

VISUAL FRAMING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE  
2012 BARACK OBAMA AND MITT ROMNEY FACEBOOK PAGES

by

JOHN MILLER

DR. CARYL COOPER, COMMITTEE CHAIR

DR. HYOUNGKOO KHANG

DR. EDWARD MULLINS

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations  
in the Graduate School of  
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2013

Copyright John B. Miller, Jr. 2013  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to discover how Barack Obama and Mitt Romney were framed visually on Facebook during the 2012 presidential election. Frame theory has been studied in various forms of media. However, this study is the first, to the researcher's knowledge, to use frame theory to analyze Facebook. A content analysis of each candidate's Facebook Timeline Photos album was conducted. The image attributes used for analysis were established in previous research. These attributes were divided into two main categories, the ideal candidate and populist campaigner. The main categories were divided into four subcategories, statesman, compassionate, mass appeal, and ordinariness. There were significant differences between candidates in the subcategories. It appeared to be a main campaign strategy to frame Mitt Romney as a statesman. Many Romney photos were filled with symbols of patriotism and campaign paraphernalia. The Barack Obama campaign appeared to frame Obama as a compassionate candidate. Obama had significantly more photos linked to compassion. While there was no difference in the ordinariness subcategory, there was a difference in the mass appeal subcategory. The Mitt Romney campaign uploaded significantly more photos of Romney in front of large audiences. Obama's photos appeared to be more intimate. Further research should be conducted by expanding the research methods of this study to other political offices and other social networks.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

- df* Degrees of freedom: number of values in the final calculation of a statistic that are free to vary.
- $X^2$  Chi-Square: Measurement of statistical significance of data.
- NS Not significant: Difference did not reach significance.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this thesis. The completion of this project would not have been possible without the help and support of faculty, family, and friends. I would like to thank Dr. Caryl Cooper, committee chair for this thesis, for her knowledge, input, and enlightening conversations. I would also like to thank Dr. Edward Mullins for his contributions and profound editing abilities. I thank Dr. Hyoungkoo Khang for making statistics make sense. I would also like to thank my coders, Trent Robinson, Ryland Dixon, Bryan Lee, and James Bates. Without their participation, this would have never been possible. I thank my parents, Johnny and Lisa Miller, for giving me such a solid foundation and supporting me throughout my academic career. To my brother, Jake Miller, thank you for putting up with my rants and giving me the support I needed to get through this. Finally, I would like to thank my loving wife, Alyson Miller, for putting up with the stack of books in front of my closet and for always supporting me. I thank you all.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
3. RESEARCH METHODS .....	25
4. RESULTS .....	34
5. DISCUSSION .....	46
REFERENCES .....	60
APPENDIX A .....	65
APPENDIX B .....	69

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Intercoder Reliability	36
2. Month of Photo Uploads	36
3. Linked to Influentials	39
4. Linked to Patriotism	39
5. Linked to Patriotism	39
6. Linked to Entourage	39
7. Campaign Paraphernalia	40
8. Confetti Shower	40
9. Wearing a Suit	40
10. Statesman	40
11. Linked to Children	41
12. Linked to Family	41
13. Linked to Women	41
14. Linked to Religion	42
15. Affinity Gestures	42

16. Individual Interaction	42
17. Physical Contact	42
18. Compassionate	42
19. Linked to Celebrities	43
20. Large Audience	43
21. Approving Audience	43
22. Crowd Interactions	44
23. Mass Appeal	44
24. Casual Dress	45
25. Sports Dress	45
26. Rolled Sleeves	45
27. Linked to Ordinary People	45
28. Physically Active	45
29. Ordinariness	46
30. Ideal Candidate	46
31. Populist Campaigner	31



## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Difference Between Candidate Uploads.....	36
2. Frequency of Uploads by Month.....	37
3. Difference Between Candidate Uploads by Month.....	37

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Political advisors have played a key role in candidate packaging and promotion since the United States was founded. Early consultants advised George Washington to publicly celebrate his 1758 candidacy for the Virginia House of Burgesses. Washington did so by distributing over 160 gallons of rum, beer, wine, and hard cider to 391 eligible voters in his district. John Beckley, recognized as the first campaign manager, launched the first “media blitz” in American politics by releasing thousands of political handbills praising the virtues of Thomas Jefferson (Friedenberg, R.V., 1999). In 1928, Edward Bernays, a pioneer of modern public relations, urged political leaders to emulate big business in “the methods of appealing to the broad public” (Bernays, 2005, p. 110). With the development of television, the importance of candidate image reached a new level (Grabe & Bucy, 2009).

The use of television as a political communications tool began in the presidential campaign of 1952, Eisenhower versus Stevenson. During the campaign the Eisenhower team pioneered the use of television by borrowing techniques from Madison Avenue. Rather than presenting long speeches, the Eisenhower campaign filmed short commercials that were similar to the M&M candy advertisements of the time. Eisenhower would appear in short 20-second spots to respond to questions from “ordinary citizens.” The success of the Eisenhower campaign was one of the first pieces of evidence to support the importance of image construction in visual media (Museum of the Moving Image, 2008).

Political strategists visually construct images to promote desired qualities and favored themes. Visually highlighting the positive attributes of a candidate is an attempt to reach voters on a more intimate level, which has the potential to result in electoral support (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). One of the most famous examples of the importance of candidate image occurred in the mediated debate in 1960. According to television viewers, the young and handsome John F. Kennedy easily defeated the 5 o'clock shadowed, perspiring Richard Nixon, while radio listeners thought Nixon won based on his answers to the questions. The Kennedy versus Nixon television debate has been heavily analyzed by communications and political science scholars (Maarek, 2011). Kennedy and Nixon held many of the same positions on issues leading researchers to believe the election may have boiled down to who appeared the most presidential. During the first televised debate, compared to the pale, tired looking Nixon, Kennedy not only looked presidential, but he also appeared more robust and vigorous (Tuman, 2008).

During the 1980s the Reagan administration mastered the art of image making. "A reporter flippantly asked Reagan what it was like being an *actor* in the White House, to which he candidly replied: 'How could you be president and not be an actor?'" (Erickson, 2000, p.257). By controlling various elements within an image such as characters, objects, or events, the image's producer can elicit responses that have been conditioned by the viewer's experience of equivalent interrelationships with real-life people, things, and actions (Messaris & Moriarty, 2005). The Reagan administration used acting, stagecraft, and mediated images to enhance Reagan's image. Dramatic photos of Ronald Reagan at historically significant sites such as Normandy Beach, South Korea's DMZ, and the Berlin Wall captivated American and

international audiences. Reagan's successes lead other presidents to emulate his use of images and stagecraft to reach voters (Erickson, 2000).

The next revolution in political communications came through the Internet. Presidential candidates began using the Internet as a form of communication during the 1990s. However, the earliest candidate websites were merely electronic versions of the print materials available to the electorate and volunteers. During the 1996 campaign the Clinton-Gore and Dole-Kemp websites featured candidate biographies, news releases, campaign information, and opportunities for volunteers. Almost every major presidential candidate from 1996 to the present has used a website as a form of mass communication (Smith & Smith, 2009). Although politicians began using the Internet in the 1990s, it did not become a major communications tool until the 2000s. During the 2000 election more people had access to the Internet and political strategists discovered new ways to use the Internet (Cornfield, 2004). The Gore campaign pioneered the use of photo galleries to display campaign events on his 2000 campaign website. Gore's website contained 502 images while the Bush contained only 67 (Verser & Wicks, 2006). Howard Dean expanded the use of the Internet as a political communications tool during his 2004 presidential campaign, one of the first and most successful to use online donations (Talbot, 2012). By connecting over 500 discussion groups, fordean.org became one of the first political sites to connect supporters with each other (Foot, Schneider, & Dougherty, 2007). This form of political communication was a prelude to the next revolution, social networking.

In 2008, Barack Obama's use of image building and social networking resulted in the historic election of America's first African-American president (Decker, 2012). His campaign

narrowed his image down to "Hope" and "Change" with a concise slogan, "Yes We Can." (Maarek 2011). This image then was distributed through new social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The Obama campaign proved the value of social networking as a political communications tool. With the help of the 24-year-old Facebook cofounder, Chris Hughes, the Obama campaign created an ultimate online political machine. Even though John McCain did not use email in 2008, his campaign provided a website and used click-to-donate tools and social networking features. In contrast, Barack Obama made the new media technology the center of his campaign (Talbot, 2008).

Facebook allows for specifically targeted political advertisements, and the social aspect of Facebook allows for persuasive messages to be delivered by trusted friends via peer-to-peer messaging. This increases the likelihood the recipient will be persuaded by the message (Talbot, 2008). Due to Obama's success, political operatives seek to better use and understand social networking as a political communications tool (Aldhous, 2012). Using frame theory, this study will analyze the official 2012 campaign Facebook pages of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney for specific image attributes that frame each candidate.

According to Goffman, framing is a method by which people compartmentalize everyday experiences in order to make sense of those experiences. Frames enable users to "locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its limits" (Goffman, 1974, p.21). It makes it possible for viewers to draw upon the rich variety of visual stimuli and associated emotions, which are already attuned through our interactions with our social and natural environments: facial expressions, gestures, postures, personal appearance,

physical surroundings, and so on (Messaris, 1997). Sight is the most sophisticated human sense. It sends information more quickly throughout the nervous system than any other sense. The basic recognition and emotional response to images occurs well before registering in our consciousness. Scientists discovered that the brain does not readily distinguish between visual stimuli originating from either the physical or the mediated world. (Grabe & Bucy, 2009).

The following studies will be used as a framework for this study. A content analysis of candidate images from *News and World Report*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* revealed these magazines portrayed Reagan more favorably based on the criteria set by Moriarty and Garramone (Moriarty & Garramone, 1986). The criteria consisted of analyzing photos for behavior, context, and perspective. More specifically behavior consisted of analyzing the positioning of the torso and arms, hand movements and gestures, and facial expressions. Context included the setting, dress, and interaction, and perspective included size of the photo and camera angle. Each attribute was judged as more favorable or less favorable based on instructions outlined in the coding sheet (Moriarty & Garramone, 1986). Scholars expanded on the 1986 study by analyzing similar photographs of the 1988 presidential election. Changes were made to the coding sheet—15 attributes were analyzed during the study. These consisted of activity, posture, arms, hands, eyes, expression, interaction, camera angle, portrayal, position, and size. The findings suggested the magazines made an effort to display the candidates equally (Moriarty & Popovich, 1991).

Later, Verser and Wicks (2006) expanded on the techniques used by earlier scholars to conduct a content analysis of the images on presidential candidate websites during the 2000 campaign. The coding sheet included 28 attributes that represented three categories of variables:

visual imagery relating human interaction, setting and appearance, and photographic production value. One major flaw in this study was the difference in the number of photos posted on candidates' websites, with Gore having 502 and Bush only having 67. As a result, Gore appeared to have more of the positive image attributes than Bush (Verser & Wicks, 2006). A content analysis of *New York Times* photos of the 2000 presidential election revealed that photos of George W. Bush with his family outnumbered photos of Al Gore with his family. Bush aides revealed the strategy involved the creation of emotion and image. Bush often appeared more personable, visually reminding voters of his family heritage; and of the likability of Ronald Reagan, while Gore appeared more like an outsider (German, 2010).

