For The People Act of 2019: A Framing Analysis of Legislators' Videos on Twitter

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Abstract:

Constituent communication is a prominent area of research in political communication, including communication of policies more specifically. Recent scholarship has focused on exploring how a digitally mediated context affects the previously held assumptions of constituent communication, such as Richard Fenno's (1978) home styles. Multimodal argumentation is a relatively underutilized perspective within constituent communication of policy; it suggests that the visual and verbal dimensions of an argument function together. This perspective is particularly productive when examining types of media apart from images, such as videos, and is congruent with a rhetorical orientation. The present study employs a rhetorical framing analysis to identify and analyze frames in videos circulated by current Congress members on Twitter regarding *H.R. 1 For the People Act of 2019*. *H.R. 1* is a bill currently within the congressional process that addresses a wide range of issues including election access and integrity, political and campaign finance, and ethical standards across the three branches of government.

To be politically successful, representatives must communicate effectively with their constituency. Home styles, theorized by Richard Fenno (1978), describe the strategies that representatives employ when communicating with their constituents; three major components are allocation of resources, presentation of self, and explanation of Washington activity. Of the three prominent areas of home styles, explanations of Washington activity has received less scholarly attention (Grose, Malhotra, & Van Houweling, 2015). Washington explanations, though, are an important area of constituent communication, particularly involving communicating policies. Furthermore, contested, or polarized, policies are relatively undertheorized (Bechtel, Hainmueller, Hangartner, & Helbling, 2015), especially involving strategies used to communicate and debate contested policies. One such strategy includes utilizing media. Media, such as images and videos, are incredibly persuasive tools, yet their presence on social media is relatively understudied (Kharroub & Bas, 2016). Scholarship on multimodal argumentation (Dove, 2012; Kjeldsen, 2015; Kress, 2010; O'Keefe, 1977; Tseronis, 2018) suggests a productive relationship for understanding how media can influence ways of understanding and communicating contested policies.

This study conducts a rhetorical framing analysis of videos posted to Twitter about *H.R. 1 For the People Act of 2019* to investigate how media is utilized in representatives' communication to constituents about contested polices. Framing analyses can take many forms across different paradigms (D'Angelo, 2002; D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974). A framing analysis from a rhetorical perspective is among the best-suited methods for exploring how media can influence audiences' interpretations of a representative's communication strategies involving contested policies. A rhetorical perspective in a framing analysis is typically concerned with making interpretive and evaluative observations using

qualitative and rhetorical methods as opposed to predominately empirical observations (Kuypers, 2005; 2010). This framing analysis reviews eighty-nine videos circulated by current congress members through Twitter between January 3 and July 3, 2019.

H.R. 1 serves as a productive contemporary example of a contested policy (Bechtel et al., 2015). *H.R. 1* is a bill currently going through the congressional procedure to become law. It was introduced in the House of Representatives on January 3, 2019, where it later passed in March 2019 along party lines. Currently, it is on the Senate's legislative calendar (see "H.R. 1 – For the People Act of 2019," n.d. for official updates). *H.R. 1* is significantly polarized; Democrat congress members praise its potential and progressivism, while Republican congress members condemn *H.R. 1* as a violation of the Constitution. This study analyzes frames produced along partisan lines and sources for the videos used to promote or refute H.R. 1. The sources include clips from news media and C-SPAN, as well as videos produced or edited by a representative's office. Frames observed along partisan lines are best equipped to contribute to the scholarship of constituent framing strategies because of current academic and social attention towards polarization. Meanwhile, frames observed between sources make meaningful contributions to research integrating multimodal argumentation into constituent communication of policy as such analysis is concerned with the media source and uses.

