with empirical and statistical “evidence” leading as the main argument for either position, followed by either occupational segregation or the statistically validated fact that women occupy more service positions and are paid lower wages than men. What might explain the consistency across sources? After all, one would expect substantive differences in media messaging based on partisanship, yet this is most clearly not the case.

One possible explanation harkens back to why the public trusts or does not trust news sources, and the decline in trust of the press media over a 40-year period as noted in the GSS and Roper polls, and in a Pew Center Research Study from October 2014. Audiences’ media habits are ingrained: though Americans get their news from a variety of sources, those on either end of the political spectrum consult radically different news sources. Consistent conservatives overwhelmingly use Fox News (47%), whereas consistent liberals name CNN (15%), the NYT (10%), NPR (13%), and MSNBC (12%) as their primary news outlets. These audiences, however, make up only 20% of the overall media market; therefore, media sources need to cater to the general populace, the 80% that are more moderate on the ideological spectrum to retain readership. A 2008 Pew Center report notes, “When Americans get the news, they generally are interested in getting an overview of the top news of the day. Fully 62% say it is more important to them to get an overview of the news than to get news about topics of particular interest to them (27%).”

Media messaging based on hard empirical data, statistical analysis, and numbers fall into the category of ‘hard-news’, heavily reliant on verifiable facts, attributed sources, and balanced reporting (Esser and Umbricht, 2014). Percentages, dollar amounts, and figures fall into this

category, and are easily interpreted and digestible because of their structural and lexical consistency by larger, less selective audiences. Esser and Umbricht (2014) refer to this as a mechanism to help ensure protection against media bias in message content, while “ensuring that the components of the hard-news paradigm are easily visible and identifiable in the news” (p. 2). Media companies have vested interests in promoting polarized or captive consumers: they “are interested in creating loyal, demographically homogeneous audiences” (Webster, 2005) to maintain profit margins and promote the strategic needs of the media organization (Esser and Umbricht, p. 5).

Numbers and statistical data have the interesting dual-benefit of allowing readers to easily access information for cognitive processing, while also allowing journalists to use the data to prop either side of the argument based on the needs of the narrative. One of the primary conflict frames (Lee et al., 2008) used by the sources included the need to both have government interventions (laws, policies, enactments) address the gender wage gap while concurrently noting the presence of the Equal Wage Act (1963) as comprehensive enough so as to prevent the need for additional laws. Another was based entirely on the supply-side versus demand-side economic arguments of individual choice—women opt in or out of the labor market, have lesser amount of labor experience, and work less on average by choice—versus the presence of occupational segregation, which systemically and institutionally limits women’s employment opportunities based on discriminatory factors inherent in the market. Empirical data—“women make 77 cents on the dollar as compared to men, even when accounting for education and experience,” or “the wage gap is actually considerably smaller than the 77 cents, if supply-side factors are considered”—are quickly decoded by readers and activate emphasis frames that

include elements of causal reasoning. The secondary and tertiary frames allow audiences to both integrate analytic elements while combining them with interpretative elements in a type of “blended approach” to news. As Xiang and Sarvary (2007) note, “While a medium may aspire to position news in certain ways, the truth about underlying events may prevent extreme positioning.” The presence of multiple, active frames provides the audience with the psychological reassurance that they are simultaneously able to rally behind a specific position (conflict-resistance frames) while being exposed to alternate positions and interpretations (conflict-displacing frames). This assurance could be illusory, however; as I mentioned earlier, the four dominant frames (Economic, Legality, Political Factors, and Capacity and Resources) may not be conflict-displacing frames because they are so closely linked in the mind of the audience and thus do not allow for alternate positions (i.e. shifting perspective on the gender wage gap issue as an equality-based issue).

Of particular relevance in regard to the findings for RQ1 and RQ2 is the overwhelming frequency of use of “pro” arguments versus “con” arguments, with two to three times as great a frequency and across all six sources, with five of the six identified frames. These results could reasonably be interpreted in the following manner: media messaging contains some form of media bias which skews positively in the direction of eliminating the gender wage gap. It may also explain why we continue to see an increase in public support for this same objective. If media are subtly employing “pro” arguments 50-75% more frequently than “con” arguments regarding this issue, and using combination of emphasis and conflict-dispersing frames that allow for cognitive consideration of alternate elements in the debate over a longer time trajectory, media may be influencing shifts in public perception of the issue.

Research question 3 delved into media polarization and whether source affiliation had any bearing on the types of media frames used. One result of my analysis showed that liberal CNN was overwhelmingly similar to both the conservative *Wall Street Journal* and liberal *New York Times* in terms of frame selection, frame dimensions (pro/con positions), and percentage of content dedicated to each frame. This is not surprising regarding the liberal sources; as I noted earlier, similar audiences access both mediums for their primary news content, thus perpetuating the need for both cyclical and similar news content (Pew Research Study, October 2014). It does, however, highlight how miniscule news content difference is, in fact, between conservative print and broadcast news sources, in regards to the *Economic*, *Legality* and *Political Factors* frames.

This same condition was not supported in reference to Fox News or NBC, however, neither of which engaged the *Legality and Constitutionality* frame, but both of which used more alternative arguments under *Capacity and Resources* frame. The supply-side argument was reflected in nearly every transcript with Bill O'Reilly (Fox), emphasizing that individual women were responsible for gender parity and that women were electing not to or expecting not to work due to other imperatives, and were poor salary negotiators (thus resulting in lower wages). System, institutional, gender-based bias had nothing whatsoever to do with the existence of an "alleged" (a term used regularly throughout several Fox articles) wage gap. NBC extended this argument via the *Morality and Ethics* frame, by suggesting in two references that women were intellectually, emotionally, or physically incapable of performing as effectively as men.