Grabe and Bucy (2009) assert visual analysis should move beyond positive versus negative by incorporating a multidimensional approach. Researchers identified three historical images that campaigns have used during past presidential elections: the common man, the master politician, and the Washington outsider. The master politician depicts the ideal candidate while the common man and Washington outsider fit a populist frame. Jimmy Carter popularized the common man image in 1976. Grabe and Bucy's study involved images derived from video presented by the news media. Their approach, "measuring the visual framing of candidate character traits within the parameters of three enduring character frames: the ideal candidate, the populist campaign, and the sure loser" (p. 101). The study included data from 1992 through 2004. The results of the study indicate the Democratic strategy was to visually frame the presidential candidate as a populist campaigner. This technique included images of the candidate interacting with crowds, often dressed down, no tie and rolled up sleeves, to portray ordinariness.

Republicans were framed visually as ideal candidates often wearing a suit and tie surrounded by symbols of patriotism (Grabe & Bucy, 2009).

This study is organized into the following sections: Literature Review, Research Methods, Results, and Discussion. The Literature Review is divided into two sections. The first section is an in-depth look at the use of social networking as a political communications tool followed by a visual communications perspective on candidate image and the theory of frame analysis. The first section concludes with studies involving visual framing. The second section of the Literature Review contains the research questions for this study. The Research Methods section documents the research methods used to gather the data presented in the results sections. The research method for the study consists of a content analysis of photos obtained from the Barack Obama and Mitt Romney official campaign Facebook pages' Timeline Photos album. The timeline for the study ranges from May 29, 2012, the day Romney secured the delegates needed to win the Republican primary, to elections day, November 6, 2012. The final section contains a discussion of the results, along with implications and suggestions for further research.

Garramone, Moriarty (1986) and Popovich (1991) analyzed photographs to see how candidates were framed in news magazines. Grabe and Bucy analyzed television using a set of image attributes which explain how candidates were visually framed on television. Grabe and Bucy's findings indicate that Democrat candidates are visually framed as "Populist Campaigners" while Republicans are visually framed as the "Ideal Candidate." This study continues down the continuum of mass media bringing the study of framing to social networking.



## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### *The Evolution of Social Networking as a Political Communications Tool*

Modern political communication professionals seek to use analyses of social media activity to create targeted messages to potential voters. There are a large number of firms marketing ways to analyze and measure the impact of social media. This form of micro-targeting is the biggest goal of modern political communicators (Aldhous, 2012). Presidential candidates began using the Internet as a form of communication during the 1990s. However, the earliest candidate websites were merely electronic versions of the print materials available to the electorate and volunteers. During the 1996 campaign the Clinton-Gore and Dole-Kemp sites featured candidate biographies, news releases, campaign information, and opportunities for volunteers. Almost every major presidential candidate from 1996 to the present has used a website as a form of mass communication (Smith & Smith, 2009). The Gore campaign incorporated photo galleries of campaign events in his 2000 campaign website. The Gore site uploaded 502 images while the Bush site uploaded only 67 (Verser & Wicks, 2006). Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign was one of the first and most successful to use online donations (Talbot, 2012).

According to Fernandes (2010), the Internet has been proven to be an excellent form of mass communication in the political campaign environment. The use of the Internet evolved in the election of 2004 with the introduction of blogging. In 2008, advancements in social networking brought the candidates and representatives closer to voters and constituents. During

the early age of social networking the possibility of two-way communication was not fully utilized. Free communication on political social networking pages was mostly avoided due to the politician's fear of losing control. Very few politicians engaged in dialogic communication with their constituents on Facebook. The 2008 election brought a surge of activity among voters ages 18-29. Barack Obama was about to gather youth support crossing both racial and partisan boundaries (Fernandes, 2010).

In 2008, the McCain campaign provided a website, click to donate tools, and social-networking features. In contrast, Barack Obama made new media technology the center of his campaign. With the help of Chris Hughes, the 24-year-old cofounder of Facebook, Obama was able to create the ultimate online political machine. Facebook allows for specifically targeted political advertisements and the social aspect of Facebook allows for persuasive messages to be delivered by trusted friends. This increases the likelihood the recipient will be persuaded by the message (Talbot, 2008).

### *Visual Communications: The Power of Images*

According to Grabe and Bucy, from a neuroscience perspective, the human brain is geared toward visual rather than verbal information processing. Sight is the most sophisticated human sense. It sends information more quickly throughout the nervous system than any other sense. The basic recognition and emotional response to images occurs well before registering in our consciousness. Science has discovered the human perceptual system does not readily distinguish between visual stimuli originating from either the physical or the mediated world.

The brain interprets media images as if they were real, preparing the body for an approach or avoidance response (Grabe & Bucy, 2009).

Visual literacy is defined as the ability to understand visual images and to create or use images as a means of expression and communication (Messaris & Moriarty, 2005). An image is worth a thousand words, and from a biological perspective this is very true. Images are capable of evoking basic emotional responses on a pre-attentive level. Additional processing via the cortical pathway allows the viewer to develop inferences based on the qualities within the image. The process of understanding an image begins with instinctual reaction followed by conscious appraisals and proposition evaluations (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). According to Messaris (1997), the iconicity of visual images makes it possible for images to draw upon the rich variety of visual stimuli and associated emotions which are already attuned through our interactions with our social and natural environments: facial expressions, gestures, postures, personal appearance, physical surroundings, and so on.

Messaris and Abraham (2011) highlight three distinctive properties of visual images— analogical qualities, indexicality, and explicit propositional syntax. Images are a analogical system of communication, whereas words are wholly arbitrary. The term indexicality comes from the writings of the philosopher C. S. Pearce (1991). He used it to single out photographs from other types of images because a photograph is an automatic product of the effects of light on lenses and film. New forms of electronic media deliver also deliver life like interpretation of the world. Being exact reproductions of reality, a photograph has a certain authenticity that human-made pictures can never have.

Research indicates inherent differences between the ways humans process visual communications versus written forms of communication. Images, both still and full motion, possess analogical qualities pertaining to their environment while words are abstract symbols with no physical resemblances to their referents. Humans associate images to the environmental elements they have encountered, but associations made with words must be taught. Film scholars argue that visual communication and written communication share similar characteristics in that they both contain rules and conventions that can be learned (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). Learning the rules and conventions of visual communications, increasing visual literacy, may be an antidote to the manipulation of viewers in visual forms of advertising and journalism (Messaris & Moriarty, 2005).

Moriarty (1996) applies Pearce's theory of abductive reasoning to visual communication. The theory postulates the understanding of how signs operate can be reduced to a logical form. The theory implies people create a hypothesis based on available clues or conditions that are well known. More clues will increase the likelihood of a truthful conclusion. In order to obtain clues one must engage in observation allowing this theory to fit into visual communications. Viewers of media observe different cues which bring forth information and associations from their past experiences. The viewer develops a hypothesis about how the provided details relate until reaching a conclusion perceived meaning.

If voters see a candidate with his or her family, it is logical they may perceive this candidate to support family values. This leads to the strategy of associational juxtaposition—"the general strategy of pairing images in order to bring about unconscious association between

them” (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). In 1989, Enoch Ebong discovered visual juxtapositions allow people to infer the meaning intended in political photographs. However, the associations are not always positive. If voters perceive juxtaposed images as staged the results may be negative. In Ebong’s study the juxtaposed images included pairing candidates with rural landscapes to show support for environmental issues, photos with the family to support family values, and the use of flags to support patriotism (Messaris, 1997).

### *Frame Theory*

The study of frames spans many disciplines throughout the social sciences and humanities (Entman, 1993). Sociologist Erving Goffman (1974) introduced the concept of framing. Goffman credits anthropologist-psychologist Gregory Bateson with originating the metaphor (Reese, 2001). According to Goffman, framing is a method by which people compartmentalize everyday experiences in order to make sense of those experiences. Frames enable users to “locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its limits” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21).

Early frame studies adhered to a psychological interpretation of framing, considering how people made sense of their everyday social experience (Reese, 2001). Framing can influence an individual based on that individual’s dynamic, issue-specific values structure. This is not the only way framing can influence attitudes. A frame may have multiple effects at various levels of message processing, with different reactions from different audiences. Most scholars studying framing believe frame effects occur through varying levels of cognitive accessibility (Nelson & Willey, 2011). Frame theory was expanded to communications research in the attempt to

discover how issues are constructed, discourse is structured, and meanings are developed (Reese, 2001).

Frames are considered extremely useful when endeavoring to understand the media's role in framing political life (Reese, 2001). Entman describes framing as, "...to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Frames are able to highlight elements within a form of communication that elevate that item to salience. Salience can be defined as a piece of information that is important and increases the chances that the audience will remember the information. A politician may use frames to elevate certain positive attributes while diminishing elements that may be considered negative (Entman, 1993). Frames can be tactics for strategic actions of political actors in public deliberation. Using the narrative quality of frames, political actors can reach the audience in a way that resonates mentally (Pan & Kosicki, 2001).

The concept of media framing offers communication scholars an alternative to the objectivity and bias paradigm and helps in understanding the effects of mass communication. Framing is a more sophisticated concept compared to media bias in that it goes beyond the notions of pro or con, favorable or unfavorable, and negative or positive. Framing also allows researchers to explore more complex, emotional responses while also adding a cognitive dimension. The cognitive element includes beliefs about objects as well as attitudes (Tankard, 2001).

Hertog and McLeod (2001) view frames as a cultural, rather than cognitive phenomena. Frames contain tremendous power through symbols, culture, and widespread recognition. The symbolic power of frames occurs from peoples' strong affective reactions to well-known symbols as in symbols created through the activation of certain myths. Individuals identify with the morals, ideals, stories, and definitions within his or her culture. A second source of the power of frames is that culturally privileged narratives, metaphors, and myths carry excess meaning. Using culturally familiar frames has the potential to activate an array of related ideas, social history, policy choices, heroes, and villains recognized within the frame. This relates to the third source of power for frames, widespread recognition. The way individuals, organizations, and institutions communicate is dependent upon shared meaning among communicators. The speaker and the audience recognize and use words, icons, ideas, gestures, and so on identically in order to communicate.

#### *Frame vs. second level agenda-setting*

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) discovered high correlations between the media agenda and the public agenda. Though their findings did not prove mass media agenda setting exists, the results of the study indicate that the agenda-setting function of the media is extremely plausible. Many scholars considered frame theory to be a part of agenda-setting theory, while others believe the two are mutually exclusive. For example, Kosicki has stated flatly that framing should not be viewed as an extension of agenda-setting because framing begins from an explicit cognitive perspective, and agenda-setting does not (Kosicki, G. M. 1993). McCombs, one of the pioneers of agenda-setting theory, argued that framing has become

the second dimension of agenda-setting research (1995). Historically, framing and agenda-setting have had opposite trajectories. Agenda-setting began with valuable approaches to measurement but lacked theoretical depth. In contrast, framing began with roots deep in cognitive psychology, but it has proved to be an elusive concept to measure (Maher, 2001).

*Image: A political communications perspective*

By controlling various elements within an image such as characters, objects, or events the image's producer can elicit responses that have been conditioned by the viewer's experience of or equivalent interrelationships with real-life people, things, and actions (Messaris & Moriarty, 2005). Goffman (1974) views a picture as a strip from reality. The image chosen represents a certain element of reality while excluding other elements, elevating the chosen element to importance. The Reagan administration used acting, stagecraft, and mediated images to enhance Reagan's image. Dramatic photos of Ronald Reagan at historically significant sites such as Normandy Beach, South Korea's DMZ, and the Berlin Wall captivated American and international audiences. Research suggests the electorate may be unable to distinguish between political fact and political strategy (Olson, Finnegan, & Hope, 2008).

