

Powerful in Pearls and Willie Brown's Mistress:

A computational analysis of gendered news coverage of Kamala Harris

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Overview and goals



Long history of sexist, racist coverage of women candidates and candidates of color.

Modern hyper-polarized media ecosystem.



Historical patterns of bias

Women candidates receive **less coverage** than their male counterparts (Falk, 2010; Aday & Devitt, 2001).

Coverage of women candidates tends to **focus on their physical appearance, family lives and personality** traits as opposed to their campaigns or policy issues (Devitt, 2002; Kahn, 1994; Meeks, 2013).

Women candidates are **often sexualized**. In other cases, they are vilified for embracing traditionally masculine leadership qualities (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009).

When women of color seek elected office, **the coverage they receive is especially problematic** (Gershon, 2012; Ward, 2017), reflecting Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality.

News coverage of Black women tends to **perpetuate damaging stereotypes** including those that portray them as hypersexual or emasculating (Meyers, 2013).

Tools and time period

*Biden announces Harris
as his running mate*



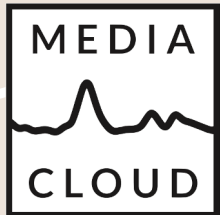
Aug 19, 2020



Apr 30, 2021

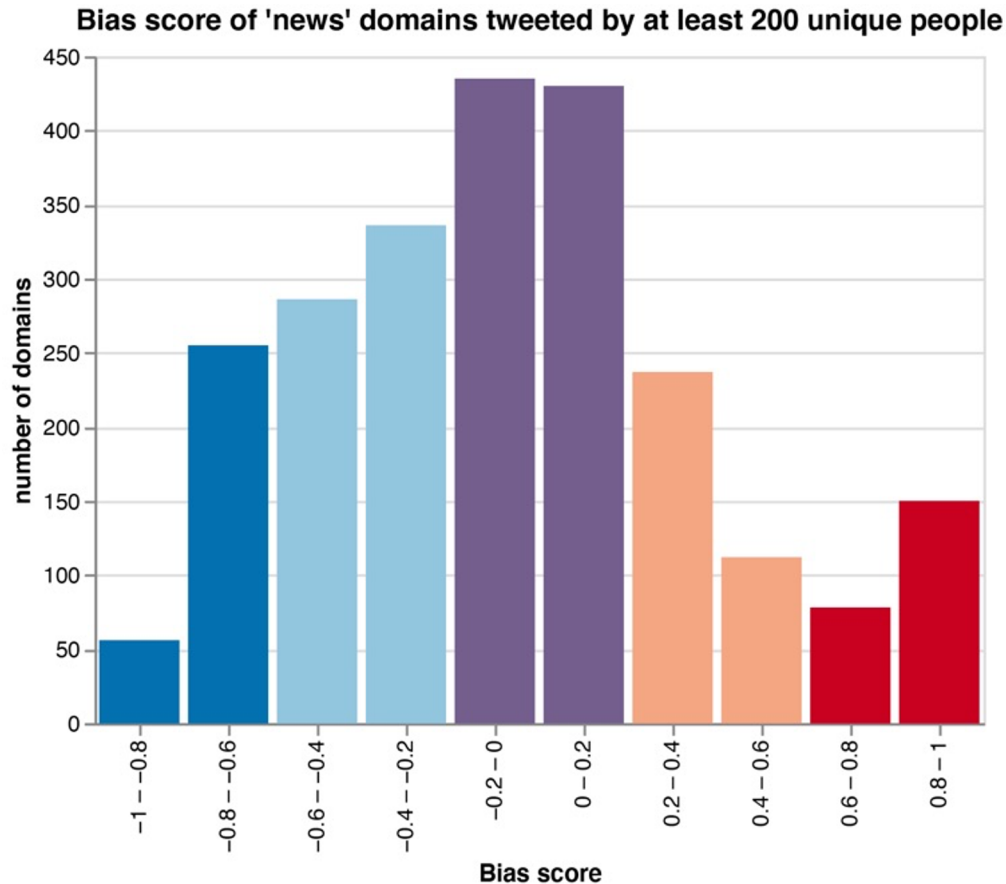


*100th day of the
Biden/Harris administration*



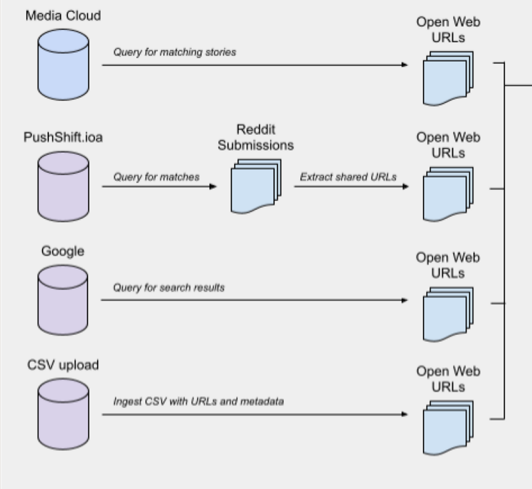
mediacloud.org
@mediacloud

Partisan Media Collections

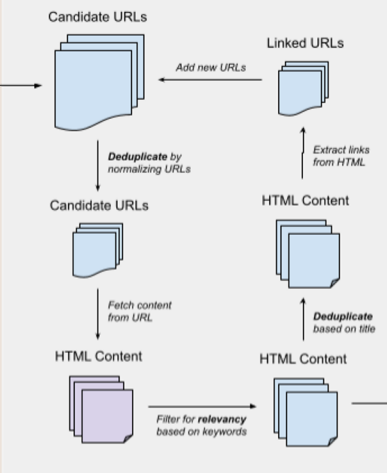


- Media sourced from a Twitter panel linked to voter registration records
- Bias score computed based on the ratio of sharing volume
- 5 partisan collections of online news sources created

