

Partisan Media Coverage and Intersectionality

A Case Study of Vice President Kamala Harris

Rahul Bhargava: r.bhargava@northeastern.edu, @rahulbot
Meg Heckman: m.heckman@northeastern.edu, @meg_heckman
Emily Boardman Ndulue: e.ndulue@northeastern.edu



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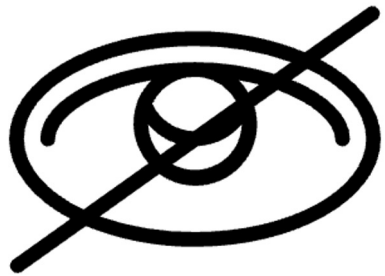
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KAMALA HARRIS MAKES HISTORY BIDEN'S VP CHOICE

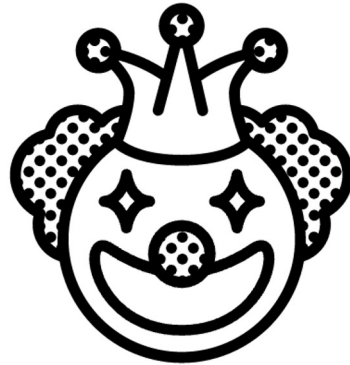


PRESUMPTIVE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE JOE BIDEN selected California Senator Kamala Harris as his vice presidential running mate on Tuesday, Aug. 11, after weeks of anticipation. Harris becomes the first African American female VP nominee in U.S. history. Read more on **Page A6**. (Photo by Cydni Eledge/Michigan Chronicle)

Gender bias in political news



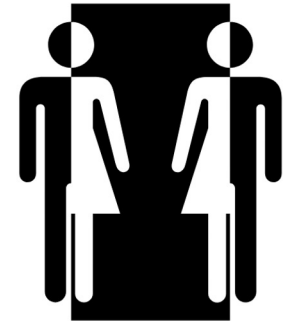
Omission



Trivialization

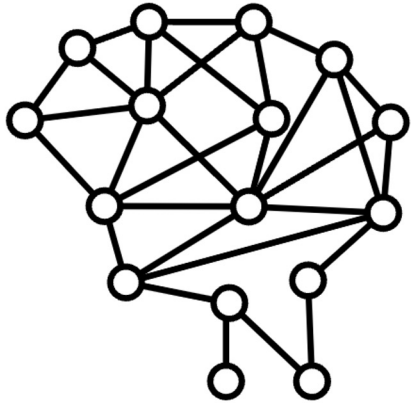


Condemnation

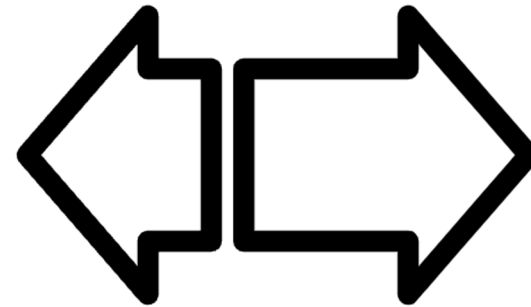


Misogynoir

Confusing Context: Media



media ecologies



media polarization

Hypotheses

H1 - Biased Tropes

Established patterns of racialized and sexist coverage of politicians will play out in both established and novel ways due to Harris' intersectional identity (woman, person of color, member of mixed race and mixed faith family.)

H2 - Asymmetric Polarization

These narratives will be unevenly distributed across a partisan view of media sources; biased narratives will be particularly prevalent in sources read by the far right.

Research Design

- Analysis of digital news stories published from August 11, 2020 (date Biden announced Harris as his running mate) through April 30, 2021 (100th day of Biden-Harris administration.)
- Publications included were from five media collections based on a measurement of media source partisanship
- Media Cloud was the content source and analytical tool employed for mixed method content analysis

Partisan Media Collections

Robertson et al, 2018;
connected registered
voters to Twitter users
and bias based on
calculated domain shares

Database of local news (Yin,
2018) and other research-based
domain lists, or inclusion on
Google News

200 unique users shared
the domain, and US-based
publications only

Split of domains evenly
into quintiles based on
Robertson bias score

**Extant Domain
Score of Media
Partisanship**

**Filter for
News Sites**

**Filter by
Share Volume
and Geography**

**Manual
Review**

**Divide into
Quintiles**

Data Collection w/Media Cloud

- RSS feed based ingest yielded 6,738,878 candidate stories
- Boolean query to capture coverage about Harris
 - (at least five occurrences of her name in the article)
- Spidering to gather relevant linked-to content
- Iterative creation of keyword based subtopics
- Corpus: 17,165 stories from 1,193 media outlets