According to Hacker, political communications scholars refer to a candidate's image as clusters of voter perceptions of candidates. There is strong evidence supporting the long-standing view that the formation of images influences voting decisions. Many scholars agree that small changes voter perception can have huge effects on elections. Party affiliation is still an important factor for most voters, but there are always a group of independent, swing voters who disregard political affiliation. Swing voters are more likely to be influenced by campaign communication



strategies, rather than party affiliation. Party affiliation has been overcome with political communication. Reagan Democrats and Clinton Republicans create evidence supporting the importance of campaign communication (Hacker, 2004).

According to Hellweg, candidate image has been variously defined in the literature as being stimulus-determined, that is, specifically projected by a politician, or as being perceiver-determined, that is, composed of attributes given to a politician by the electorate (Hellweg, 2004). What a voter believes, feels, or intends to do about a candidate depends upon persuasive efforts by communicators to engage that voter. Traditionally the following political attitudinal variables are regarded as important perceiver attributes: partisan self-identification, political ideology, and issue orientations (Savage, 2012). In regard to political candidates and party affiliation, Hoegg and Lewis (2012) propose that visually inferred personality traits might alter personality traits normally associated with the party. Republicans benefit from being visually perceived as competent whereas Democrats benefit from being visually perceived as intelligent. A match between appearance-based traits and party-level traits can benefit a candidate. Bayes suggests interpersonal warmth appears to be a personality dimension that can be reliably judged by voters. An expression of positive feelings in any form was found to be a possible predictor of warmth. Smiling is the best predictor of warmth among nonverbal cues of interpersonal relationships (Bayes, 1972).

### *The “Photo Opportunity”*

The term “photo opportunity” was first used in 1968 by John Hart during the CBS evening news broadcast by John Hart on October 15. The term was a part of Hart’s commentary

on Richard Nixon's photo with television star Jackie Gleason. Despite originally being part of a joke, the term is now part of political culture (Adatto, 2008). Citizens are twice as likely to view rather than listen to the President. Presidents stage photo opportunities to reach mass audiences in a controlled and calculated manner because citizens are twice as likely to view rather than listen to the President. Rhetorically performed gestures within photo opportunities are used to manipulate visual appeal. This manipulation creates a gray area between fiction and reality. White House-manipulated photo opportunities have transformed how presidents are portrayed visually. The Kennedy White House released engaging photographs of touch football games, quiet contemplation, elegant affairs, international diplomacy, and a youthful family that charmed the nation (Olson, Finnegan, & Hope, 2008). John F. Kennedy is viewed as having a Camelot presidency. This story unfolded through warm and inviting photographs of his young family and glamorous wife (Adatto, 2008).

Other presidents used photo opportunities to enhance their image, but Ronald Reagan perfected the art. Every moment of every public appearance was scripted and choreographed (Olson, Finnegan, & Hope, 2008). The Reagan team was notorious for setting up compelling images from using the beaches of Normandy to portraying Reagan as a classic American cowboy. Since then, presidents and presidential candidates have attempted to emulate Reagan by creating elaborate spectacles to convey their image through pictures. For example, in 2003, President George W. Bush flew onto an aircraft carrier in a fighter jet. Afterwards he posed in pictures with the crew. After losing the flight suit for a suit and tie, Bush posed for a photo in front of a big banner that proclaimed, "Mission Accomplished." The use of spectacle has defined

the rhetorical presidency, making the iconic photograph as important as an eloquent speech (Adatto, 2008).

### *Past Studies and Past Campaigns*

Politicians have a long-standing tradition of using their families on the campaign trail, allowing voters to get a more personal view (Maarek, 2011). Research has shown voter decisions are relying less on ideological positions and more on the perception of the candidate's personal qualities (Rosenberg, Kahn, Tran & Le, 1991). Barack Obama brought personalization to a new level during the 2008 presidential campaign. The Obama campaign built an image establishing a parallel between his personal life and the history of the United States. Obama's reflections on his life from his Kenyan father to being raised by his white grandmother in Hawaii were used as a symbol of the building of America (Maarek, 2011). Psychologists have attempted to answer why image is so important to voters (Rosenberg, Kahn, Tran, & Le, 1991).

One of the most important examples of the importance of candidate image occurred during the first televised Presidential debate, Kennedy vs. Nixon in 1960. During this debate the young, handsome John F. Kennedy appeared to have won the debate over the older, perspiring Nixon. However, radio listeners felt Nixon won the debate based on his answers to the questions. This moment is still studied by political scientists (Maarek, 2011). In 1986 Berry and McArthur suggested appearance has an effect on perception, an example being voters might perceive a baby-faced candidate as honest and warm but also physically weak, based on people's perceptions of babies. In 1967, Ernest Rose and Douglas Fuchs conducted an analysis of TV political ads created during the 1966 California gubernatorial campaign. Governor "Pat" Brown

and challenger Ronald Reagan hired public relations firms to create television advertisements. Though researchers do not believe that mass media had a direct effect on the outcome of the election, the results point out Reagan's image as a well-known movie star "good guy" may have influenced the election (Rose & Fuchs, 1967).

To a political communications specialist, according to Maarek (2011), a successful campaign strategy should consist of reexamining campaigns of the past. Learning from past mistakes can make a campaign stronger. A new candidate can be a threat to an incumbent implementing the same strategy as the original campaign. For example, some believe George H. Bush lost the 1992 election because he recycled the same negative tactics he used against Dukakis in 1988. Personalization continues to grow in importance making a candidate's image a key factor in the electoral process (Maarek 2011).

The aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attack caused Bush to be perceived as stronger and more able to lead than Kerry. Developing a politician's image is a complex process the end result of which needs to be simple. A simple image is easily understood by the public. This is evident in Barack Obama's 2008 campaign narrowing his image down to "Hope", "Change", and a concise slogan, "Yes We Can". Though a political marketer's goal is to build an image that resonates with the electorate, problems potentially occur if the image seems disingenuous or the public creates a contradictory image of the candidate. An example, French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing attempted to build an image that connected with the middle class, but this fell apart when he did not know the price of a Paris metro ticket (Maarek, 2011). One may argue a similar incident occurred during a 2012 Republican Primary debate when Mitt

Romney made a \$10,000 bet with Rick Perry. This gesture made him look out of touch with the middle class.

Trustworthiness and competence are two factors consistently important to voters. In 1991, Rosenberg, Kahn, Tran, and Le asked groups of potential voters to look at photos and associate certain dimensions of the photo with political demeanor, competence, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Their findings suggest certain facial features, ways of posing, clothing, and backgrounds affect the perception of a candidate's image (Rosenberg, Kahn, Tran & Le, 1991). Hoegg and Lewis propose, in regard to political candidates and party affiliation, visually inferred personality traits might alter personality traits normally associated with the party. A match between appearance-based traits and party-level traits can benefit a candidate (Hoegg & Lewis, 2011).

In 1983, Edell and Staelin conducted a study focusing on “pictorial effects on the memorability of advertisements and the cognitive structure (belief strengths, attitudes, intentions) resulting from exposure to these advertisements” (p. 45). They postulated that the presence of a dominant picture in a print advertisement can have an effect on the viewer’s cognitive activity. The results of the study indicate that consumers' processing of print advertisements is related to the structure and content of the advertisement (Edell & Staelin, 1983). In 1988, Shimp, Urbany, and Camlin conducted a frame analysis of magazine advertisements as opposed to the editorial or news content base used in the Edell and Staelin 1983 study. The study involved a content analysis of 1,415 magazine advertisements for mass-marketed products. By examining how advertisers used pictorials to display mass-marketed products, the study sought to “determine the

frequency with which framing and characterization are used, in which combinations they occur, and with what types of products each tends to be used” ( Shimp, Urbany, & Camlin, 1988, p. 23). Shimp, Urbany, and Camlin (1988) define a frame as occurring when “the pictorial and the message are mutually reinforcing,” (p. 24) and unframed advertisements as occurring when “interactive imagery is precluded because the picture does not offer a demonstration of the verbal message.”(p. 24). Their findings supported Edell and Staelin’s (1983) study by showing that advertisers predominately use framed ads, which communicate product benefits better than unframed ads (Shimp, Urbany, & Camlin, 1988).

A content analysis of candidate images in *U.S. News and World Report*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* revealed the magazines portrayed Reagan more favorably based on the criteria set by Moriarty and Garramone. These criteria consisted of analyzing photos for behavior, context, and perspective. Behavior consisted of analyzing torso, arms, hands, and facial gestures; context included setting, dress, and interaction; and perspective included size of the photo and camera angle. Each attribute was judged as more favorable or less favorable based on instructions outlined in the coding sheet (Moriarty & Garramone, 1986). Moriarty and Popovich expanded on the 1986 study analyzing similar photographs of the 1988 presidential election. Changes were made to the coding sheet—15 attributes were analyzed during the study. These consisted of activity, posture, arms, hands, eyes, expression, interaction, camera angle, portrayal, position, and size. The findings suggested the magazines made an effort to display the candidates equally (Moriarty & Garramone, 1991).

Expanding on the techniques used by Moriarty, Garramone, & Popovich (1991), Verser and Wicks (2006) conducted a content analysis of the images on presidential candidate websites during the 2000 campaign. The coding sheet included 28 attributes that represented three categories of variables: visual imagery relating human interaction, setting and appearance, and photographic production value. One major flaw in this study was the difference in the number of photos posted on both candidate's websites, 502 on Gore's and 67 Bush's. As a result, Gore appeared to have more positive image attributes than Bush (Verser & Wicks, 2006). A content analysis of New York Times photos of the 2000 presidential election revealed that photos of George W. Bush with his family outnumbered photos of Al Gore with his family. Bush aides revealed the strategy involved the creation of emotion and image. Bush often appeared more personable than Gore. Bush visually reminded voters of his family heritage and the likability of Ronald Reagan, while Gore appeared more like an outsider (German, 2010).

Grabe and Bucy assert visual analysis should move beyond positive versus negative incorporating a multi-dimensional approach. Researchers identify three historical images that presidents have embraced: the common man, the master politician, and the Washington outsider. Jimmy Carter popularized the common man image in 1976. The master politician depicts the ideal candidate while the common man and Washington outsider fit a populist frame. Grabe and Bucy's study involved images derived from video presented by the news media. Their approach, to measure the visual framing of candidate character traits using three enduring character frames: the ideal candidate, the populist campaigner, and the sure loser. The study includes data from 1992 through 2004. The results of the study indicate the Democratic strategy was to visually frame the presidential candidate as a populist campaigner. This technique included images of the candidate

interacting with crowds often dressed down, no tie and rolled up sleeves, to portray ordinariness. By contrast, Republicans are visually framed as ideal candidates often wearing a suit and tie, surrounded by symbols of patriotism (Grabe & Busy, 2009).

### *Research Questions*

RQ 1: Is there a difference in the number of photos uploaded to each candidate's Facebook Timeline Photos album?

A frequency analysis will be conducted to determine how many photos were uploaded by each candidate. During the Verser and Wicks (2006) study it was discovered that the Gore site uploaded 502 images while the Bush site only uploaded 67 (Verser & Wicks, 2006). Will there be a major difference in the number of photos uploaded to Facebook or will the number of photos uploaded be similar?

RQ 2: How were the candidates framed in photographs located on each candidate's official campaign Facebook Timeline Photos album?

Image attributes were divided into two main categories, the ideal candidate and the populist campaigner. These categories contain two subcategories each, statesman and compassionate for the ideal candidate and mass appeal and ordinariness in the populist campaigner category. Each attribute, category, and subcategory will be analyzed and compared to determine how each candidate was framed.

RQ 3: Is the visual framing of candidates on Facebook similar to the visual framing of candidates in the Grabe and Bucy study?



Grabe and Bucy's findings indicate that Democrat candidates are visually framed as "Populist Campaigners" while Republicans are visually framed as the "Ideal Candidate" (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). Will the findings of this study be similar? The Grabe and Bucy study included all Presidential elections from 1992 to 2004. Each election findings will be compared to the results of this study.