Another interesting result was how frequently CNN and Fox used the *Political Factors* frame. A majority of the conversations surrounding this issue between Fox anchors Bill O'Reilly

or Greta Van Susteren and his conservative guests tied the *Capacity and Resources*’ arguments of women opting out of the work force to a left-leaning liberal media agenda and growing government regulation from the Democratic party:

SEN. BARBARA BOXER (D), CALIFORNIA: Mitt Romney doesn't even know if he'd sign a bill promising us equal pay for equal work. I've got to say to the women out there whether you're a Republican, a Democrat or Independent, if you're a self respecting human being, please vote for President Obama.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

O'REILLY: So what about this war on women? I say it's fiction. Here are some backup. *Forbes* magazine ranking the most powerful celebrities four out of five are ladies. Jennifer Lopez, Oprah Winfrey, Rihanna, Lady Gaga. Look at the salaries there. Salaries, that's money—salaries but that's money they get every year.

So if you're going to have equal pay for equal work a lot of male singers are going to be very wealthy...And you know to hear this Barbara Boxer say oh, we want a bill that says women have to have equal pay. You know, everybody's circumstance is different, Leslie -- everybody's circumstance. Some women work 30 hours instead of 40 because they want to be home for various reasons.

Women in America make 82 percent—82 percent of what men make. And women unemployment is lower than men. So, where is this war, this economic war on women? Where is this?

How might we interpret these results? Overall, they revealed that concrete distinction between media frames and content across print and broadcast sources are small. There are more similarities within news narratives, and source affiliation does not appear to distinguish any one source from the others. I would suggest this may again be attributable to the media cycle, and journalists’ preponderance towards employing consistent media frames to maximize audience reach. NBC and USA Today, as centrist sources, might be attempting to distinguish itself from the pack, given its first-place position in the nightly news market, by incorporating a wider

variety of frame dimensions to appeal to moderate audiences who are not as wed to one primary news source as conservative or liberal audiences.

Media sources resoundingly rely upon a preponderance of *Economic*, *Legislative*, *Capacity and Resources* and *Political Factors* frames. What then can we say regarding *Morality and Ethics*, a frame only employed by NBC? Is it possible that the limited use of this media frame is the contributing factor preventing the gender wage gap issue from being resolved? “Practical interests can, at times should, be the basis for a political transformation,” contends Molyneux (1998). The dominant (top four) frames focused on “practical interests”—economic, legal, political, capacity and resources—all reflect clear indicators of change. Salaries are made equal, or there is a gap. Laws are enacted or defeated. Political parties gain and cede ownership. Individuals are driven to employment or exit from it.

Morality and Ethics, however, is a bit of a conundrum. Regarding the gender wage gap issue, human equality seems to be an outcome or an ancillary “response” to the other frames: once laws change, public policy can likewise reflect more egalitarian representation that is evidenced in issues like equal pay. The crux of issues of discrimination are based upon the societal inequality between men and women that plays out on the economic landscape. Media, with one source exception (NBC), is using the gender wage gap issue as a symbolic, easily-contestable and polarizing issue, that is best examined via economic, legal, and political frames. However, the sole frame that might actually carry greater weight in exposing and addressing the root cause creating this issue—*Morality and Ethics*—is used in limited scope. By not employing the *Morality and Ethics* frame more consistently in media messaging, media content can conveniently overlook the ideological paradigms that regularly emphasize women and men are

not equals. Paradoxically, research by McClosky and Zaller (1984), and Wilcox and Wolpert (1996, 2000) show that the values of equality and morality are “key elements of American political culture” (Brewer, 2003). Yet the gender wage gap issue is afforded limited exposure using this frame in its media content.

The reification of the economic, legal and political positions and frames, then, becomes an overly-simplified, trite mechanism by which to evaluate the gender wage gap issues: these frames make it appear as if media discourse is robust in considering all facets of the debate, while in reality not addressing the heart of the issue itself: gender inequality based on perceptions of women as intrinsically less meritorious of equal compensation due to gender identification.

Yet we see examples of other human rights’ movements that have advanced through the mobilization of *Morality and Ethics* messaging. I introduce the gay rights’ movement in the United States beginning in the 1970s as an example of one that hinged much of its ideological tenets on the fundamental argument that all human beings are equal. Indeed, Clendinen and Nagourney (1999) note that on the eve of the 1969 Stonewall Inn riots “was when the fundamental philosophical principles of the movement were formed and the battle lines drawn: that homosexuals were normal, too...and that they had a right to enjoy love and civil liberties like any other group” (p. 14). By situating the movement on this morality-based foundation, media messages began reflecting the public discourse of support which ultimately contributed to the movement’s success in obtaining legislative and political change. Brewer’s 2003 examination of mass media coverage during 1990-1997 (the peak years of the movement) reflect a legal preponderance towards supporting gay rights based on morality-based argumentation. A

1996 U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Romer v. Evans*, which struck down an initiative to ban gay rights' laws, framed the decision in terms of supporting laws that upheld human beings as equals regardless of sexual orientation. Media coverage of this and the gay marriage legitimization arguments which began a decade later showed that liberal *New York Times* not only emphasized human equality as the lynchpin for legal and political changes, but later became an institutional activist for gay marriage, emphasizing the linkage between the issue of human equality to gay rights in marriage and increasing its media coverage on the issue (Pan et al., 2009). By contrast, conservative *Chicago Tribune* contested the human rights frame as a dominant one, instead emphasizing American traditional family values as a defense against gay rights, although it still presented the equal rights' frame in 19.1% of topics related to gay marriage vs. 33.6% of *The New York Times* (p. 638).