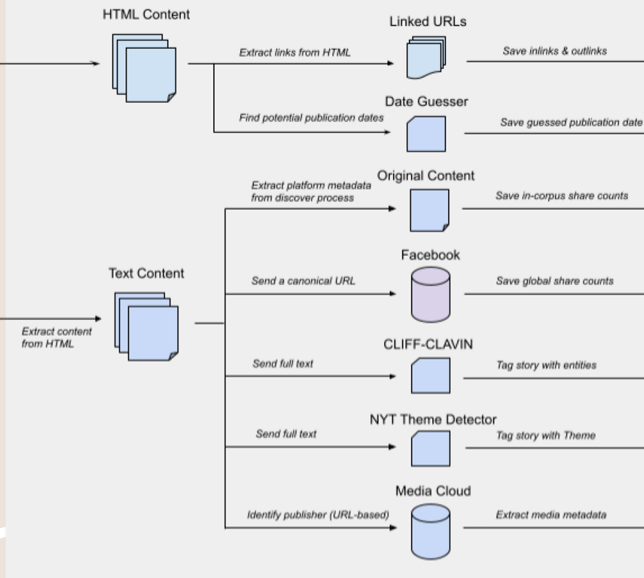
1 - Discovery



2 - Spidering

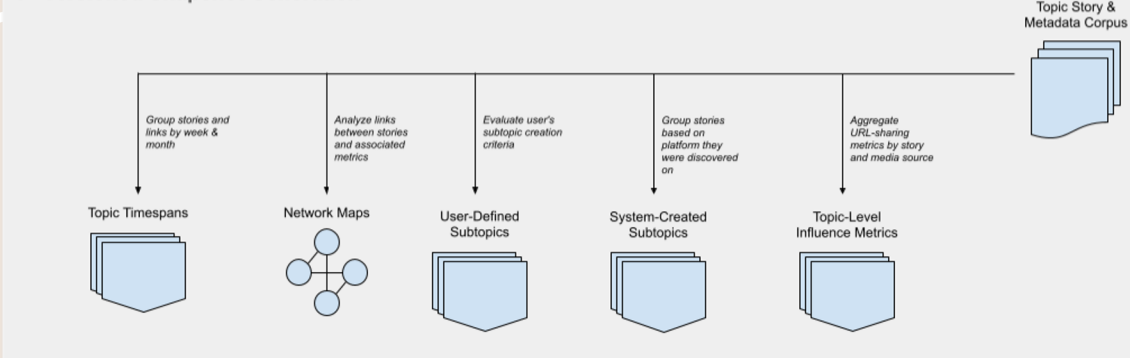


3 - Story Processing



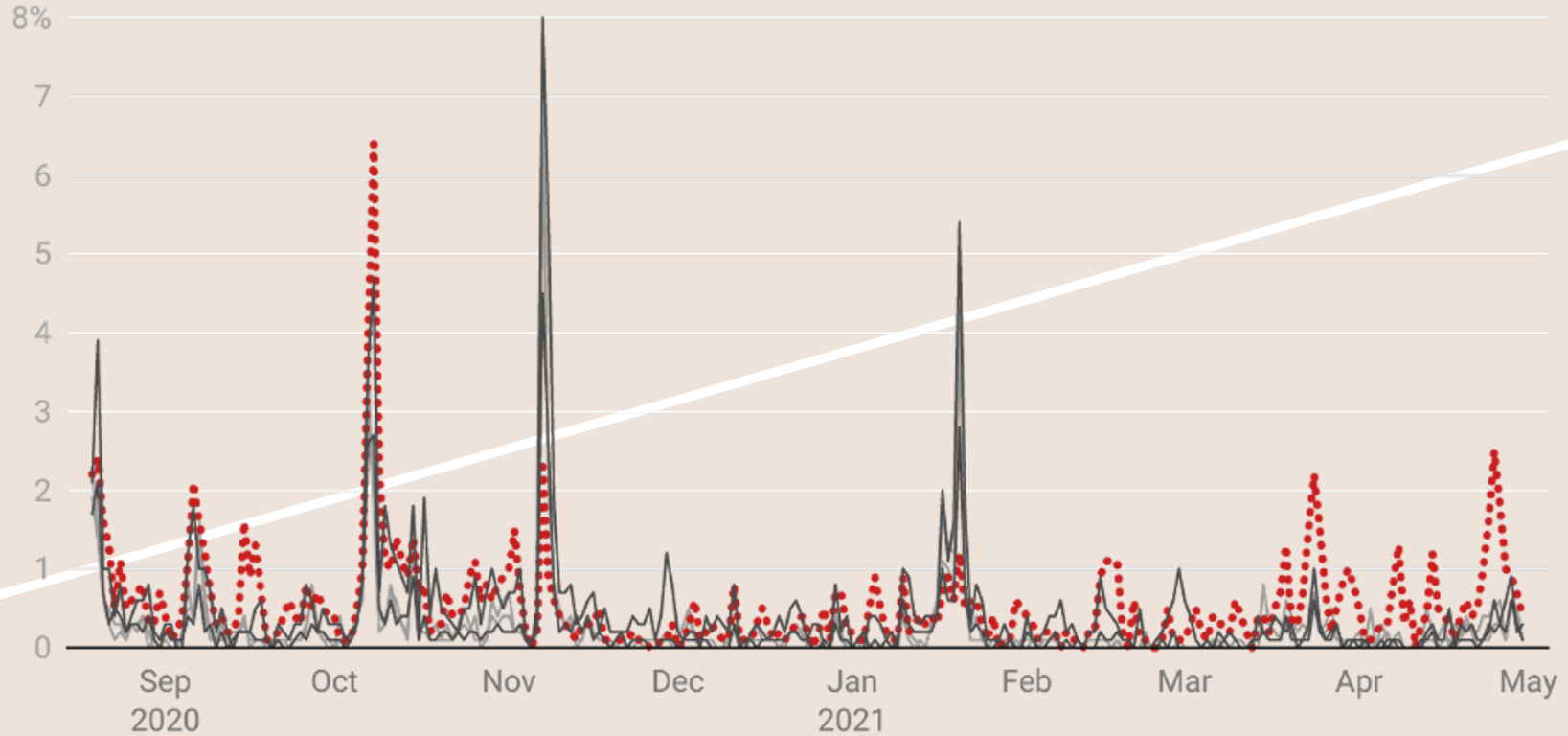
Story Ingest & Analysis

4 - Versioned Snapshot Generation



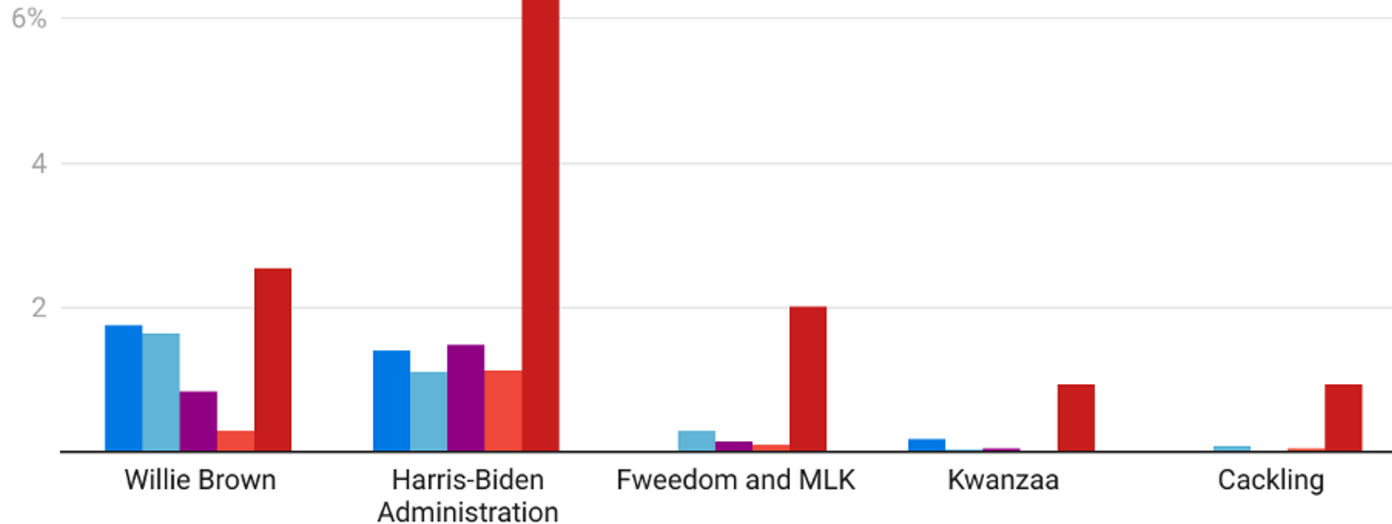
There were stark differences in the *volume* and *type* of coverage Harris received.

Volume of coverage by quintile



Topics by 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



History repeats,
especially on the far
right.

Example #1:
Willie Brown and
hypersexualization



The screenshot shows the top of a web browser displaying the Independent Sentinel website. The header includes a hamburger menu icon, the site name "Independent Sentinel" with the tagline "A government of laws, not of men", and a search icon. Below the header is a navigation bar with the text "Home of News, Politics & Opinion". The main content area features the article title "Kamala Harris, the woman who could be president thanks to Willie" in a large, bold font. Below the title is the byline "By M. Dowling - March 4, 2021" and a comment icon with the number "1". A row of social media sharing icons (G+, Facebook, Twitter, Email, Pinterest, Telegram, Medium, and a generic share icon) is positioned below the byline. The article text begins with "As Joe Biden falters due to his mentally deteriorating state, it looks like the woman who got 0% in her own presidential campaign, could become president. She would be the first woman, the first woman of color, the first descended from slave owners, the first who slept her way to the top."