RQ 4: Is one candidate visually depicted as being more personable than the other based on the amount of photos containing interpersonal interaction?

Social networking is made up of personal connections. Grabe and Bucy listed personal interaction in their coding sheet. Due to the personal nature of social networking personal interaction may occur more frequently.

## Chapter 3

### Research Methods

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to discover how President Barack Obama and Presidential candidate Mitt Romney were framed on Facebook during the 2012 presidential election. Framing is a method by which people compartmentalize everyday experiences in order to make sense of those experiences (Goffman, 1974). Image viewers are able to connect visual stimuli with associated emotions developed over interactions with their social and natural environments (Messaris, 1997). Previous research has analyzed the way presidential candidates are visually framed in news magazines, newspapers, and television. In *Visual Framing*, Grabe and Bucy analyzed images derived from network news broadcasts across four presidential elections. During the study Grabe and Bucy chose 23 coding items that will be used in this study. The results of this study will be compared to Grabe and Bucy's study to discover any similarities between the way candidates were framed on television from 1992 to 2004 and the way candidates were framed on Facebook during 2012.

#### *Method Utilized*

The primary form of data analysis for this study will be a content analysis. Kerlinger, as cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2010), defines content analysis as, "a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables." Content analysis was used in the visual framing research of Moriarty and Garramone (1986), Moriarty and Popovich (1991), Verser and Wicks (2006), and Grabe and

Bucy (2009). The samples analyzed in these studies were derived from news magazines and news broadcasts. This study will analyze images collected from Facebook.

### *Samples Analyzed*

The units of analysis were photos collected from the official campaign Facebook pages of presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. Organizing for Action was responsible for the Barack Obama page. Romney for President, Inc. was responsible for Mitt Romney's Facebook. A photo is operationally defined as a picture of the candidate that does not contain any text superimposed on the picture. The timeline for the study was set from May 29, 2012, the day Mitt Romney obtained enough delegates to win the GOP primary, to November 6, 2012, Election Day. The photos were downloaded from the Timeline Photos album of each candidate page. This album consists of photos that appeared on both candidates' Facebook Timeline. A census of photos located in both candidates Timeline Photos album was collected due to the relatively short timeline, the specific album selected, and the research question involving the frequency of photos. The sample size for this study consists of 242 photos.

### *Coding Instrument*

The coders were provided with two folders. The Barack Obama folder contained all the photos retrieved from the Barack Obama Facebook Timeline Photos album as well as an excel file. The excel file contained a spreadsheet with cells containing the photo file name followed by the attributes and variables to be coded. The Mitt Romney folder contained all the photos retrieved from the Mitt Romney Facebook Timeline Photos album as well as an excel file. The

excel file contained a spreadsheet with cells containing the photo file name followed by the attributes and variables to be coded.

Coding items 1-14 contain the variables or frames contained within each photo under the main category of ideal candidate with items 1-7 falling under the statesman subcategory and items 8-14 under the compassionate subcategory. Grabe and Bucy (2009) defined the ideal candidate around two major character themes: statesmanship, which includes the mythic proportions of the presidency, projecting power, authority, control and active leaderships and compassion, which are designed to convey an image of warmth and personal likability linking the candidate with social symbols of compassion, such as children and families (Grabe & Bucy, 2009).

The following paragraphs describe the individual variables, image attributes, in detail. The first category described is the ideal candidate category. The first subcategory of the ideal candidate is the statesman, which contains the following image attributes: linked to influentials, linked to patriotism, linked to progress, linked to entourage, campaign paraphernalia, confetti showers, and wearing a suit. The first attribute, linked to influentials, refers to a photo containing the candidate photographed with an influential such as prominent community leaders, statesmen, or other figures that influence public policy. Examples are former presidents, current or former vice presidents, congressman, senators, governors, etc.

Linked to patriotism refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with patriotic symbols such as American flags, bald eagles, or other historically significant symbols of American patriotism. Examples of historically significant symbols of American patriotism include pictures

or paintings of former presidents, the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, and the military. Linked to progress refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with symbols of progress such as a successful factory or technological achievement. This would include an automotive plant, a renewable resource research facility, and engineering or technological achievement.

Linked to entourage describes a photo of the candidate appearing with a large entourage. A large entourage is different than a large audience. The entourage is with the candidate rather than observing the candidate. This could be represented by a large group of men in suits, like the secret service or personal security, surrounding the candidate.

Campaign paraphernalia describes a photo of the candidate appearing with campaign paraphernalia including campaign signs, slogans, and logos. These signs may be held by supporters, attached to podiums, or incorporated into the background. Confetti shower refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with a confetti shower. Confetti showers, rallies with campaign paraphernalia, and large entourages are symbolic of the power and authority of a candidate as a potential chief executive (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). Wearing a suit describes a photo of the candidate wearing a suit and tie. In order for the dress to be considered a suit it must contain pants, coat, collared shirt, and tie.

The next subcategory within the ideal candidate category is the compassionate subcategory. This subcategory contains the following image attributes: linked to children, linked to family, linked to women, linked to religion, affinity gestures, individual interaction, and physical contact. Linked to children refers to a photo with the candidate appearing with children. The children must take prominence in the photo, not just be part of the crowd. Linked to family

refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with his family. The candidate's wife and children are part of the candidate's family. Linked to women describes a photo of the candidate appearing with women. The candidate's wife and daughters are considered a link to women. Women must take prominence in the photo. They cannot just be part of the background.

Linked to religion refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with a religious official or any symbol of religion. This would include prominent religious leaders such as a pastor, priest, or rabbi as well as religious symbols including the cross, Star of David, star and crescent, or any other world religion symbol.

Affinity gestures describe a photo of the candidate waving, shaking hands, paying focused attention to supporters, or any other nonverbal affinity gesture. This also includes smiling. Individual interaction describes a photo of the candidate interacting with supporters in a one on one scenario. The candidate is giving focused attention to one person as opposed to a group. This is not to be confused with crowd interaction where the candidate is interacting with a crowd of people. Physical contact refers to a photo of the candidate coming into physical contact with a supporter, staff, friend, or family, such as shaking hands or hugging.

Items 15-23 contain variables or frames within the populist campaigner main category with items 15-18 falling under the mass appeal subcategory and items 19-23 are included in the ordinariness subcategory. "Populist narratives are built on the idea that ordinary people, a *noble troupe*, stand in opposition to an aristocratic and self-serving elite" (Grabe and Bucy, 2009, p. 105).

The mass appeal subcategory contains the following image attributes: linked to celebrities, large audience, approving audience, and crowd interactions. The first image attribute in the mass appeal subcategory, linked to celebrity, describes a photo of the candidate appearing with a well-known celebrity entertainer or athlete, such as a famous actor, recording artist, musician, or professional athlete.

Large audience refers to a photo of the candidate appearing in front of a large audience. A large audience is defined by a crowd of more than 100 people. Approving audience refers to a photo of the candidate appearing in front of an approving audience. This can be discerned by the excitement of the crowd, which can be gauged by the amount of hands in the air, smiling faces, or applause. Crowd interaction describes a photo of the candidate interacting with the crowd. Examples include the candidate shaking hands with people in the crowd or posing for pictures with people in the crowd. This is not to be confused with individual interaction which involves a candidate interacting with an individual away from the crowd.

The final subcategory, ordinariness, contains the following image attributes: casual dress, sports dress, rolled sleeves, and linked to ordinary people. Casual dress refers to a photo of the candidate appearing dressed down, not wearing a suit. This can include a shirt and tie with no jacket. Any outfit that is not a full suit or tuxedo is considered casual dress. Sports dress refers to a photo of the candidate wearing sports-related clothing. This includes outdoor sports, hunting and fishing attire, and athletic sports, basketball, baseball, golf, etc. Rolled sleeves describe a photo of the candidate wearing a long sleeve shirt with rolled sleeves.

Linked to ordinary people refers to a photo of the candidate interacting or speaking with ordinary people. Ordinariness can be described as everyday Americans, blue collar workers, teachers, police officers, farmers, or people who are not influential, leaders, policy makers, or celebrities. The final attribute, physically active, refers to a photo of the candidate engaging in some form of physical activity such as running or playing a sport. This also includes dancing.

### *Coding Procedure*

A pilot study was implemented in order to determine intercoder reliability. During the pilot study three coders were selected. The coders were all male between the ages of 20 and 22. These coders were the most readily available to the researcher. Two coders were undergraduates currently attending the University of Alabama and the third coder had attended college. The coders were given a training session to ensure they understood the operational definitions of the variables. The specific pilot coding instructions can be found in the appendix.

Table 1 contains the intercoder reliability of each variable. An overall Cohen's Kappa score of 0.968 was determined. This allowed the study to continue.



Table 1

*Intercoder reliability*

Variable	
Linked to influentials	.97
Linked to patriotism	1.00
Linked to progress	.92
Linked to entourage	.94
Campaign paraphernalia	1.00
Confetti shower	1.00
Wearing a suit	1.00
Linked to children	1.00
Linked to family	1.00
Linked to women	1.00
Linked to religion	1.00
Affinity gestures	1.00
Individual interaction	1.00
Physical contact	1.00
Linked to celebrities	.89
Large audience	1.00
Approving audience	.97
Crowd interactions	1.00
Casual dress	1.00
Sports dress	1.00
Rolled sleeves	1.00
Linked to ordinary people	1.00
Physically active	1.00

Percent of overall agreement Po : 0.984

Free-marginal kappa : 0.968

Three new coders, including the researcher, were chosen for the full study. Two hundred and forty-two photos were divided evenly among the three coders. The coders participated in a training session to ensure they understood the operational definitions of the variables. After all of the images were coded, the data was entered into SPSS for statistical analysis. A frequency

analysis was performed to determine the number of photos each candidate uploaded. Cross-tabulation using Chi-square was performed on all data to determine how each candidate was framed during the campaign.

## Chapter 4

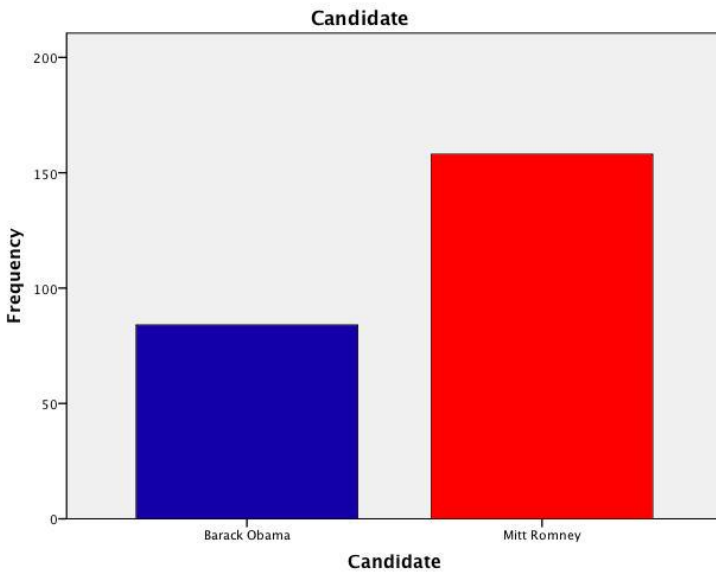
### Results

Two hundred and forty-two photos collected from both candidates' Facebook Timeline Photos album were analyzed in this study, 84 from the Barack Obama page and 158 from the Mitt Romney page. A statistical analysis was implemented by entering the data from the coding sheets into SPSS. The results are presented in two sections. The first section contains frequency charts and graphs. These give general information about the study, including how many photos were uploaded from each candidate. The next section is an in-depth analysis of the variables, image attributes, in the study. Using cross-tabulation analysis and Chi-square, the results are analyzed and explained.