A similar, morality-oriented framework around the minimum wage gap discourse, tying the *Economic* frame (statistical evidence around the impossibility of maintaining a base standard of living at current wage rates) to the *Morality and Ethics* frame (every individual deserves the right to have a basic level of economic solvency). Again, we see progress in terms of increases in minimum wages in 29 states as of January 1, 2015. The gay rights and minimum wage movements succeeded, in part, because of their strategic reliance on human rights, for the former, and as an economic right based on human rights for the latter. The gender wage gap remains an issue, in part, because it has not done so. By framing the gender wage gap as predominantly an economic or political issue and trivializing the morality component, media replicate the institutionalization of gender bias and inequality, thereby minimizing the full

traction that is needed to turn this issue in to a successful movement that completely eliminates the gap.

6.5 Key Finding 2: Significant milestones are not that significant, unless there is a “perfect storm” including legislative discourse at the Congressional level, and proposed or pending executive action, that directly contributes to increased media attention and public awareness.

Analysis around the fourth research question showed that significant milestones are *not* correlated with increased media coverage, *unless* there is a ‘perfect storm’ of certain variables present. These include: 1) legislative discourse and debate at the highest political levels (Congress) over an extended period of time (sometimes years) so the issue gains traction in the media and public eye; lawsuits and settlements conversely do not carry much traction with media coverage; 2) intended executive action by the President that will either ratify, enact, or pass legislation related to the gender wage gap issue; and 3) an increase in media coverage that corresponds to the significant legislative or executive event. Without this combination, media framing is not significantly influential in driving attitudinal changes about the gender wage gap.

Only five of the seventeen significant milestones reflected this “perfect storm”: the passage of the Lilly Ledbetter Act in 2009, and the enactment of two executive laws as part of President Obama’s support of the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2014. Of the 2009 news articles or broadcast transcripts, 27% focused on the Ledbetter Act, and of 2014 news articles or broadcast transcripts across all sources, 93% focused on the congressional debates regarding the Paycheck Fairness Act. Concurrently, as media coverage increased around these two significant milestones, the number of administered public opinions polls reflected increased issue salience

and continuously growing public support for eliminating the gender wage gap. Therefore, though media frames matter in debunking the “myths” surrounding the gender wage gap issue, it is really legislative and executive action, coupled with increased media coverage *around significant milestones* that drive shifts in public opinion.

Furthermore, in comparing the types of frames used by the six media sources (WSJ, NYT, USA Today, Fox News, CNN, and NBC) to the tone and tenor of polls over the period of 1980-2014, the continuously upward-trending support for pay equity seen in the poll results are mirrored in media messages, regardless of source partisanship.

In this study, public support to eliminate the gender wage gap remained high as media coverage continued to increase, as did support for Democratic policies. 38% of the nation felt “much more positive” around Democratic candidates for Congress, who are elite policymakers regarding this and other social issues, if said candidates supported closing the gender gap (Democracy Corps Poll, April 2014). Though the Paycheck Fairness Act was ultimately defeated in September 2014, media attention to this significant milestone contributed to increased public awareness. In a nationwide survey from January 2014, “62 percent of likely voters said they supported the bill, and support crossed demographic and ideological lines. Eighty-three percent of Democrats, 58 percent of independents, and 44 percent of Republican voters said they support the Paycheck Fairness Act” (Anzalone Liszt Grove Research, 2014). By March of that same year:

84% said they support a new law that would provide women more tools to get fair pay in the workplace. High levels of support for this bill held true regardless of political party, gender, race, ethnicity, or regions of the country. For example, 77% of Republicans support it, along with 91% of Democrats and 87% of Independents. Large majorities of both men and women support the law as well—81% and 87% respectively. In another

poll, support is equally high along racial lines with 66% of Latino voters and 78% of African American voters supporting the bill.

A corollary to my construct of the perfect storm, is that media coverage should continue to emphasize a multiplicity of frames on which they are already reliant and which do address both supply and demand-side positions on the gender wage gap issue, including *Economic*, *Legality and Constitutionality*, *Capacity and Resources*, and *Political Factors* frames, but the realized transformation will come with the *Morality and Ethics* frame (as we have seen with the gay rights and minimum wage movements). If there is any hope of truly shifting the ideological underpinnings that continue to ground the gender wage gap issue in fundamental gender inequality, media's emphasis should move towards an increase in framing around the *Morality and Ethics* frame as a type of consistent companion to the other dominant frames. This occurred very clearly in 2013 with the Congressional and Executive discourse surrounding the Fair Minimum Wage Act, and in 2014 following the Obama Administration's introduction and Executive order mandating the Paycheck Fairness Act. Morality and human rights ideologies were imbued in both of these social issues, linking multiple media frames—*Morality and Ethics*, *Economic*, *Legality*, and *Political Factors*.

In the decades-earlier example from a CNN article from April 11, 1995, President Bill Clinton effectively ties the *Morality and Ethics* frame to that of the *Economic* frame by emphasizing the benefits of increasing women's rights to the nation:

If you think about the great challenges facing America today, resolving the dilemmas of working women are critical to our medium. Women want to be treated as assets to be developed in the workplace, not costs to be cut. They deserve to work in an environment that treats them with dignity, respects the value of their families, and invests in their skills

and their future. This is not just the fair and decent thing to do. It is the smart thing to do for America (Kelley, CNN, April 11, 1995, para. 2)

The same article goes on to link the need to support women as equal human beings, as well as breadwinners, by enforcing legislative efforts against discrimination. This is where the gender wage gap “pro”-sided arguments become most impactful: when multiple frames are woven in to the discourse but there is a dominant linguistic turn that echoes *the Morality and Ethics* frame. Labor Secretary Robert Reich noted,

But in unprecedented numbers...women are in the workforce. They need help. They need help with child care. They need help with better pay...We’re going to vigorously enforce the laws against discrimination. We’ve already been doing that, but we’re going to make sure that federal contractors and any other employer—they simply don’t discriminate against women (Kelley, CNN, April 11, 1995, para. 8, 10)

Media framing, particularly around significant milestones of a legislative and political nature, is an instrumental and necessary component of a democratic media landscape that takes public sentiment in to consideration for policy formation.