Independent Sentinel
A government of laws, not of men

Home of News, Politics & Opinion

Kamala Harris, the woman who could be president thanks to Willie

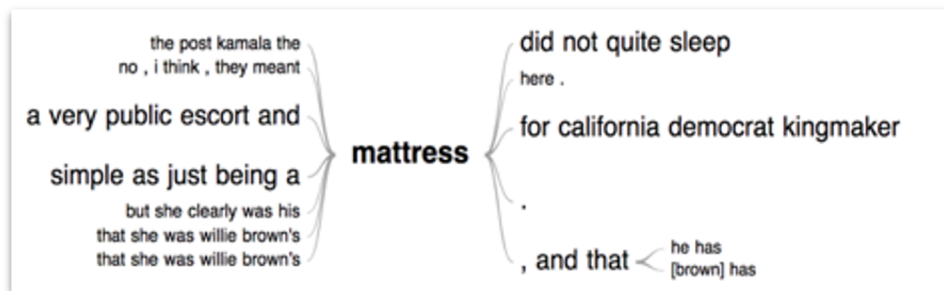
By **M. Dowling** - March 4, 2021 1

g f t e p M W

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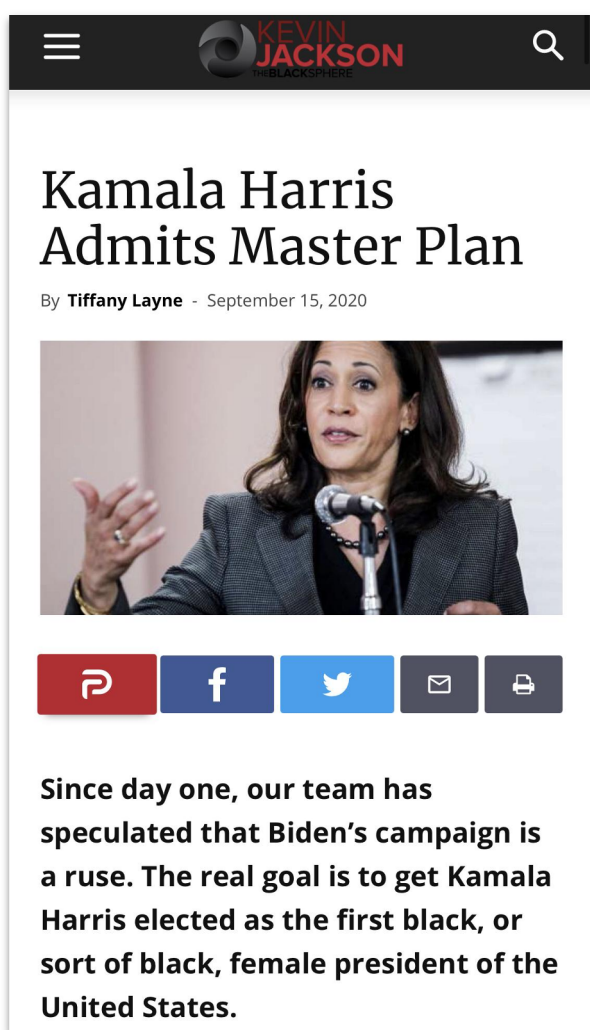
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Example #1:
Willie Brown and
hypersexualization



History repeats,
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Example #2: “Harris-
Biden”
administration and
unfeminine ambition



☰ KEVIN JACKSON THE BLACKSPHERE 🔍

Kamala Harris Admits Master Plan

By **Tiffany Layne** - September 15, 2020



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Since day one, our team has speculated that Biden's campaign is a ruse. The real goal is to get Kamala Harris elected as the first black, or sort of black, female president of the United States.

History repeats,
especially on the far
right

Example #3:
Cackling and
vilification



Meanwhile, on the left...



Conclusion

Coverage of Harris is especially intense on the partisan extremes.

Mostly Republican-shared sources focus on narratives not covered in other quintiles.

Emerging gendered narrative about fashion as a political statement of empowerment, identity, and affiliation (ie. not just the male gaze).