#### *Frequency Data*

A frequency analysis was conducted to determine the number of photos each candidate uploaded during the selected timeframe, May 29 through November 6, 2012. Figure 1 illustrates the difference in the frequency of photos uploaded to each candidate's Facebook Time Photos album. The Barack Obama campaign uploaded 84 photos and the Mitt Romney campaign uploaded 158 photos. Table 1 contains the frequency of uploads during each month from May to November. The peak months were August, which contains 21.1% of the uploaded photos, and October, with 25.2% of the uploaded photos. A cross tabulation was conducted to compare the frequencies of uploads per month between candidates.

Figure 1: Difference Between Candidate Uploads



Obama 84 – Romney 158    N = 242

Table 2: Frequency of Photos by Month

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	May	4	1.7%
	June	37	15.3%
	July	38	15.7%
	August	51	21.1%
	September	36	14.9%
	October	61	25.2%
	November	15	6.2%
	Total	242	100.0

N = 242

Figure 2: Frequency of Photos by Month

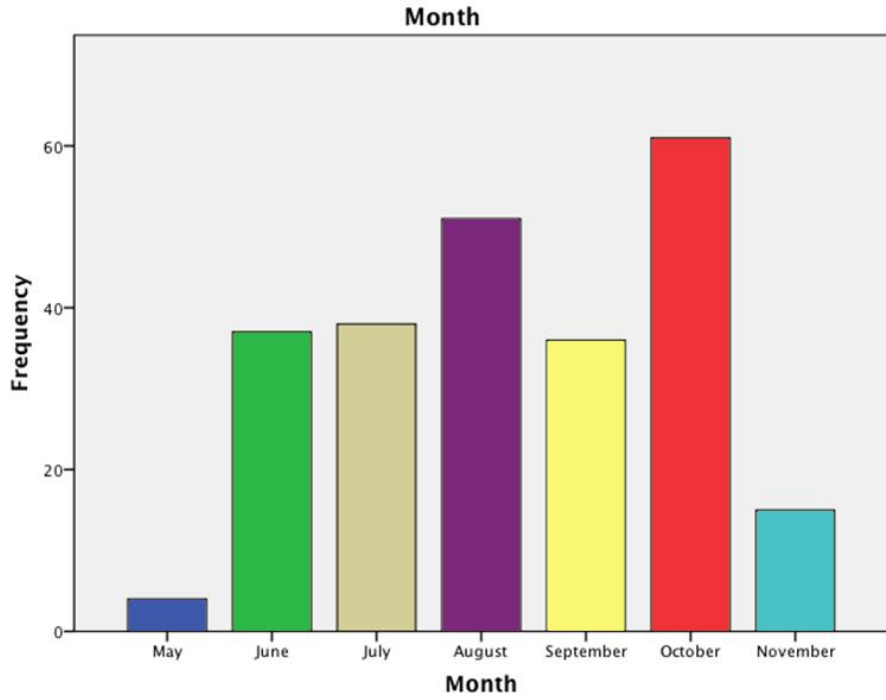
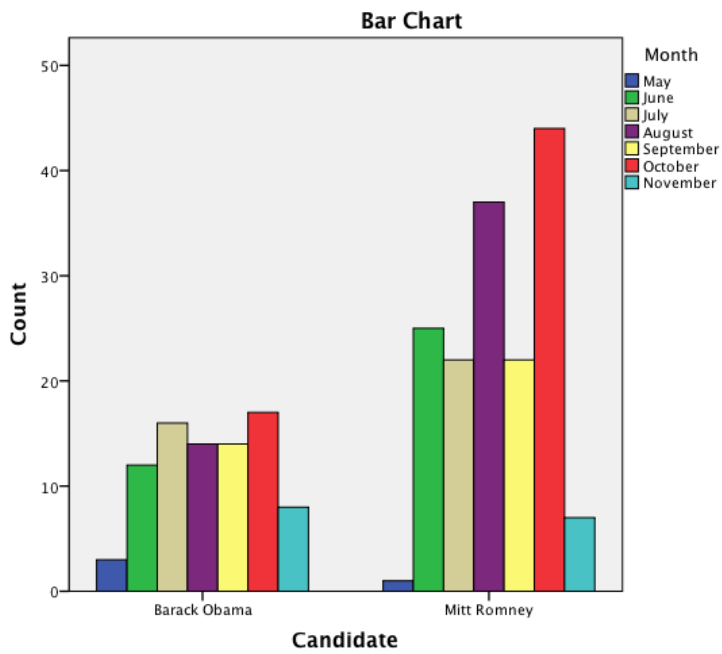


Figure 3: Frequency of Photos by Month for Each Candidate



### *Crosstabs*

Cross-tabulations were conducted to compare the frequency of image attributes within both candidates' photos. A Chi-Square analysis was conducted to determine significance. Table 3 contains the image attributes within the statesmen's attribute subcategory, which is located within the ideal candidate category. There was no significant difference between candidates in photos containing the linked to influentials attribute. The cross-tabulation revealed a significant difference between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney photos that were linked to patriotism. Sixty-three percent of Mitt Romney's photos were linked to patriotism and 28.6% of Barack Obama's photos contained a link to patriotism. There was also a significant difference between a link to progress within the photos. Mitt Romney had 16.5% of photos linked to progress while Barack Obama had no photos linked to progress.

Continuing through the ideal candidate: statesmen category, there was no significant difference between the candidates in photos linked to entourage. However, there was a significant difference in photos linked to campaign paraphernalia. Mitt Romney's page contained 70.3% of photos linked to campaign paraphernalia and only 21.4% of Barack Obama's photos contained campaign paraphernalia. While there was no difference in photos containing confetti showers, there was a difference between photos of the candidates wearing suits. Barack Obama was wearing a suit in 31% of his photos, while Mitt Romney wore a suit in only 17.1% of his photos.

A cross tabulation of the entire subcategory was taken to determine if there was a significant difference between how each candidate was visually framed. There was a difference

in the occurrence of statesman attributes between the candidates. Mitt Romney had significantly more occurrences of statesman attributes, with 93% of his photos containing at least one statesman attribute. Statesman attributes were present in 48.8% of Barack Obama's photos.

Table 3. Linked to Influentials

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (15.5)	Frequency (63.3)
Not Present	Frequency (84.5)	Frequency (36.7)
$X^2 = .005$ (df1), p.= NS		

Table 4. Linked to Patriotism

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (28.6)	Frequency (71.4)
Not Present	Frequency (63.3)	Frequency (36.7)
$X^2 = 26.461$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 5. Linked to Progress

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (0)	Frequency (16.5)
Not Present	Frequency (100)	Frequency (83.5)
$X^2 = .15.487$ (df=1), p.= .000		

Table 6. Linked to Entourage

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (4.8)	Frequency (8.2)
Not Present	Frequency (95.2)	Frequency (91.8)
$X^2 = 1.009$ (df=1), p.= NS		

Table 7. Campaign Paraphernalia

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (21.4)	Frequency (70.3)
Not Present	Frequency (78.6)	Frequency (29.7)
$X^2 = 52.524$ (df=1), p.= .000		

Table 8. Confetti Shower

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (0)	Frequency (1.9)
Not Present	Frequency (100)	Frequency (98.1)
$X^2 = 1.615$ (df=1), p.= NS		

Table 9. Wearing a Suit

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (31.0)	Frequency (17.1)
Not Present	Frequency (69.0)	Frequency (82.9)
$X^2 = 6.163$ (df=1), p.= .013		

Table 10. Statesman

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (48.8)	Frequency (93)
Not Present	Frequency (51.2)	Frequency (7)
$X^2 = 61.888$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 4 contains the results for the image attributes of the compassionate subcategory within the ideal candidate category. Barack Obama’s Facebook Timeline Photos album contained significantly more photos linked to children, family, and women. A link to children was present in 25% of Barack Obama’s photos and 3.2% of Mitt Romney’s photos. A link to family was found in 35.7% of Obama’s photos compared to 14.6% of Mitt Romney’s photos. A link to women was found in 54.8% of Barack Obama’s photos while 18.4% of Mitt Romney’s



photos were linked to women. Barack Obama also had significantly more photos containing affinity gestures, individual interaction, and physical contact, but neither candidate displayed a link to religion within their photos.

After adding all of the present and not present attributes within the compassionate category, a cross-tabulation was conducted to discover the overall difference between the candidates within the category. Barack Obama had significantly more photos containing an attribute linked to compassion than Mitt Romney, 79.8% versus 33% of Romney’s photos.

Table 11. Linked to Children

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (25)	Frequency 3.2)
Not Present	Frequency (75)	Frequency (96.8)
$X^2 = 27.268$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 12. Linked to Family

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (35.7)	Frequency (14.6)
Not Present	Frequency (64.3)	Frequency (85.4)
$X^2 = 14.353$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 13. Linked to Women

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (54.8)	Frequency (45.2)
Not Present	Frequency (18.4)	Frequency (81.6)
$X^2 = 33.990$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 14. Linked to Religion

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (0)	Frequency (100)
Not Present	Frequency (0)	Frequency (100)
$X^2 = .534$ (df1), p.= .NS		

Table 15. Affinity Gestures

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (46.4)	Frequency (53.6)
Not Present	Frequency (22.8)	Frequency (77.2)
$X^2 = 14.335$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 16. Individual Interaction

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (64.3)	Frequency (10.8)
Not Present	Frequency (35.7)	Frequency (89.2)
$X^2 = 75.793$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 17. Physical Contact

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (45.2)	Frequency (8.9)
Not Present	Frequency (54.8)	Frequency (91.1)
$X^2 = 43.019$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 18. Compassionate

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (79.8)	Frequency (33)
Not Present	Frequency (20.2)	Frequency (66.5)
$X^2 = 46.863$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 5 reveals the results of the mass appeal attributes found within the populist campaigner category. While there was no significant difference in photos containing a link to

celebrity, there were differences in photos with the presence of a large audience and an approving audience. Of the photos analyzed on Mitt Romney’s Facebook page, 41.7% contained a large audience where 30.4% depicted an approving audience. Within Barack Obama’s album, 19% contained photos with large images with 15.5% of all photos containing photos of an approving audience. There was no significant difference between candidates in regard to photos containing crowd interactions. A cross tabs of the entire subcategory revealed that Mitt Romney had significantly more photo than Barack Obama containing mass appeal attributes.

Table 19. Linked to Celebrities

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (1.2)	Frequency (1.3)
Not Present	Frequency (98.8)	Frequency (98.7)
$X^2 = .003$ (df1), p.= NS		

Table 20. Large Audience

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (19)	Frequency (41.7)
Not Present	Frequency (81)	Frequency (58.3)
$X^2 = 27.234$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 21. Approving Audience

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (15.5)	Frequency (30.4)
Not Present	Frequency (84.5)	Frequency (69.6)
$X^2 = 6.461$ (df1), p.= .011		

Table 22. Crowd Interactions

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (7.1)	Frequency (5.1)
Not Present	Frequency (92.9)	Frequency (94.9)
$X^2 = .435$ (df1), p.= NS		

Table 23. Mass Appeal

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (22.6)	Frequency (55.1)
Not Present	Frequency (77.4)	Frequency (44.9)
$X^2 = 23.452$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 6 contains the results from the image attribute of ordinariness contained within the populist campaigner category. Both candidates were casually dressed in a majority of their photos. Mitt Romney was casually dressed in 81.6% of photos while Barack Obama was casually dressed in 67.9% of his photos. Sports dress did not appear predominantly in either candidate's photo album. There was not a significant difference between the appearances of candidates with rolled sleeves, but there was a difference in photos linked to ordinary people. Mitt Romney appeared with ordinary in 62%, and 41.7% of Barack Obama's photos contained ordinary people. Though there were few photos containing the candidates engaging in physical activity, there was a significant difference between the number of Barack Obama's active photos and Mitt Romney's. A cross-tabulation of the entire subcategory revealed both candidates had a majority of photos containing image attributes associated with ordinariness.