6.6 Study Limitations

Prior to discussing prospects for new avenues of research related to media framing of the gender wage gap and public opinion, I would like to recognize several limitations to this study. To begin, this was the first study of its kind that looked at this particular social, economic, and political issue through the lens of a meta-media framing analysis across multiple, diversely affiliated sources, over a large span of time. While I am confident in having successfully diagnosed broader patterns, themes, and possible interpretations of media frames and pro-con rhetoric, there are bound to be relevant findings in addition to those I identified, particularly at the granular level of linguistic variations in tone, structure, and position.

Second, the use of defacto GSS questions as representative of public opinion shifts related to media framing provide only an indirect means of correlating the two. Though reliable, there is room for alternate interpretations in assessing what the public is thinking in relation to the gender wage gap issue.

Third, these findings are predicated on the identification of certain de facto frames and source selection. Other frames might be considered or unearthed in additional research. Additionally, a broader selection of sources, perhaps even regional news transcripts or local news broadcasts, might provide different insights into the use of dominant and less dominant frames by partisanship.

Ultimately, I was able to address the research questions I set out to find answers to, and more research can only contribute to the growing body of work on frame analysis, public opinion, and policy formation research.

6.7 Future Research – Moving Forward

Important research opportunities exist in relation to this topic. A more detailed analysis within each decade could unearth more revelations around media frames and patterns, and tie greater correlation to political and economic drivers during a given historical moment in time.

Incorporation of additional sources for source variation—for example, a study analyzing different source (perhaps partisan sources) or incorporating data gleaned via online news sites—might yield comparable or contrasting results of interest. In addition, a selection of alternate significant milestones to those identified might yield different and ground-breaking results. Likewise, analysis by demographic characteristics of audiences would contribute to a clearer understanding of generational differences in public opinion around this topic.

Additionally, an examination of other issues related to human rights and women's equality merit examination, potentially using the same methodology and approach. Are these findings replicable across other social movements and issues, or is the gender wage gap issue unique in its considerations? Does the *Morality* and *Ethics* frame present similarly as both a signifier and possible solution to these issues? This study intended to contribute to the continuously growing body of research on media framing and its influence from or on public opinion, as well as examine the correlations between media framing and significant m one issue: the gender wage gap. Additional studies at the meta-level of other issues critical to society that pertain to women and minorities—reproductive rights, or race equality movements like Black Lives Matter, for example—would be beneficial in building additional understanding of the nuances involved in media framing.

Furthermore, the question of whether non-trusting media consumers are more immune to media effects may also be something to consider, as is the question of how emphasis frames activate causal reasoning via alternative secondary and tertiary frames. Were the gender wage gap framing to shift radically in the media from one predicated on the predictable frames of economics, legality, and political factors to those based on human rights, equality and morality arguments, would the public be able to perceive and react to the distinction accordingly?

Finally, I return to the overarching questions I posed in Chapter 1: What role does media play in societal change if it employs selective dominant frames and leaves out the human equality and morality dimension in a majority of its messaging? Why, despite the overwhelming preponderance in media messaging of supply-side support couched as “pro”-sided narratives that clearly shows most media (with the exception of Fox) want the gender wage gap eliminated,

does this continue to be an issue? I suggest the lack of a “perfect storm” for all significant milestones, coupled with the underutilization of the Morality and Ethics frame, is to blame. Despite the mainstream media framing this as an economic, legislative, and political issue, it is lacking the ideological thrust that can only be demonstrated via a human rights’ argument to effect substantive change in public opinion. The news reporting paradigm is meant to be based on factual reporting, objectivity and partisan neutrality rather than news bias (Hackett, 2009). Yet the political attitudes of decision-makers who write and create the news—journalists, reporters, and editors—makes a difference in what gets reported and to what degree. News agencies are tasked with gaining traction around readership and viewership under significant cost and budget constraints, competition, the continued rise of digital media, and a changing landscape that forces stories to be more compelling yet cater to a broader swath of audiences’ and readers’ partisan attitudes. Nevertheless, I call on media to carefully consider this research as a launching ground for evaluating its own media framing practices, and considering frame usage and exclusion as relevant in what the public is entitled to read and hear around gender equality and human rights.

6.8 Closing

The gender wage gap continues to be an economic reality in the United States. While multiple demand-side variables do indeed contribute to the employment decisions women make, media framing of the gender wage gap must be recognized as both a reflection on society’s perspectives about gender equality as well as an influential partner in shaping public discourse on this topic. Given the right conditions, such as intense media coverage around a significant milestone, which seems to be legislative and executive in nature, rather than legal (lawsuits) or

governance-oriented (committees, labor relation board), media framing can affect public opinion by drawing greater attention to a social issue, and ultimately affect policy formation in the direction to close the gap.

Perhaps the contemporary women's movement can leverage these findings to better position itself in relation to these "perfect storms." The fact that we now understand the correlation between media framing around high-visibility significant milestones and policy change should help shape the structure of transforming theory to practical outcomes, and the "politics of disruption." "When women go beyond individual action to effective group action, editors will have to report that action on the news pages, not the women's page," states Lillian McCormick, Executive Director of Women on the Job (*New York Times*, December 15, 1985, para. 4). A *New York Times* article from 1981 noted that "segregation by sex in the workplace...remains one of the last and least recognized civil rights frontiers." Here we are, 35 years later, and that observation remains poignant and painfully relevant. It is time to rise up and change history. A closer examination of other movements (gay rights, minimum wage gap) that have successfully mobilized and achieved policy reform, coupled with a deeper unpacking of media framing around those movements is pivotal in making that change.