Constituent Communication of Policy

Constituent communication refers to the strategies that elected representatives use to communicate with their potential voter base, their constituents, and the public (Evans & Hayden, 2018; Fenno, 1978; Grimmer, 2013). Constituent communication is a major area of political communication and political processes in the United States. Richard Fenno's (1978) *home styles* are an early and foundational contribution to constituent communication scholarship. Home

styles are various strategies that elected representatives use when communicating with their

constituency. The three major areas are the allocation of resources, presentation of self, and

explanation of Washington activity (Fenno, 1978, p. 33). A representative's allocation of

resources includes not just justifying government spending, but also their office's resources, such

as the staff's time and efforts (Adler, Gent, & Overmeyer, 1998; Fenno, 1978). A

representative's presentation of self refers to the ways they conduct themselves in a public

setting. There is a growing surge in scholarship of representative's self-presentation strategies,

particularly in mediated contexts (e.g., Enli & Rosenberg, 2018; Evans, Cordova, & Sinpole,

2014; McGregor, Lawrence, & Cardona, 2017) and concerning (performed) authenticity (Neblo,

Esterling, & Lazer, 2018). Lastly, a representative's explanation of Washington activity often

includes issues such as policy positions and ways of benefiting their district (Fenno, 1978; Parker

& Goodman, 2009). Explanations of Washington activity, however, have received less scholarly

attention than the other two major components of home styles, according to Grose, Malhotra, and

Van Houweling (2015). Importantly, these components are not mutually exclusive; for example,

a representative's policy position (explanation of Washington activity) can include questions of

political spending (allocation of resources). Though policy communication expands beyond

constituent communication, policy communication is also firmly within constituent

communication and, especially, a representative's explanation of Washington activity (Fenno,

1978; Grimmer, 2013; Parker & Goodman, 2009). According to Grimmer (2013), a

representative's presentation style directly influences their constituents' knowledge and

perception of the representative's actions in Congress.

        Political polarization is a prominent issue in both constituent and policy communication

(Bechtel et al., 2015; Butler & Dynes, 2016; Evans & Hayden, 2018; Mendez & Grose, 2018;

San Miguel, 2004). Contested policies, specifically, are policies that are highly politically polarized (Bechtel et al., 2015; San Miguel, 2004). In other words, contested policies have minimal, if any, bi- or multi-partisan agreement for the policy. Policies characterized as contentious often "raise significant questions about national identity, federalism, power, ethnicity, … and relations between federal, state, and local governments (San Miguel, 2004, p. 1). Though the United States continues to receive significant scholarly attention involving polarization and contested policies (e.g., Barberá et al., 2016; Hong & Kim, 2016), contested policies are also studied in international contexts (e.g., Bechtel et al., 2015).

Following social media's explosion in popularity, political communication research of how the public and representatives use social media for political purposes grew exponentially (Boulianne, 2018; Jungherr, 2016; Kümpel, Karnowski, & Keyling, 2015). Currently, Twitter is the most ubiquitous social media platform used by Congress members (King, 2018; Golbeck, Grimes, & Rogers, 2010). Golbeck, Grimes, and Rogers (2010) found that Congress members use Twitter, among other platforms, to share official information such as news articles, press releases, and to announce upcoming events and activities that involve the representative. Since Golbeck and other's (2010) study was conducted, Congress members face a growing expectation to maintain Twitter use with all members having at least one Twitter account (King, 2018), though some have multiple accounts to designate campaign use (as implicitly recommended by *House Ethics Manual*, chapter 4) and staff-authored messaging. Further, Twitter has become a new form of official statements by representatives, including the presidency, as argued by the Department of Justice in *James Madison Project v. Department of Justice* (2018). Political candidates also frequently rely on Twitter for campaign messaging, which is a prominent area of research (e.g., Bossetta, 2018; Evans, Cordova, & Sinpole, 2014; Jungherr, 2016; King, 2018).

Additionally, representatives often use social media platforms to personalize themselves using various strategies (Evans, Cordova, & Sinpole, 2014; Fenno, 1978; Golbeck, Grimes, & Rogers, 2010; McGregor, Lawrence, & Cardona, 2017).

Twitter is one of the most frequently studied platforms in political communication, though not uncritically (e.g., Bossetta, 2018). Twitter is a predominately politically-oriented social media platform because of its infrastructure and common usage by prominent political figures for political engagement (Bode & Dalrymple, 2016; Bossetta, 2018; Golbeck, Grimes, & Rogers, 2010; King, 2018; Lassen & Brown, 2011; Shearer & Grieco, 2019). Further, studying Twitter can often be a pragmatic choice. Twitter's data is more easily accessible to scholars and industry professionals when compared to other platforms such as Facebook, which is more protective of proprietary software and data (Murthy & Bowman, 2014), and recent scandals like the Cambridge Analytica controversy have made it a less utilized platform (see Silverman, 2019 for a summary).