Table 24. Casual Dress

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (67.9)	Frequency (81.6)
Not Present	Frequency (32.1)	Frequency (18.4)
$X^2 = 5.862$ (df1), p.= .015		

Table 25. Sports Dress

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (2.4)	Frequency (97.6)
Not Present	Frequency (.06)	Frequency (99.4)
$X^2 = 1.369$ (df1), p.= .NS		

Table 26. Rolled Sleeves

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (39.3)	Frequency (50)
Not Present	Frequency (60.7)	Frequency (50)
$X^2 = 2.532$ (df1), p.= NS		

Table 27. Linked to Ordinary People

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (41.7)	Frequency (62)
Not Present	Frequency (58.3)	Frequency (38)
$X^2 = 9.183$ (df1), p.= .002		

Table 28. Physically Active

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (10.7)	Frequency (0.6)
Not Present	Frequency (89.3)	Frequency (99.4)
$X^2 = 14.070$ (df1), p.= .000		

Table 29. Ordinarity

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (76.2)	Frequency (84.8)
Not Present	Frequency (23.8)	Frequency (15.2)
$X^2 = 2.739$ (df1), p.= .0.98		

Table 7 contains the results from a cross-tabulation of the entire ideal candidate category. Approximately 96% of both candidates' photos contained at least one ideal candidate attribute. Table 8 reveals that a majority of both candidates' photos contain at least one attribute associated with the populist campaigner attribute. There was not a significant difference between the candidates with regard to the main attribute categories.

Table 30. Ideal Candidate

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (96.4)	Frequency (96.2)
Not Present	Frequency (3.6)	Frequency (3.8)
$X^2 = .008$ (df1), p.= NS		

Table 31. Populist Campaigner

	Obama (%)	Romney (%)
Present	Frequency (75)	Frequency (86.7)
Not Present	Frequency (25)	Frequency (13.3)
$X^2 = 5.242$ (df1), p.= NS		

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine how President Barack Obama and candidate Mitt Romney were framed visually on Facebook during the 2012 presidential election. Several studies have analyzed various traditional forms of media—newspapers, news magazines, and television—to discover how previous presidential elections were framed visually. This study analyzes a relatively new form of media, social media, by conducting a content analysis of the photos uploaded to the official campaign Facebook pages of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney.

#### *Research Question 1*

This study established four research questions to guide the research. Regarding the first research question, there was a difference in the amount of photos uploaded to each candidate's Facebook Timeline Photos album. Romney had nearly twice as many photos as Barack Obama, 158 compared to 84, uploaded his Facebook Timeline Photos album. The cause or reason for the difference cannot be determined from the data collected. However, it is possible that Mitt Romney had more photos because he was the challenger. The operational definition of photo must also be taken into consideration. Photos were defined as an image of the candidate with no superimpositions.

Both candidates had a similar strategy in the frequency of uploads per month. The earlier months, May, June, and July, have considerably fewer photos than the months of August, September, and October. October contained the highest amount of uploads which can be attributed to the fact that October is the last month before election month. The month of May and

November were the only months in which the Barack Obama campaign uploaded more photos than Mitt Romney's campaign, but only a few days were analyzed in both months.

### *Research Question 2*

Research question two asks how each candidate was framed on their Facebook Timeline Photos album. The frame can be determined using the image attributes established in Grabe and Bucy's (2009) *Visual Framing* study. The first set of attributes to be discussed are contained within the ideal candidate category. This ideal candidate frame is created by using imagery traditionally associated with the office of the president. This category is broken down into two subcategories, statesmen and compassionate.

An analysis the attributes in the statesmens category revealed that Romney was framed as a statesman. Over 60% of the photos on Romney's page contained a link to patriotism compared to less than 30% of Barack Obama's photos. Many of Romney's photos displayed American flags flying in the background or being waved by supporters. The displays of patriotism found in Obamas photos were often a small American flag lapel pin, White House decorations, or the American flag on Air Force One. Obama's supporters did not appear to have as many flags as Romney's supporters.

Romney also had more links to progress than Obama. It did not appear that the Obama campaign used progress or the economy as a campaign strategy. The Mitt Romney campaign took advantage of the bad economy by staging a photo opportunity in front of the Obama subsidized, failed solar company, Solyndra (Stein, 2012). However, despite the economy being a



huge issue in the campaign, Mitt Romney was linked to progress in only about 16% of his photos.

Campaign paraphernalia was found in about 70% of Romney's photos while roughly 20% of Obama's photos contained campaign paraphernalia. This large difference can be attributed to the fact that Romney was photographed at more rallies than Obama. Many of Romney's photos pictured him in front of large crowds with supporters holding Romney signs and the backgrounds of photos often contained similar campaign paraphernalia. Overall, it was more obvious that Romney was campaigning. Obama's photos often looked like photos you would find on any other Facebook page—with family and friends.

Obama was photographed more often wearing a suit. However, wearing a suit did not dominate either candidate's photos. About 30% of Obama's photos showed him in a suit compared to approximately 17% of photos showing Romney in a suit. During the campaign, Romney was often referred to as a vulture capitalist (Hruby, 2012). It may have been a campaign strategy to frame Romney as less of an executive and more of a common man. The remaining frames, a link to influentials, entourage, and confetti shower revealed no major differences between candidates.

A cross-tabulation of the statesmen category revealed a significant difference between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. Ninety-three percent of Mitt Romney's photos contained at least one attribute associated with the statesman subcategory. Barack Obama had at least one attribute in 48.8% of his photos. According to the findings in this study, Mitt Romney was framed visually more often as a statesmen than Barack Obama.

The second subcategory within the ideal candidate category is the compassionate subcategory. The image attributes within this subcategory are associated with compassion and include links to women, children, family, religion, affinity gestures, individual interaction, and physical contact. Barack Obama had more links to compassion in every category except for a link to religion, which did not appear in either candidate's photos. Over half of Barack Obama's photos contained a link to women compared to less than 15% of Mitt Romney's. Nearly half of Barack Obama's photos contained affinity gestures while only 23% of Mitt Romney's photos contained affinity gestures. A substantial difference can be found when comparing photos containing individual interaction; 63.4% of Barack Obama photos had individual interaction compared to 10.8% of Mitt Romney's photos. There was also a large difference in the amount of photos showing the candidates engaged in physical contact with 45.2% of Obama's photos showing physical contact and only 8.9% of Mitt Romney's photos showing physical contact. Overall, Obama appeared more compassionate and personable. In many photos, Romney appeared at a distance and as a lecturer in a large auditorium.

By analyzing both candidates' Facebook Timeline Photos album, it became clear that a key strategy of the Obama campaign was to use the first lady, Michelle Obama, as well as his children in photos. The use of Michelle Obama in photos increased Obama's score in the women and family attribute categories. The Romney campaign could have provided a similar link to women and family by using photos of Mitt Romney with his wife, Ann Romney. However, after reviewing the numbers this does not appear to have been a key strategy for the Mitt Romney campaign. Women, children, and family do appear to be a key strategy for the Obama campaign

as well as the strategy of framing Obama as a compassionate person willing to engage individuals rather than being separated from the audience.

Analysis of the ideal candidate category reveals a split between the statesmen and compassionate subcategories. While Mitt Romney was framed more as a statesman, Barack Obama was framed as being more compassionate. Approximately 80% of Barack Obama's photos contained image attributes associated with the compassionate category. A little over 30% of Mitt Romney's photos contained attributes associated with compassion, making Barack Obama the winner in this category.

The next main category, populist campaigner, contains the subcategories mass appeal and ordinariness. The image attributes analyzed in the mass appeal subcategory include a link to celebrities, large audience, approving audience, and crowd interactions. This scenario takes place at rallies and large events. Mitt Romney was photographed at more large rallies than Barack Obama. As a result, Romney had more photos with large and approving audiences. However, neither candidate was shown very often with celebrities or interacting with crowds. An analysis of the entire category revealed 55% of Romney's photos contained at least one attribute associated to mass appeal while Barack Obama had mass appeal attributes in 23% of his photos.

The final image attribute subcategory to be discussed is ordinariness. This category contains attributes associated with the everyday, common man. These include casual dress, sports dress, rolled sleeves, a link to ordinary people, and being physically active. Both candidates were dressed casually in many of their photos. Romney was dressed casually in 81.6% of the photos analyzed and Barack Obama was casually dressed in 67.9% of his photos. A

casual outfit often included rolled sleeves; Obama had rolled sleeves in 39.3% of his photos while Mitt Romney had rolled sleeves in 50% of his photos. Neither candidate wore sports dress in many of the photos. An analysis of the entire category reveals that both candidates had attributes linked to ordinariness in the majority of their photos. Both campaigns appear to be attempting to connect with the common man.

A final analysis of the main categories, ideal candidate and populist campaigner, revealed there was no significant difference between candidates. Mitt Romney and Barack Obama had at least one image attribute associated with the ideal candidate frame in 96% of the photos coded. There was more of a separation in the populist campaigner category. Mitt Romney had more photos with attributes pertaining to the populist campaigner, but these results did not reach significance.

### *Research Question 3*

Research question three asks for the findings in the Grabe and Bucy (2009) *Visual Framing* study to be compared to the findings in this study. The Grabe and Bucy (2009) study analyzed the Presidential campaigns from 1992 to 2004. The findings of each campaign will be compared to the findings of this study to determine if the candidates of past elections studied were framed visually similarly.

The first campaign to be compared is Clinton v. Bush in 1992. Bill Clinton was the Democratic candidate and George H. Bush was the Republican incumbent during the 1992 election. During the campaign Bush was portrayed as a statesman more often than Clinton (Grabe and Bucy, 2009), which is similar to the findings in this study, where Mitt Romney, a

Republican, was portrayed as more of a statesman than Barack Obama, a Democrat. However, there is a difference in this comparison in that Barack Obama was the Democratic incumbent and Mitt Romney was the Republican challenger.

More can be revealed by comparing the image attributes within each category. Mitt Romney's photos contained significantly more links to patriotism than Barack Obama's photos. During the 1992 election, George H. Bush was portrayed as being more patriotic. In both studies the findings pertaining to patriotism were statistically significant. Both Romney and Bush had more links to progress than Obama and Clinton (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). These findings also reached significance in both studies.

Barack Obama was framed as compassionate more often than Mitt Romney. This is similar to the 1992 election where Clinton outscored Bush overall in the compassion category, and there was a large difference in images linked to children and images containing physical contact (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). It was obvious that the campaign strategists desired to frame Obama as compassionate, by using photos containing women, children, and family.

In the populist campaigner category, there were some differences between the 2012 campaign and the 1992 campaign. Bill Clinton scored the highest in the mass appeal subcategory out of every election analyzed by Grabe and Bucy (2009). In this study, Mitt Romney had a significantly higher number of photos containing attributes pertaining to mass appeal. Settings with large audiences appeared more often in Mitt Romney's photos compared to Barack Obama's photos which were often more intimate, showing the President with his family or interacting with individuals. The 1992 and 2012 campaigns showed similar results in regard to

ordinariness with both campaigns using image attributes associated with ordinariness in their photos.