I began this dissertation with a personal narrative, the telling of how I started my first high-visibility, high-compensation position in management consulting nearly twenty years ago, and my naivety in regards to the economic conditions women faced as they entered the labor force around compensation, negotiation, pay equity, and institutionalized gender discrimination. I believe that both supply-side and demand-side economics contribute to this issue, and that media framing mirrors that insofar as the types of media framing and dimensions it employs,

which are seemingly more consistent across sources than we might have suspected. It appears that debate in the political arena at the highest levels—president, congress—is necessary for discourse on policy formation around this issue to take place. Media is not solely responsible for influencing citizen behavior, by any means, but it bends the public's ear in ways that have an impact on policy formation.

I end now with the thought that the gender wage gap has very real potential to be an issue that is not only elevated in media coverage at critical moments in time, but that I will see this issue debated and resolved with full pay equity in my lifetime. After all, it is an idea whose time has come, and media has something to contribute to that change.

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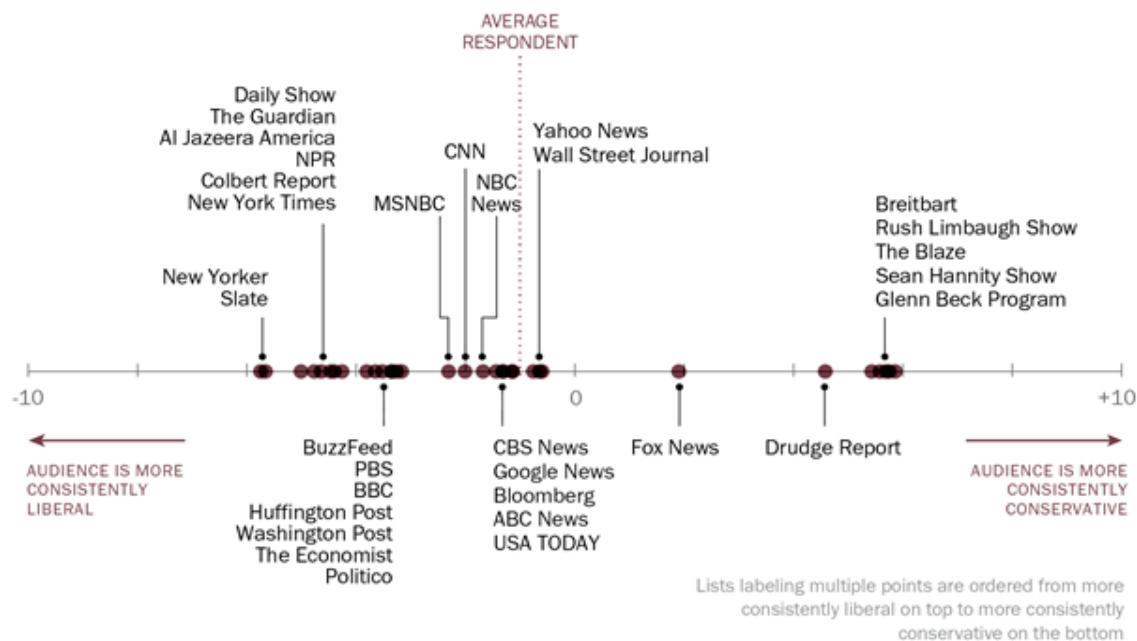
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MEDIA SOURCES AND PARTISANSHIP

Figure 3.1 Ideological Placement of Media Sources/Partisanship

Ideological Placement of Each Source's Audience

Average ideological placement on a 10-point scale of ideological consistency of those who got news from each source in the past week...



American Trends Panel (wave 1). Survey conducted March 19-April 29, 2014. Q22. Based on all web respondents. Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see About the Survey for more details.) ThinkProgress, DailyKos, Mother Jones, and The Ed Schultz Show are not included in this graphic because audience sample sizes are too small to analyze.

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APPENDIX A (Continued): MEDIA SOURCES AND PARTISANSHIP

Public Trust in Media Sources based on political leanings

More News Media Sources Trusted by Those on the Left

% saying they trust each source (sources trusted by 50% or more shown)

	Total	Consistently liberal	Mostly liberal	Mixed	Mostly conservative	Consistently conservative
CNN	54%	NPR 72%	CNN 66%	CNN 61%	Fox News 72%	Fox News 88%
ABC News	50	PBS 71	NBC News 63	ABC News 56		Hannity 62
NBC News	50	BBC 69	ABC News 59	NBC News 54		Limbaugh 58
		NY Times 62	CBS News 55	CBS News 50		Glenn Beck 51
		NBC News 56	PBS 50			
		CNN 56				
		ABC News 52				
		MSNBC 52				
		CBS News 51				

American Trends Panel (wave 1). Survey conducted March 19-April 29, 2014. Q21a-Q21b. Based on web respondents. Respondents were first asked if they had heard of each outlet. For outlets they had heard of they were asked first to choose those they trusted, then to choose those they distrusted. Those not selected as either trusted or distrusted are considered neither trusted nor distrusted. See topline for full question wording. Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see About the Survey for more details).