Multimodal Argumentation on Social Media Platforms

Policy communication is related to theories and strategies of argumentation. For representatives to gain policy support from their constituency or fellow representatives, representatives ought to illustrate (argue) why their position is the preferable option (Fenno, 1978). As social media platforms become a major source of official communication by representatives, representatives' messages must structurally conform to platform specifications such as character counts and media file size limits while advancing their policy positions (Bossetta, 2018). These platform characteristics have fostered a move toward more social media usage and have created a productive extension of multimodal argumentation.

Multimodal argumentation includes and moves beyond the 'visual turn' in argumentation. Multimodal argumentation posits that argumentation can take place within various modes, or mediums, such as imagery, videos, space and place, time, and the body separately and simultaneously (Kjeldsen, 2015; Kress, 2010; O'Keefe, 1977; Tseronis, 2018). Multimodal argumentation complicates the assumption that argumentation is an inherently and exclusively verbal phenomenon. Modes of argumentation often behave and are structured in different ways. Multimodal arguments consider the roles of both argument and evidence (Blair, 2012; Dove, 2012; Roque, 2012). Further images lack a cohesive linear structure (Fleming, 1996), videos do have such a linear structure – a video progresses from the beginning to the end.

Though much of the current multimodal argumentation research privileges the visual dimensions of argumentation, it does not inherently require scholars to eschew the verbal dimension of argumentation. Instead, multimodal argumentation allows for the two dimensions – visual and verbal – to reach a productive intersection of joint arguments (Roque, 2012; Tseronis, 2018). A joint argument occurs when "the visual and the verbal combine in order to construct the argument" (Tseronis, 2018, p. 47). Political communication research commonly includes videos, particularly within political advertising (Kjeldsen, 2015). Political advertising scholars such as Gronbeck (1993), Collins and Schmid (1999), and Geer (2006) have been most concerned with the nuances of campaign advertising. Political videos on social media, though, have been left relatively unaddressed (Kharroub & Bas, 2016).

The distinction between videos on television, such as news broadcasts, and videos on social media platforms are important for scholars to explore further. Social media platforms are increasingly becoming either a source or mediator for news and political information (Geiger, 2019; Shearer & Grieco, 2019). Additionally, representatives are commonly on social media

platforms, especially at the federal level (King, 2018). Remediated videos on social media

platforms function and present differently than videos 'native' to social media. A major

difference is the fragmentation of the audience. While specialized television stations and

channels contribute to television's audience fragmentation (Webster, 2005), social media

audiences are uniquely fragmented though overlapped with television audiences (Fletcher &

Nielsen, 2017; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012). Whereas television stations can expect a relatively

stable audience accessing the station for similar purposes, social media platforms are not

guaranteed that same audience stability nor cohesion. This difference is significant because it

requires content creators to employ different creative strategies to maintain audience attention

(Fletcher & Nielson, 2017; Webster, 2005, 2014; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012).

Method

This study employs a framing analysis (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Entman, 1993;

Goffman, 1974) to explore the different frames politicians construct utilizing video clips on

Twitter in articulating their support or opposition of *H.R. 1 For the People Act of 2019*. For

representatives to successfully communicate complex, contested policies like *H.R. 1* through

social media platforms, they inherently must rely on framing strategies. Frames are "principles of

organization which govern events … and our subjective involvement in them" (Goffman, 1974,

p. 10) and can be identified "by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases,

stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing

clusters of facts of judgements" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). As one of the most studied media effects,

there is a vast body of research concluding that frames and their manipulations are persuasive

with audiences (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Entman, 1993). Furthermore, framing analyses

have been conducted for similar research in political communication, such studies focused on

mainstream news (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2008), public opinion (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012),

and social media (Qin, 2015).

This framing analysis uses a rhetorical perspective (Kuypers, 2005, 2010). A framing

analysis with a rhetorical perspective is a qualitative endeavor rather than a quantitative one.