The next election to be compared is the 1996 Clinton v. Dole Presidential election. During the 1996 campaign, Republican challenger Bob Dole was framed as more of an ideal candidate than President Clinton. Dole scored higher in every subcategory. Dole also had more image attributes associated with compassion than any candidate in the four elections analyzed in the Grabe and Bucy (2009) study. The results of the 1996 election differed from the results in this study in that one candidate, the Republican challenger, scored higher in every category, but not all scores were significantly different.

During the 2000, Bush v. Gore, election both candidates were framed similarly as ideal candidates. Gore had a slight edge in the statesman subcategory, while Bush had a slight edge in the compassionate subcategory (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). The results of the Grabe and Bucy (2009) study are opposite to this study in that Mitt Romney, Republican, appeared more statesman-like and Barack Obama, Democrat, was framed as being more compassionate. Al Gore was framed as a populist campaigner more often than George W. Bush. Al Gore had more attributes associated with mass appeal as well as ordinariness (Grabe and Bucy, 2009). This also differed from the results in this study in that Mitt Romney was framed with mass appeal attributes and there was significant difference between candidates and ordinariness.

The final election analyzed in the Grabe and Bucy study was the 2004 Presidential Election, Bush v. Kerry. During this election there were no statistical differences in the framing of the two candidates. Bush was portrayed as more of a compassionate statesman, but this did not

reach significant levels. It appeared that the Kerry campaign focused on pomp and spectral more than the Bush campaign. As for the populist campaigner category, both candidates were framed visually similarly (Grabe and Bucy, 2009).

The composite scores for all of the elections analyzed in the Grabe and Bucy (2009) study revealed that Democrats were visually framed more often as populist campaigners compared to Republicans, and Republicans were framed more often as ideal candidates. However, this difference did not reach significance. During this study both candidates had almost identical percentages in the ideal candidate frame. Although Mitt Romney had more attributes in the populist frame, it did not reach significance.

#### *Research Question 4*

Research question four asks if one candidate was depicted as being more personable than the other candidate. Barack Obama had more image attributes associated to individual interaction than Mitt Romney. Many of Barack Obama's photos involved the President interacting with other people. Obama had significantly more photos containing the individual interaction image attribute. Romney often appeared in front of crowds, with an obvious barrier between him and his supporters. Another recurring theme within the photo album was pictures of Barack Obama with his family.

It is possible that Obama's campaign strategists attempted to make his campaign look like any other Facebook profile, which are often filled with pictures of family and friends. Romney did not have many photos with his family. Photos of Mitt Romney with Ann Romney occurred later on during the campaign, but Barack Obama frequently appeared in photos with

Michelle Obama throughout the campaign. These photos featuring smaller crowds and intimate family moments made the Barack Obama Facebook Timeline Photos album appear more like anyone else's Facebook album while Mitt Romney's Facebook Timeline Photos album appeared like a typical politician's. There were two images in particular that resonate on Barack Obama's Facebook page. One image showed Obama fist bumping a janitor and the other showed Obama in the arms of a regular person. This person is giving the President such a large hug he actually lifts the President off the ground.

### *Conclusion*

The major findings of this research were not found within a comparison of the main framing categories, the ideal candidate and populist campaigner. Both candidates had an attribute associated with the ideal candidate in almost every photo analyzed, but an analysis of the subcategories, statesman and compassionate, revealed differences. Mitt Romney was framed as more of a statesman than Barack Obama. Romney's photos often depicted him at a distance, in front of large crowds with American flag waving supporters. Romney also appeared with more campaign paraphernalia. It is obvious that Mitt Romney was running for president in. While it appeared the Romney campaign focused on rallies and patriotism the Obama campaign had a more intimate approach in framing the President.

One of the biggest differences between the two campaigns was found in the compassionate subcategory. The photos on Barack Obama's Facebook page differ greatly from Mitt Romney's photos in this regard. Obama's page feels more like an average person's Facebook page. While Mitt Romney is seen in front of a campaign rally, Barack Obama is seen



dancing with Michelle Obama. The use of family in Barack Obama's photos made Obama appear more as a family man. Over half of Obama's photos contained attributes associated with both women and family. A common theme used by the news media involved the so called "Republican War on Women." An Obama campaign strategy appears to be associating the President with women. The Romney campaign does not appear to have attempted to frame Romney with women.

The populist campaigner subcategories also reveal interesting differences. Romney scored higher in the mass appeal subcategory. Mass campaigner is a good way to describe the Romney campaign as portrayed on Facebook. While Romney appeared with more crowds he often appeared at a distance. The photos depicted a great divide between the people and Romney. Conversely, Obama often appeared with smaller crowds or in more intimate situations. Though it can't be concluded that more personal photos are a better campaign strategy, personal photos do make the candidates' Facebook page appear more as a personal profile than a politician's page.

Both campaigns attempted to frame each candidate as an ordinary person. This is a continuation of the Jimmy Carter strategy and occurred throughout the elections analyzed in the Grabe and Bucy (2009) study. Both candidates often appeared in casual dress with their sleeves rolled up. It was very important for the Romney campaign to connect with the average person due to his background as a wealthy executive. The Obama campaign appeared to do a better job at connecting the President with ordinary people. This was accomplished by the uploaded photos of the President interacting with ordinary people. This interaction could be a key strategy in visually framing a presidential candidate.

### *Limitations*

There were a few limitations in this study. This study is the first, to the researcher's knowledge, to analyze photos located on presidential candidates' Facebook pages for visual framing. Previous studies involved analyzing images derived from news magazines and clips taken from network news coverage. There could be image attributes better suited for social network analysis that were not used in this study.

This study also had a restricted timeline. It may be more beneficial to analyze a candidate's Facebook page beginning in the primaries. This could reveal a difference between primary campaigning and campaigning in the general election. There was also a difference in the studies analyzed in the literature review and this study in that previous studies dealt with the news media. Facebook allows image handlers to get their message across unrestricted, meaning there are no gatekeepers involved in social media.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of data from the 2008 Presidential election. The Barack Obama v. John McCain election was not analyzed in the Grabe and Bucy (2009) study. It was also not analyzed in this study creating a gap in the data. An analysis of the 2008 campaign could provide researchers with a better understanding of how each campaign visually framed each candidate. It would also reveal if there was a difference in the way Barack Obama was visually framed during the 2008 election.

### *Implications for future research*

This study just scratches the surface of political campaign visual frame analysis via social media. Future research can expand on the techniques and discoveries found in this study. The procedures could be administered to all primary presidential candidates to discover how each party frames its candidate against members of their own party. The study could also be expanded to other political offices.

The findings of this study support previous research in that framing does occur in political communication, and there are differences in the way communication professionals frame different candidates. This study also reveals a difference in social networking strategy that may prove useful for future campaigns. The Romney campaign appeared old fashioned in that the photos uploaded were similar to campaign rallies of the past. Many of Romney's photos feature him at a campaign rally in front of flag waving supports. In contrast, the Obama team uploaded more intimate photos of the President. Photos of Obama and his family were a common occurrence. The Obama strategy appeared to mirror every day Facebook profiles, which may have made the President appear more real and approachable than his competitor.

Expanding this study to include more political candidates and offices could lead to a better understanding of how candidates are framed visually. Trends could be established and differences could be discovered. Would candidates of the same party be framed similarly or might district or geographical location create differences between the candidates? Also, could there be differences in how other offices are framed on Facebook? Is a senator's page drastically different than a congressman's page? While an expansion to include more candidates would lead

to a better understanding, expanding the studying to include other social networks should also be considered.

This study analyzed Facebook. There are many social networks; two of the main social networks, Twitter and YouTube, should be analyzed. There are also newer social networks gaining popularity like the Vine and Instagram. An analysis of photos and videos on all social networks would lead to a better understanding of how political candidates are visually framed.

Diversity attributes should also be added to the lists of attributes. The researcher noticed Mitt Romney's Facebook photos were not as racially diverse as Barack Obama's photos. Most Romney supporter appeared to consist mainly of Caucasians, while Barack Obama's audiences were more racially diverse. However, a diversity attribute may be difficult to operationally define. It may be defined by setting rather than the appearance of those in the photo. Sexual orientation support may be discerned by a candidate being photographed at a pro-gay marriage rally. Latino support may be discerned from a candidate photographed being interviewed on Univision, the leading Spanish language media network. Given that the 2012 showed that largest gender gap in history, Obama winning women with a plus 12 margin and losing men at a -8 margin, expanding the diversity attribute may give political communicators valuable information (Jones, 2012).

## REFERENCES

- Adatto, K. (2008). *Picture perfect: life in the age of the photo op* / Kiku Adatto. Princeton : Princeton University Press, c2008.
- Aldhous, P. (2012). The social election. *New Scientist*, 213(2856), 20. Retrieved from EBSCOhost
- Banning, S. A., & Coleman, R. (2009). Louder than words: A content analysis of presidential candidates' televised nonverbal communication. *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 16(1), 4-17. doi:10.1080/15551390802620464
- Barack Obama. (2012). In *Facebook* [Fan Page]. Retrieved February, 26, 2013, from <https://www.facebook.com/barackobama>
- Bayes, M. A. (1972). Behavioral cues of interpersonal warmth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 39(2), 333-339. doi:10.1037/h0033367
- Bernays, E. L. (2005). *Propaganda* / Edward Bernays; with an introduction by Mark Crispin Miller. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Ig Pub., c2005.
- Decker, J. (2012). Obama and Romney: The path to the presidency. *Policy Review*, (174), 21-33. Retrieved from EBSCOhost
- Domenech, B. (2012). The GOP's broken machine. *Commentary*, 134(5), 28. Retrieved from EBSCOhost
- Erickson, K.V. (2000). Presidential Rhetoric's Visual Turn Performance Fragments and the Politics of Illusionism. In L.C. Olson (Ed), C. A. Finnegan (Ed), D. S. Hope (Ed), *Visual Rhetoric A Reader in Communication and American Culture* (pp. 357-374). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Edell, J. A., & Staelin, R. (1983). The Information Processing of Pictures in Print Advertisements. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(1), 45-61.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51.
- Fernandes, J., Giurcanu, M., Bowers, K. W., & Neely, J. C. (2010). The Writing on the Wall: A Content Analysis of College Students' Facebook Groups for the 2008 Presidential Election. *Mass Communication & Society*, 13(5), 653-675. Retrieved from EBSCOhost

- Fisher, P. (2010). The Age Gap in the 2008 Presidential Election. *Society*, 47(4), 295-300.  
Retrieved from EBSCOhost
- Foot, K.A., Schneider, S. M., & Dougherty, M. (2007). Online structure for political action in the 2004 U.S. congressional electoral web sphere. In R. Kluver, N.W. Jankowski, K. A. Foot, & S. M. Schneider (Eds), *The internet and national elections* (pp. 92-103). New York, NY: Routledge. tyjgdgh
- Frum, D. (2012). White person's party. Old person's party. Whatever happened to the Grand Ol' Party?. *Newsweek*, 160(21), 36. Retrieved from EBSCOhost
- Grabe, M., & Bucy, E. (2009). *Image bite politics : News and the Visual Framing of Elections*. Maria Elizabeth Grabe and Erik Page Bucy. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- German, K. (2010). Bush/Gore Photos Reveal Differing Styles, Strategies. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 31(4), 48-61.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis : an essay on the organization of experience / Erving Goffman*. Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Hacker, K.L. (2004) *Campaigns and Candidate Images in American Presidential Elections*. Lanham, Md. Rowman & Littlefield, c2004
- Hruby, P. (2012). To get a grasp on Mitt Romney, start with the lesson of the muffin. *Washington Times*, The (DC), 1. Retrieved from EBSCOhost
- Hellweg, S. A. (2004) *Candidate Images in Presidential Elections* In K.L. Hacker (Ed) *Campaigns and Candidate Images in American Presidential Elections*. Lanham, Md. Rowman & Littlefield, c2004
- Hoegg, J. & Lewis, M. (2011). The impact of Candidate Appearance and Advertising Strategies on Election Results. *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)*, 48(5), 895-909. Retrieved from EBSCO Host
- International Business, T. (2012, November 12). Romney Losing Facebook Fans After Presidential Elections. *International Business Times*. Retrieved from EBSCO Host
- Jones, J. (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/158588/gender-gap-2012-vote-largest-gallup-history.aspx>
- Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Problems and Opportunities in Agenda-Setting Research. *Journal of Communication*, 43(2), 100-27.