Findings - H1: Biased Tropes



Trivialization



Condemnation

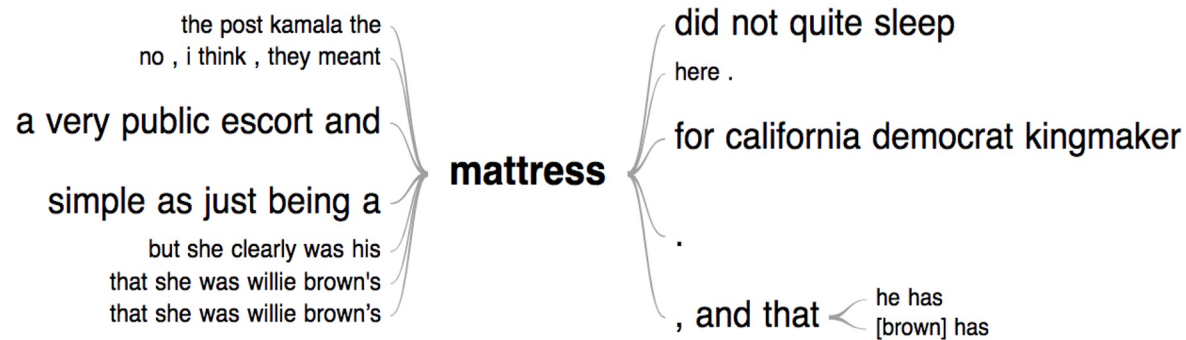


Misogynoir



Willie Brown

- Vilification/Condemnation
- Among the most frequently used words in coverage of this narrative from the mostly Republican quintile are "affair," "slept," "extramarital," and "mattress" — the result of multiple references to Harris as "Kamala the mattress," and as "Willie Brown's mattress."



Cackling

- Vilification/Condemnation
- Among the most frequently used words in stories which include cackl* are "witch," "crazy," and "wicked." Notably, stories that referred to Harris as cackling tended to also link Harris to Hillary Clinton.



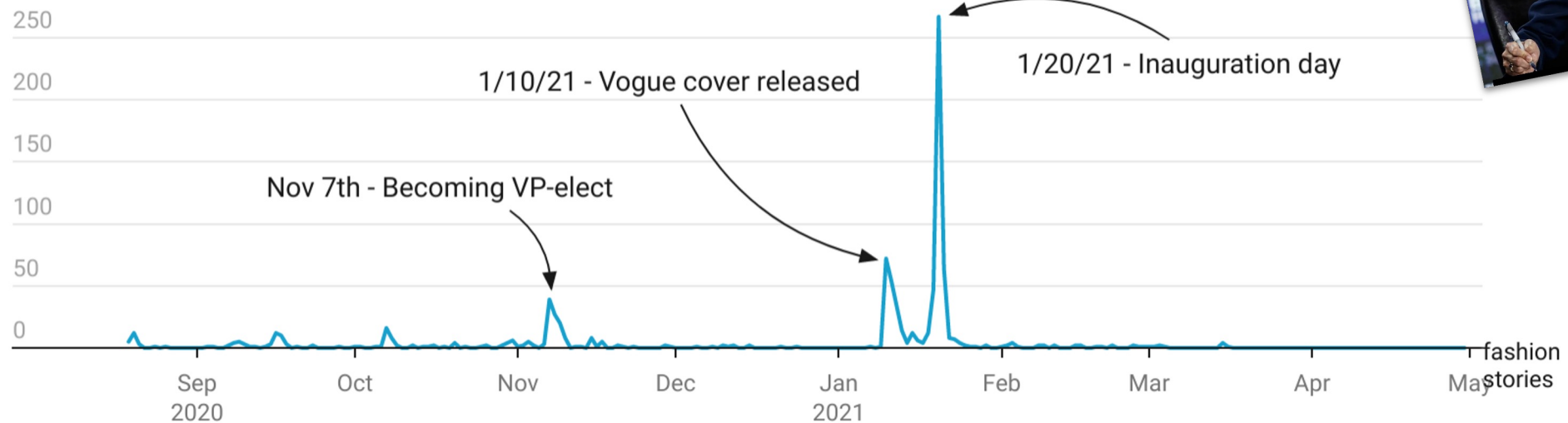
Questioning Credibility (in Black Experience)

- Vilification/Condemnation, Misogynoir
- Plagiarism accusation, of Dr. Martin Luther King's story
- Accusation that her accounts of celebrating Kwanzaa are false