Thus, rhetorical framing analyses are often conducted inductively from a text (Kuypers, 2010). A

common distinction between rhetorical framing analysis and other qualitative framing analyses is

an emphasis on interpretation rather than empirical description. Similar to other rhetorical

criticism, a critic conducting a rhetorical framing analysis "will not present [their] claims as

being the truth about reality, but rather as *one way* of describing the data" (Kuypers, 2010, p.

294; emphasis added). Additionally, rhetorical framing analyses fall within a critical paradigm in

part because they interrogate structures of power and language (Entman, 2007; D'Angelo, 2002;

Kuypers, 2010). A rhetorical approach to framing analysis recognizes that frames and their

analysis are important areas of rhetoric, analogous to Kenneth Burke's terministic screens (Ott &

Aoki, 2002). In this respect, such an analysis acknowledges that frames act rhetorically "to

define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies" (Kuypers,

2010, p. 301).

Videos that are posted (remediated or otherwise) to social media platforms include

framing strategies (Tseronis, 2018, p. 44). Videos must conform to platform standards (Bossetta,

2018; Bucher & Helmond, 2018), which require that file sizes be within a specific size. When

remediating videos from television, such as news or C-SPAN broadcasts, representatives (or

rather representatives' communication staff) must trim videos to meet the appropriate file size.

This trimming, or framing, can influence audiences' interpretation of the recorded argumentative

situation (Grabe & Bucy, 2009). Additionally, representatives must select the source of the video

clip. As identified by Entman (1993), sources of information often produce identifiable frames. Sources-as-frames can be studied further through remediated videos on Twitter. Using remediated video clips from partisan news sources can imply a partisan frame, whereas using remediated video clips from C-SPAN can imply a more objective frame. Frames, though, are often political and strategic (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1989; Goffman, 1974; Kuypers, 2005). By focusing on videos shared by Congress members through Twitter, this study makes valuable theoretical and methodological contributions. Studies involving political communication on Twitter consistently privilege Twitter's textual messages (Kharroub & Bas, 2016), missing the rich argumentative abilities of additional media such as videos within tweets (e.g., Davis, 2012; Tseronis, 2018). This oversight is not unexpected, though, as paralleled by Grabe and Bucy's (2009) critique of earlier scholars prioritizing candidate's visual *and* verbal appearance despite television news's move towards image bites.

H.R. 1 For the People Act of 2019 is a productive context to explore framing and multimodal argumentation strategies surrounding contested policies. *H.R. 1* is highly contested and polarized in Congress, passing in the House of Representatives along stark partisan lines ("H.R. 1 – For the People Act of 2019," n.d.). Prominent representatives also voiced their support and opposition, such as Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell (2019) referring to the bill as a "power grab" and the "Democrat Politician Protection Act" in a *Washington Post* opinion piece. Additionally, *H.R. 1* addresses a broad range of issues, including voting accessibility, election integrity and security, political spending, and ethics standards for all branches of the federal government.

Research Questions

How Congress members communicate federal policies to constituents is an important area of research across multiple disciplines (Brick, Freeman, Wooding, Skylark, Marteau, & Spiegelhalter, 2018; Druckman, 2015; Dunn, 2015). Communication of policy involving election processes, including voting access, is particularly crucial to investigate as elections are a necessary component to a democratic governing system. However, ways of communicating policies are shifting (Nulty, Theocharis, Popa, Parnet, & Benoit, 2016). Previously, Congress members' most effective ways of communicating policies to their constituents and the public writ large were through personal appearances, such as town halls or traditional news media. More recently, Congress members have added social media platforms to their arsenal of communication tools.

While none of these sources are mutually exclusive, social media platforms have facilitated multimodal sharing of the same content to broader audiences. For example, a Congress member's newspaper interview can be linked on Facebook, or C-SPAN footage can be edited for length through the C-SPAN Video Library and shared to Twitter. The change of medium and platform potentially impacts the meaning of messages that are circulated by office holders (Berger & Iyengar, 2013; McLuhan, 1964). Moreover, perceptions of the content's source complicate this shift in the platform in ways that implicate credibility and authority, as well as potentially reveal insights about differences in strategies along party lines. To begin to consider these consequences for how social media continues to transform the business of policy-making, I consider the following research questions:

> **RQ1**: *What frames did Congress members employ about* H. R. 1 For the People Act of 2019 *through video footage on Twitter?*
>
> **RQ2**: *How do these frames differ by the political party or content source?*

Additionally, because the *For the People Act of 2019* addresses a wide range of issues in American politics, from campaign finance to government ethics, employing a framing analysis is a productive way of investigating what parts are most contested and prioritized. Congress members emphasize the parts of *H. R. 1 For the People Act of 2019* by selecting certain aspects of the bill to support or oppose. Identifying what components Congress members emphasize could facilitate future research investigating the effects of these varying emphases.