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APPENDIX B:

Preliminary General Social Survey (GSS) Variables and Corresponding Questions used in Cross Tabulations

GSS Variables	Questions
CONPRESS	I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them? (The Press)
NEWSFROM	We are interested in how people get information about events in the news. Where do you get most of your information about current news events – newspapers, magazines, the Internet, books or other printed materials, TV, radio, government agencies, family, friends, colleagues, or some other source?
CONFED	I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them? (Executive Branch)
GOVDOOK	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? A. Most of the time we can trust people in government to do what is right
FEFAM	Now I'm going to read several more statements. As I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. For example, here is the statement: D. It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.
FEWORK	Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?
FEPRESCH	Now I'm going to read several more statements. As I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. For example, here is the statement: C. A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.
FAMSUFFR	Do you agree or disagree ... C. All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job.
HOMEKID	Do you agree or disagree ... E. A job is alright, but what most women really want is a home and children.
HUBBYWK1	And, do you agree or disagree . . . A. A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family.

TWOINCS1	A. Do you agree or disagree ... both the husband and the wife should contribute to the household income.
POLVIEWS	A. We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale?
POLEFF3	Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. C. The average citizen has considerable influence on politics.

APPENDIX C:

Significant Milestones from January 1, 1980–April 30, 2014

Time period	Significant Milestones
1980s	<p>“1981 - In <i>County of Washington (Oregon) v. Gunther</i>, the Supreme Court rules that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act applies even if jobs are different. Prison matrons earned only 70% of what male prison guards were paid, though their jobs scored almost the same job evaluation points. This landmark victory brought them up to 95% of what male guards earned.” (Baird & Walters, 1982).</p> <p>1981 - San Jose (CA) city workers are first workers to strike for pay equity. Their victory brings \$1.5 million in pay equity adjustments (and more in succeeding contracts).</p> <p>1984 - Advocates battle attack on pay equity by Clarence Pendleton, Chair, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, who calls pay equity “the looniest idea since Looney Tunes.” Yale clerical and technical workers win first major strike in private sector over pay equity. Federal workers pay equity bill passes House 413-6 but loses in Senate 51-47. 20 states conduct pay equity surveys; 4 make pay equity adjustments.</p> <p>1988–89 - Pay Equity for Federal workers passes House 302-98. National Committee on Pay Equity celebrates its 10th Anniversary, now has 120 organizational members. 24 states have pay equity studies, 20 states have made some pay adjustments. San Francisco completes March 1987 pay equity adjustment agreement made with SEIU and other unions after nine years of struggle.</p> <p>1989: Executive Order 11246 (Harris Trust Savings Bank/11-year race/sex discrimination case) passes. Administrative Law Judge ruled Harris Bank had discriminated against women and minorities in hiring, placement, salary, salary increases, and promotions, based on gender. The ruling resulted in the</p>

	single largest financial recovery (\$14 million) for thousands of women and minorities.
1990s	<p>1991: Civil Rights Act enacted. Allowed Title VII Plaintiffs to recover compensatory and punitive damage caps due to intentional pay discrimination. Most definitive legislation on civil rights since 1964 Civil Rights Act. Attempted to strengthen earlier law; designed to restore employees' ability to successfully sue employers for discrimination.</p> <p>1995: EEOC holds meetings re: wage-based employment discrimination (1995; in 1994, 9,600 charges of wage discrimination were filed with the Commission under Equal Pay Act)</p> <p>1999: Boeing wage-discrimination class action lawsuit settled in favor of Plaintiffs (\$72.5 million awarded to 29,000 former female employees)</p>
2000s	<p>2001: Dukes v. Walmart; trail representing 1.6 million women in class action lawsuit, alleging discrimination in pay and promotion policies (settled in 2001, in favor of Defendant)</p> <p>2002: Coca-Cola class action lawsuit (wage/race discrimination lawsuits; settled in favor of plaintiffs for \$195.2 million settlement)</p> <p>2004: Wachovia lawsuit (\$5.5 million settlement for underpaying 2,000 female workers)</p> <p>2004: EEOC v. Morgan Stanley & Co.(2004; EEOC obtained \$54 million for employees alleging sex-based discrimination in compensation, promotion, career advancement)</p> <p>2007: Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. case initiated</p> <p>2009: Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act passed 2009. President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act, which allows victims of pay discrimination to file a complaint with the government against their employer within 180 days of their last paycheck. Previously, victims (most often women) were only allowed 180 days from the date of the first unfair paycheck. This act is named after a former employee of Goodyear who alleged that she</p>

	was paid 15–40% less than her male counterparts, which was later found to be accurate.
2010s	2010: Formation of National Equal Pay Task Force 2013: Fair Minimum Wage Act passed 2014: Paycheck Fairness Act introduced in 113 th Congress April 2014: Equal Pay Act/Bill enactments – Executive Order/Presidential Memorandum (prevents workplace discrimination, employees gain control over pay, federal contractors required to submit data on employee compensation)

APPENDIX D:

Coding Protocol of U.S. Gender Wage Gap Frames

Using Chong and Druckman's (2007) media framing typology and Boydston's (2013) policy guide handbook, I have developed a framework for coding frames in media sources related to discourse around the U.S. Gender Wage Gap debate.

This page lists the set of "Gender Wage Gap" frames. "Specific frames are highlighted in bold with representative examples following. In some cases, a given example is coded in multiple frames, as several meanings may be invoked simultaneously" (Boydston, 2013). Note: these are only preliminary a priori examples; an additional frame and code were added as needed during data analysis.*

Layer 1: Positions & Tone

Pro = Support the right of women to receive the same or equal salaries to men in comparable occupational positions. Support legalization of salary equalization and elimination of wage gaps between genders. Support gender equality related to pay issues.

Con = Oppose the right of women to receive the same or equal salaries to men in comparable occupational positions. Oppose legalization of salary equalization and elimination of wage gaps between genders. Oppose gender equality related to pay issues.