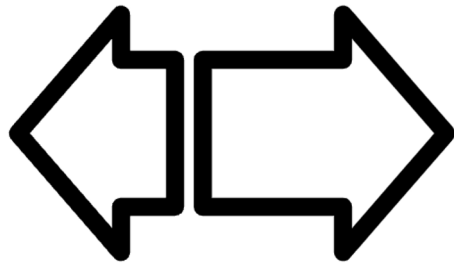
Focus on Fashion

- Trivialization

Fashion-Related Stories



Findings - H2: Asymmetric Polarization

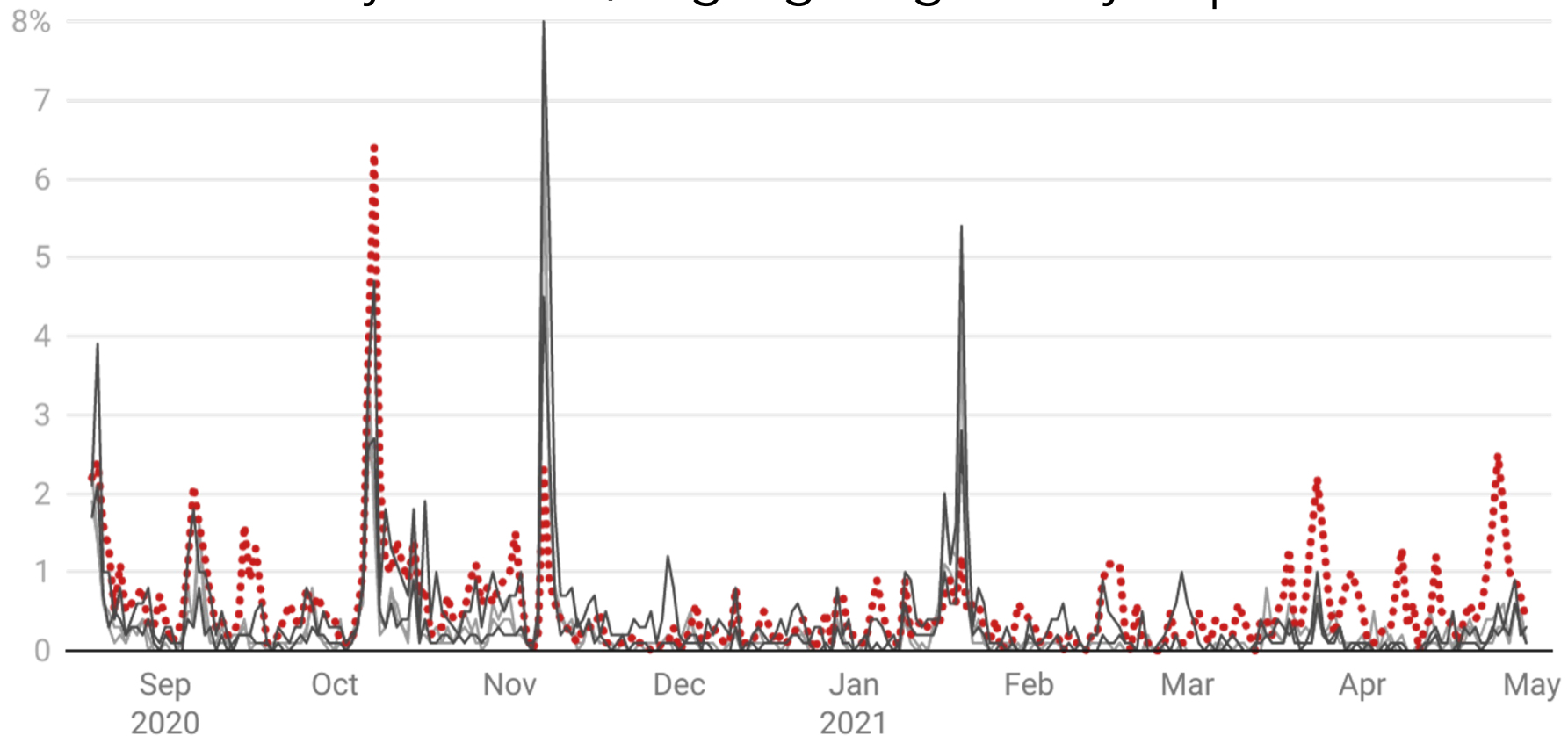


More Attention at Extremes

Partisanship Quintile	Total Stories Published	Percent (Number) of Stories Featuring Harris
Sources Tweeted Mostly by Democratic Voters	272,080	0.50% (1,366)
Sources Tweeted Somewhat More by Democratic Voters	1,346,915	0.23% (3,118)
Sources Tweeted Evenly by Republican/Democratic Voters	3,523,340	0.24% (8,569)
Sources Tweeted Somewhat More by Republican Voters	1,093,378	0.28% (3,110)
Sources Tweeted Mostly by Republican Voters	638,353	0.59% (3,765)