> *RQ3: What components of* H. R. 1 For the People Act of 2019 *are emphasized by Congress members?*

To address these questions, the analysis section will be organized by first examining frames consistent across political parties and sources. Then, frames will be contrasted along partisan lines to create more nuanced observations involving polarization. Within this section, I will also address what specific components of *H.R. 1* are emphasized by Congress members. Lastly, I will compare the presence of various frames found in the different content sources: news media clips, C-SPAN clips, and office-produced videos. Therefore, the unit of analysis will be at the party and content source level rather than at the level of each video. However, individual videos will be referenced in order to illustrate various articulations of a frame. Analyzing frames at these broader levels allow for more generalizable observations.

Data Collection

A broad goal of this study is to understand how Congress members communicate contested policy within a networked platform's infrastructural constraints. A framing analysis will be conducted using a sample of available tweets published by Congress members that (a) contain a video and (b) are related to *H.R. 1 For the People Act of 2019*. Tweets were collected through Twitter's search function using various search parameters associated with the legislation

to ensure that the tweets and videos were related to *For the People Act of 2019*. These search

parameters included hashtags and key terms, such as #HR1, #ForThePeople,

#DemocratProtectionAct, H.R. 1. Only tweets circulated by current members of Congress were

included; simple retweets were excluded. Because *H.R. 1* is still progressing through Congress,

tweets were collected within a six-month timeframe of January 3, 2019, when the House of

Representatives introduced the bill, to July 3, 2019. Eighty-nine videos were collected, most (63)

of which were from Democrat members of Congress. This imbalance is to be expected, though,

since Democrat representatives are typically more active on social media platforms than

Republican representatives according to a year-long study from Quora (King, 2018).

Analysis

There were multiple unique frames presented in the sample of videos tweeted by

Congress members. The frames are organized by consistent presence regardless of partisanship

or video source, partisan sources, and original video source. Within these areas, I address the

frames that were present within those categories to answer *RQ1* (frames by Congress members,

partisan and overall) and *RQ2* (frames by video source). Because *RQ3* is only concerned with

how Congress members emphasized elements of *H.R. 1*, it is addressed in the sections that

concern Congress members: consistently present frames and partisan frames. This analysis

cannot address every single frame presented within the videos, nor does it attempt to. Instead, the

frames and elements discussed in this analysis were those that were prominently manifested,

even if articulated slightly different. Thus, these frames, across their various unique articulations,

appeared in at least half of the videos of a given area for comparison. In line with a rhetorical

perspective, the analysis focuses heavily on potential interpretations (Kuypers, 2005, 2010).

Despite the careful attention devoted to identifying frames, there could be other interpretations

not identified or discussed in this analysis that future research with different methodological

approaches could better address.

Consistently Present Frames

When examining the videos shared by Congress members about *H.R. 1 For the People*

Act of 2019, there were a few frames that were consistent across the two major parties and

different content sources. In framing discussion of *H.R. 1*, representatives often used an

individual-centric approach to highlight their individual position or specific contributions to

support or oppose the policy. Additionally, representatives often framed *H.R. 1* and constituent

bodies as a state-level phenomenon as opposed to a national level. Lastly, the most consistently

referenced part of *H.R. 1*'s potential impact by both parties' members involved money in

politics. Both groups referenced a specific provision of *H. R. 1*, the proposed federal matching

system for campaign finance, though Republican members emphasized it more heavily than their

Democrat colleagues.