Layer 2: Frames

1. Economic (National, Domestic, Income/Earnings)
2. Morality & Ethics
3. Capacity & Resources
4. Legality, Constitutionality & Jurisdiction
5. Employer/Organizational/Corporate Resources & Rights
6. Profitability
7. Public sentiment
8. Political Factors & Implications
9. Information and Education on the gender wage gap *

* Frame added after coding processes began

Notes for Coders

Should I code this article? In order to code an article, you must be able to answer ‘YES’ to all of these questions:

1. Does it refer to a gender wage gap issue in the United States?
2. Does it refer to a gender wage gap issue (vs. minimum wage or other wage-related discourse)?
3. Is the print news article (NYT, WSJ, USA Today only) a news article, business or financial article? IF YES, CODE. If any other type of article (Opinion, Op-Ed, Letter to the Editor, World News, Addendum, Supplement, Perspectives, Sports, Travel, Leisure, Entertainment), DO NOT CODE.
4. Is this a broadcast transcript (CNN, Fox, NBC) related to a news program? If yes, CODE. If any other type of broadcast transcript (entertainment, infotainment, advertising, sports program), DO NOT CODE.

For print media: Do not code any headlines or sub-titles.

For broadcast transcripts: Do not code any other stories included in the transcript.

Code for primary frame – the dominant one that “comes across most strongly” first, then for secondary and remaining frames. Since policy issues are multi-dimensional, frame cues are not mutually exclusive and may receive multiple codes. You will find codes in to be co-occurring in many instances.

1. **Economic (National, Domestic, Income/Earnings)** – the gender wage gap is about the difference between female earnings expressed as a percentage of male earnings (OECD). As a percentage, female earnings are less than those of male earnings in comparable occupational positions regardless of human capital variables such as education and experience. Can include issues of wages, employment or unemployment, economic drivers/gender wage gap as contributor or detractor from economic well-being of the U.S.

CODES

Pro (argues that the wage gap should be eliminated based on economic growth and/or wage discrepancies supported by statistics):

- Closing the gender wage gap would create a significant economic stimulus.
- Small women-owned businesses would increase, contributing to GDP.
- Lower-wage workers tend to be women. Women are more likely to remain poor/be in poverty due to wealth inequality. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women.
- Occupational segregation could be minimized (occupations staffed predominantly by men tend to pay more than occupations staffed predominantly by women).
(www.nwlc.org)
- More women would enter the workforce as a result of pay equity.
- Married women experience a motherhood penalty in the workplace. Wage gaps are smallest for those women who have never had children/dependent care.
- Statistical and numerical differences in pay exist.
- Women's lower wages hurt women and families who rely on women's earnings for all or part of their income.

Con (argues that the wage gap is based on women's experience, education, willingness, ability, or lack of desire to work, and/or the gap is negligible based on statistics):

- Statistical and numerical differences in pay are negligible.
- There is a glass ceiling (this is a systemic reality).
- Women have lesser amounts of labor experience than men.
- Women with same levels of education, experience are paid equally to men. Wage gaps are smallest for those women who have never had children/dependent care; when

adjusted for differences in human capital and other variables, these gaps become nearly insignificant.

- Women work less than men. The gender wage gap is due to human capital variables: more women are mothers/primary care-givers and work fewer hours than men on average; therefore, they merit less in wages. (nwlc.org)

- 2. Morality & Ethics (Gender Equality)** – the gender wage gap is based on the ideological construct that men and women are equal in every regard as human beings, should receive equal treatment, are imbued with equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities, and should not be discriminated against based on gender. Any argument that is compelled by duty, honor, shared humanity, righteousness or any other sense of ethics or social or personal responsibility (equality is the “right thing to do”).

CODES

Pro (argues that the wage gap should be eliminated based on moral or ethical considerations):

- Equality is the right thing to do. Women comprise 51% of American society (U.S. Census). They comprise 47.4% of the civilian labor force in 2012 (U.S. Census). They are equal to men and therefore deserved to be paid equally for the same work.
- Women are equal to men as human beings and should therefore be treated equally.
- Jobs women do (particularly in the service sector) are not as valued as those performed by men.
- Wage equality will benefit families, the country.

Con (argues that the wage gap is based on moral or ethical considerations which state men and women are not equal, or women are inferior to men):

- Women are not equal to men as human beings.
- Women should/should not be in the workplace in certain positions because they are emotionally, physically, and/or mentally incapable of performing as effectively or as well as men.

- 3. Capacity & Resources** – the gender wage gap is an ongoing issue that has impacted the United States beginning in the 21st century. In general, the availability or the lack of resources – time, physical, geographic, information, space, human, financial, technological, political, previous policies/precedents – may help or hinder the addressing of this issue. This frame deals specifically with the limitations or availability of resources as they relate to policy objectives. Examples: is there sufficient money to pay women equal wages? Has this been tried in the past with successful/unsuccessful results? Is there sufficient data/ and/or information on the effects of wage parity? Are there other pressing societal issues of greater import? Are there technological limitations (infrastructure) preventing wage equity from being implemented? Do women have differing occupational preferences from men that influence their employment?

NOTE: in contrast to the Economic frame, this frame stresses that there is a **LIMITATION** or **ADEQUATE CAPACITY** of resources. Therefore, while the messages may be economic in nature (and cross-coded with Economic or other codes), the emphasis stresses a clash, competition, or allocation among a finite number of resources.

CODES

Pro (argues in favor of reallocating resources to achieve economic parity/reduce gender wage gap):

- There are few limitations preventing this issue from being addressed.
- Women care about money as much as men.
- Women like to work as much as men in the workplace.