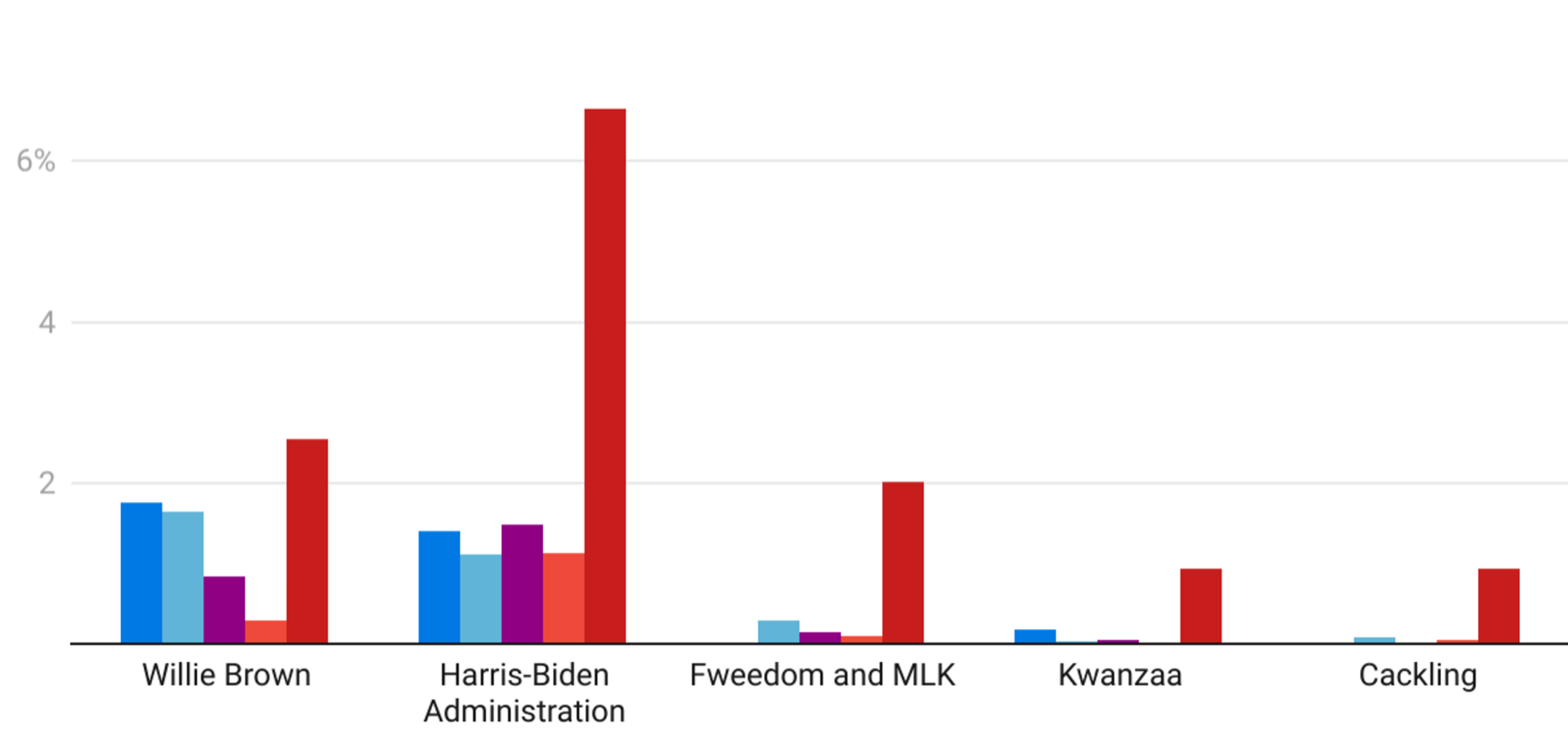
Different Peaks in Attention

Attention Over Time by Quintile, Highlighting Mostly Republican Quintile



Biased Trope Presence by Partisan Quintile

■ Sources Tweeted Mostly by Democratic Voters ■ Sources Tweeted Somewhat More by Democratic Voters
■ Sources Tweeted Evenly by Republican/ Democratic Voters
■ Sources Tweeted Somewhat More by Republican Voters ■ Sources Tweeted Mostly by Republican Voters



Discussion + Conclusions

Takeaways

- Perpetuation of previously documented sexist frames in coverage
- News organizations associated with the far right follow different norms when it comes to selecting and framing news narratives, especially those related to race and gender
- U.S. news organizations are struggling to move beyond racial and ethnic binaries in ways that would allow for narratives that fully explore multi-faceted identities

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