- Maarek, P. J. (2011). *Campaign communication and political marketing* / Philippe J. Maarek. Chichester ; Malden, MA : Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187. EBSCO Host
- Mlot, S. (2012). Infographic: Obama Beats Romney ... on Facebook. *PC Magazine*, 1.
- Messaris and Moriarty, "Visual Literacy Theory," *Handbook of Visual Communication* (NY: Routledge, 2005): 479-502
- Messaris, P. (2000). Chapter 9: Visual Culture. In , *Culture in the Communication Age* (pp. 179-192). Taylor & Francis Ltd / Books.
- Messaris, P. (1997). *Visual persuasion: The role of images in advertising*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mitt Romney. (2012) In *Facebook* [Fan page]. Retrieved February 26, 2013, from <https://www.facebook.com/mittromney>
- Moriarty, S. E., & Garramone, G. M. (1986). A Study of Newsmagazine Photographs Of the 1984 Presidential Campaign. *Journalism Quarterly*, 63(4), 728-734.
- Moriarty, S. E., & Popovich, M. N. (1991). Newsmagazine Visuals and the 1988 Presidential Election. *Journalism Quarterly*, 68(3), 371-380.
- Moriarty, S. E. (1996). Abduction: A theory of visual interpretation. *Communication Theory*, 6(2), 167-187. <http://spot.colorado.edu/~moriarts/abduction.html>
- Olson, L. C., Finnegan, C. A., & Hope, D. S. (2008). *Visual rhetoric : a reader in communication and American culture* / Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, Diane S. Hope, editors. Los Angeles : Sage, c2008.
- Olson, L. C., Finnegan, C. A., & Hope, D. S. (2008). *Visual rhetoric : a reader in communication and American culture* / Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, Diane S. Hope, editors. Los Angeles : Sage, c2008.
- Rose, E. D., & Fuchs, D. (1967). Reagan vs. Brown: A TV Image Playback. *Journal Of Broadcasting*, (3), 247.
- Friedenberg, R.V. (1999). A prehistory of media consulting for political campaigns. In *The Manship School guide to political communication* / edited by David D. Perlmutter. Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, c1999.

- Rose, E. D., & Fuchs, D. (1967). Reagan vs. Brown: A TV Image Playback. *Journal Of Broadcasting*, (3), 247.
- Rosenberg, S. W., Kahn, S., Tran, T., & Le, M. (1991). Creating a Political Image: Shaping Appearance and Manipulating the Vote. *Political Behavior*, (4), 345. doi:10.2307/586121
- Savage, L. h. (2012). How Obama Won. *Maclean's*, 125(45), 32. Retrieved from EBSCO Host
- Shimp, T. A., Urbany, J. E., & Camlin, S. E. (1988). The Use of Framing and Characterization for Magazine Advertising of Mass-Marketed Products. *Journal Of Advertising*, 17(1), 23-30.
- Scherer, M. (2012). Inside the Secret World of Quants and Data Crunchers Who Helped Obama Win. *Time International (South Pacific Edition)*, 180(21), 40. Retrieved from EBSCO Host
- Shenhav, S. R. (2009). We have a place in a long story: Empowered narratives and the construction of communities: The case of US presidential debates. *Narrative Inquiry*, 19(2), 199-218. Retrieved from EBSCO Host
- Smith, M. M., & Smith, B. P. (2009). Race and Gender as Peripheral Cues on Political Campaign Web Sites. *Communication Research Reports*, 26(4), 347-360. Retrieved from EBSCO Host
- Stein, S. (2012). The Environmentalist's Dilemma. *Policy Review*, (174), 49.
- Museum of the Moving Image. (2008). 1952 Eisenhower vs. Stevenson. Retrieved from <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1952>
- Talbot, D. (2008). How Obama Really Did It. *Technology Review*, 111(5), 78. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/08/us-usa-campaign-diversity-new-idUSBRE8A70QK20121108>
- Verser, R., & Wicks, R. H. (2006). Managing Voter Impressions: The Use of Images on Presidential Candidate Web Sites During the 2000 Campaign. *Journal Of Communication*, 56(1), 178-197. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00009.x
- Vitak, J., Zube, P., Smock, A., Carr, C. T., Ellison, N., & Lampe, C. (2011). It's Complicated: Facebook Users' Political Participation in the 2008 Election. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*, 14(3), 107-114. Retrieved from EBSCO Host



- Wicks, R. H. (2005). Message framing and constructing meaning: An emerging paradigm in mass communication research. In P. Kalbfleish (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 29* (pp. 333–360). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Woolley, J. K., Limperos, A. M., & Oliver, M. (2010). The 2008 Presidential Election, 2.0: A Content Analysis of User-Generated Political Facebook Groups. *Mass Communication & Society*, 13(5), 631-652. Retrieved from EBSCO Host

APPENDIX A  
CODING INSTRUMENT

Variables/ Frames

Ideal Candidate

*Statesman*

1. Linked, influentials
  - (1) Present
  - (2) Not Present
2. Linked, patriotism
  - (1) Present
  - (2) Not Present
3. Linked, progress
  - (1) Present
  - (2) Not Present
4. Linked, entourage
  - (1) Present
  - (2) Not Present
5. Campaign paraphernalia
  - (1) Present
  - (2) Not Present

6. Confetti shower

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

7. Wearing a suit

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

*Compassionate*

8. Linked, children

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

9. Linked, family

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

10. Linked, women

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

11. Linked, religion

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

12. Affinity gestures

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

13. Individual interaction

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

14. Physical Contact

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

Populist Campaigner

*Mass Appeal*

15. Linked, celebrities

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

16. Large audience

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

17. Approving audience

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

18. Crowd interactions

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

*Ordinariness*

19. Casual dress

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

20. Sports dress

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

21. Rolled sleeves

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

22. Linked, ordinary people

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

23. Physically active

(1) Present

(2) Not Present

(Grabe and Bucy page, 2009, p. 115-116)

## APPENDIX B

### CODING INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for participating in my study. The purpose of this study is to discover how President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney were framed visually on their campaign Facebook Pages during the 2012 presidential election. The method used to gather data for this study is a content analysis. The following are instructions on how to fill out the coding sheet.

You will be provided with two folders. The Barack Obama folder contains all of the images retrieved from the Barack Obama Facebook Timeline Photos album. The Mitt Romney folder contains all of the images retrieved from the Mitt Romney Facebook Timeline Photos album. Each candidate has a corresponding excel spreadsheet. Each photo title is located within each spread sheet.

#### **Coding Procedure**

1. Open the Barack Obama candidate folder
2. Open excel file.
3. Open the image file.
4. Begin the coding process by following the instructions located in the coding instrument section.
5. Continue coding each image until you reach the end of the candidates excel file and all images have been coded.
6. Open the Mitt Romney folder and repeat steps 2-5.

#### **Coding Instrument**

For the following variables type 1 under present (1) if the variable is present or type 2 under not present (2) if the variable is not present.

**Linked to influentials** refers to a photo containing the candidate photographed with an influential such as a prominent community leaders, statesmen, or other figures who influence public policy. Examples are former presidents, current or former vice presidents, congressman, senators, governors, etc.

**Linked to patriotism** refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with patriotic symbols such as American flags, bald eagles, or other historically significant symbols of American patriotism. Examples of historically significant symbols of American patriotism include pictures or paintings of former presidents, the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, and the military.

**Linked to progress** refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with symbols of progress such as a successful factory or technological achievement. This would include an automotive plant, a renewable resource research facility, an engineering or technological achievement, etc.

**Linked to entourage** describes a photo of the candidate appearing with a large entourage. A large entourage is different than a large audience. The entourage is with the candidate rather than observing the candidate. This could be represented by a large group of men in suits surrounding the candidate.

**Campaign paraphernalia** describes a photo of the candidate appearing with campaign paraphernalia including campaign signs, slogans, and logos. These signs may be held by supporters, attach to podiums, or incorporated into the background.

**Confetti shower** refers to a photograph of the candidate appearing with a confetti shower. Confetti showers, rallies with campaign paraphernalia, and large entourages are symbolic of the power and authority of a candidate as a potential chief executive (Grabe and Bucy, 2009).

**Wearing a suit** describes a photograph of the candidate wearing a suit and tie. In order for the dress to be considered a suit it must be a full suit as in pants, coat and tie.

**Linked to children** refers to a photograph with the candidate appearing with children. The children must take prominence in the photo, not just be part of the crowd.

**Linked to family** refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with his family. The candidate's wife and children are part of the candidate's family.

**Linked to women** describes a photo of the candidate appearing with women. The candidate's wife and daughters are considered a link to women. Women must take prominence in the photo. They cannot just be part of the background.

**Linked to religion** refers to a photo of the candidate appearing with a religious official or any symbol of religion. This would include prominent religious leaders such as a pastor, priest, or rabbi as well as religious symbols including the cross, Star of David, star and crescent, or any other world religion symbol.

**Affinity gestures** describes a photo of the candidate waving, shaking hands, paying focused attention to supporters or any other nonverbal affinity gesture. This also includes smiling.

**Individual interaction** describes a photo of the candidate interacting with supporters in a one on one scenario. The candidate is giving focused attention to one person as opposed to a group. This is not to be confused with crowd interaction where the candidate is interacting with a crowd.

**Physical Contact** refers to a photograph of the candidate comes into physical contact with a supporter, staff, friend, or family.

**Linked to celebrity** describes a photo of the candidate appearing with a well-known celebrity. A celebrity is considered a famous entertainer or athlete. A famous actor, recording artist, musician, or professional athlete is considered a celebrity.

**Large audience** refers to a photo of the candidate appearing in front of a large audience. A large audience is defined by a crowd of more than 100 people.

**Approving audience** refers to a photo of the candidate appearing in front of an approving audience. This can be discerned by the excitement of the crowd which can be gauged by the amount of hands in the air, smiling faces, or applause.

**Crowd interactions** describes a photo of the candidate interacting with the crowd. Examples include the candidate shaking hands with people in the crowd or posing for pictures with people in the crowd. This is not to be confused with individual interaction which involves a candidate interacting with an individual away from the crowd.

**Casual dress** refers to a photo of the candidate appearing dressed down, not wearing a suit. This can include a shirt and tie with no jacket. Any outfit that is not a full suit or tuxedo is considered casual dress.

**Sports dress** refers to a photo of the candidate wearing sports related clothing. This includes outdoor sports, hunting and fishing attire, and athletic sports, basketball, baseball, golf, etc.

**Rolled sleeves** describes a photo of the candidate is wearing a shirt with rolled sleeves.

**Linked to ordinary people** refers to a photo of the candidate interacting or speaking with ordinary people. Ordinariness can be described as everyday Americans, blue collar workers, teachers, police officers, farmers, or people who are not influential, leaders, policy makers, or celebrities.

**Physically active** refers to a photo of the candidate engaging in some form of physical activity such as running or playing a sport. This also includes dancing.