Con (argues against reallocating resources to achieve economic parity/reduce gender wage gap):

- There are other societal issues that are more pressing/deserve greater attention.
- Wage equality solution too difficult to implement. It would be economically-prohibitive to equalize wages (the process of doing so would cost employers/the economy too much money/be too heavy a burden to implement).
- Women don't negotiate as well as men for salaries or wages (therefore society should not address this issue, as it is the individual woman's responsibility to address wage gaps)
- Women expect to not work. Women will always have men to take care of them, and want to get married/move into child care roles rather than the labor force. Women are not as effective, productive, or committed as men in the workplace due to competing obligations

(child or dependent care) outside the workplace that impact their ability to be as effective as men.

- Women prefer to or opt out to do other types of jobs like run their own businesses.
- Individual women are responsible for achieving equality.

- 4. Legality, Constitutionality & Jurisdiction** - the gender wage gap is about all citizens being afforded equal opportunities for employment under federal and state laws, regardless of gender. Laws passed, defeated, or under consideration. Court cases, all aspects of jurisdiction (state vs. federal; employer vs. employee, voters vs. courts, etc.). Freedoms granted to or constraints imposed upon individuals, government, and corporations via the Constitution, Bill of Rights, Amendments, policies, statutes, or judicial interpretation. The rights and authority of individuals and corporations to act independently of government.

CODES

Pro (more laws, stronger laws, or more government intervention is needed to support eliminating the gender wage gap):

- Current laws are too limited and do not enforce equality.
- The Department of Labor and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) sets basic minimum wage and overtime pay standards which, if violated, result in penalties/fines/legal judgments.
- Equal Pay signed in to law in 1963 protects against discrimination and should be upheld.
- Government intervention (laws, initiatives, enactments) are needed to address the wage gap.
- Individual and class action law suits around employment discrimination in the past have resulted in material appropriation for victims of discrimination. (FLSA)

Con (laws are already in place and less government intervention is needed):

- Caveat emptor: an employee agrees to abide by corporate policies upon hiring, including compensation decisions.
- Several laws are already in place that protect the rights of citizens. There is no need for additional legislation to crack down on pay inequity.

- 5. Employer/Organizational Rights** – the gender wage gap is about ensuring organizations are committed to hiring the most qualified employees regardless of gender.

CODES

Pro (corporations are obligated by social good/society to provide substantive wages):

- Corporations have a responsibility to society and the labor market to ensure they attract, recruit, retain, and provide career advancement opportunities to all segments of the employable population.

Con (corporations are free entities and are not beholden to employees or government):

- Government should not interfere with operation of the labor market. Government should not be able to micromanage the workplace or influence compensation decisions.

- 6. Profitability** – the gender wage gap is about ensuring industries and organizations reduce structural and institutional disparities in order to maximize profitability. This frame focuses on the institutional level of corporations and the drivers that spur or deter from profitability.

CODES

Pro (happier employees = higher profits; therefore organizations should focus on paying equitably):

- Hiring individuals across gender is good business sense.

Con (free market trumps any other considerations, including compensation equality):

- Profit is the primary driver for organizations. Any intervention that inhibits profitability is contrary to the unimpeded operation of the labor market.

- 7. Public Sentiment** – in general, the public’s opinion. Includes references to general social attitudes, polling, demographic information, voting results, research highlighting the public’s preferences, implied or actual consequences of diverging from or “getting ahead” of public opinion or polls. Includes interviews/perspectives of laypeople/civilians that are used to represent public opinion. Also includes any public passage of a proposition/law/amendment (NOTE: this frame should be cross-coded with Legality, Constitutionality & Jurisdiction frame; voting results should be cross-coded with Political Factors).

CODES

Pro (what the public and research says matters, because they support reducing the gender wage gap):

- A majority of individuals polled support gender wage gap equality.
- Research supports closing the gender wage gap.

Con (polls are biased, only one variable, and research says closing the pay gap doesn’t make sense):

- Public sentiment is easily skewed/manipulated and does not reflect economic reality.
- Public opinion polls are only one variable in this issue and do not take the intricacies of this issue into consideration.
- Polls indicate the public considers other issues to be more important/relevant than equal pay based on gender.
- Research invalidates closing the gender wage gap.

- 8. Political Factors** – any political considerations surrounding an issue, such as partisan filibusters, lobbyist involvement, bipartisan efforts, deal-making, vote-trading, parties, political maneuvering. Mention of a political entity (e.g. Democrats, Republicans, The House, The Senate, Congress, The President, Presidential candidate, Obama, Bush, Clinton, Reagan, etc.) get marked as political. Explicit statements that a policy issue is good or bad for a particular political party. Political voting results (Example: “the Lilly Ledbetter Act was signed in to law, 93-7”).

CODES

Pro (by changing the laws in favor of eliminating the gender wage gap, political parties benefit; discussing this issue benefits the public and is supported by most equal rights’ groups):

- Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party **
- Discussion of this issue influences voting/elections.
- Most equal rights’ groups support gender wage equality.

Con (changing the law does little for political parties):

- Changing laws to reduce the pay gap benefits one political party **
- Keeping laws in place benefits one political party.
- There is little political gain to be made for political entities if wages are equalized.

** Note: this code may apply to both pro/con arguments, depending upon the political party to whom the news article is referring and their framing of support or opposition to said party

- 9. Information and Education about the wage gap** – any education or information-providing efforts from the government or other institutionalized sources that contribute to the education of the public and/or employees about the gender wage gap. This includes reference to Clinton and Obama’s initiatives to educate and empower employees with salary/compensation information, workshops, seminars, and other initiatives that employers are required to provide to educate employees. NOTE: this frame ties in very closely with the Political and Legislative frames, as these initiatives are frequently part-and-parcel of laws or enactments.

CODES

Pro (more information = better-educated and informed public who would support eliminating the wage gap)

- Education programs are designed to inform workers about wage gap issues.
- Government should conduct more research on these issues.

Con (public is already informed; no need for additional education)

- Government should not waste money on educating/informing the public about the gender wage gap.

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