A consistent frame within the videos was the articulation of policy position at both the

individual- and party-levels. An individual-level policy position is when the Congress member

prioritizes their position concerning the policy, regardless of being aligned or contrary to their

respective party's position. However, all individual-level positions were unsurprisingly within

the overarching party's position regarding *H.R. 1*. Meanwhile, Congress members also explicitly

aligned themselves with their party's position through strategies such as using "we" statements

to reference the party. Congress members also expressed concern for government and political

processes across party lines despite divergences in specific articulations. One common

articulation of both parties, though, was accusing and criticizing the other party of refusing to

engage in bipartisan discussions for policymaking. Republican members of Congress accused

their Democrat colleagues of not engaging in bipartisanship when creating *H.R. 1,* while

Democrat members of Congress referenced past transgressions of forgoing bipartisanship,

notably for the change in taxation during the previous 115th Congress.

A second consistent and meaningful frame used by congress members on both sides of

the aisle and across all types of video sources was *local issues*. Congress members highlighted

different aspects of *H.R. 1* and illustrated ways that *H.R. 1* would affect their community.

Republican congress members most commonly emphasized the changes *H.R. 1* would make to

state-level voting processes, such as felon enfranchisement and voter identification laws.

Democrat members of Congress were less cohesive in what effects *H.R. 1* would have for their

respective district, though, opting for local-specific effects, such as Delegate Elanor Holmes

Norton arguing that *H.R. 1* is an avenue for Washington D.C. to achieve statehood. Both parties'

representatives, though, emphasized that "the people" were rooted in local and state communities

rather than at the broader federal or national levels.

The most referenced component of *H.R. 1* across both parties and three source-types was

the bill's proposed methods of addressing money in politics. *H.R. 1* would create a federal

matching system for small-dollar donations to eligible candidates. Democrat members of

Congress claimed that the matching program would make representatives more accessible to

their constituents by relying less on donations from special-interest groups and political action

committees (PACs) and would make it easier for citizens to enter politics as candidates.

Republican members, though, argued that the matching program would both increase money in

politics and inhibit citizens' First Amendment rights.

Partisan Frames

Unsurprisingly, there were multiple frames prioritized by a single party rather than both. This section primarily addresses what framing differences exist across party lines beginning with the Democrat members of Congress, followed by the Republican members. Rather than belaboring every existing frame and its various articulations, this analysis strives to identify the common features of party frames, independent of the videos' sources. Democrat members' most common frames included a government for the people, popular support, and historical progressivism. Republican members, meanwhile, most emphasized the federal government's overreach into states' authority and acting as truth-tellers of *H.R. 1*.

Democrat Frames

The first frame from Democrat members of Congress is the *government for the people*. This frame was, predictably, consistent across party members. Some members highlighted concerns regarding government ethics, particularly highlighting the Trump Administration's "at best, very awkward relationship with ethics," according to Representative Harley Rouda. Thus, the implication is that the government has fallen from its ideal of being a government "of, for, and by *the people*" (emphasis added), a phrase quoted by several representatives. Related, representatives also critiqued the presence of money in politics as inhibiting their ideal democratic government for the people. Multiple politicians accused "dark money" and special interest groups' lobbying efforts as the cause of a current governmental reality that, in their estimation, is not for the people. When using this articulation of *government for the people*, Congress members also praised the proposed federal funding matches as incentivizing their (implicitly Republican) colleagues to prioritize meeting with and listening to constituents rather than lobbyists. Lastly, multiple Democrat Congress members attempted to reclaim and rearticulate a common attack by their Republican colleagues of *H.R. 1* being a "power grab" for

the Democrats. For example, Representative Ayanna Pressley said in a statement on the House

floor that Republicans "got [Democrats] again" and that she and her fellow Democrat

representatives were "guilty" of orchestrating a power grab. According to Rep. Pressley, though,

Democrats "wouldn't have to grab back the grab for the people if through policy [Republican

members] weren't complicit in or perpetuating the disenfranchisement and marginalization of the

people." Across its various articulations, a call for the restoration of government and democracy

predicated the *government for the people* frame.

Unique to Democrat members of Congress was an explicit endorsement of a

nonpolitician and references to public opinion, characterizing the frame of *popular support*. In an

official press conference broadcast through C-SPAN and shared by Representative John

Sarbanes, Chris Shelton, the president of Communications Workers of America, expressed his

and his union's strong support of *H.R. 1*. Additionally, Freshmen Democrat members of

Congress, or those elected in the 2018 election, featured a unique articulation of *popular support*

for *H.R. 1* by referencing their electoral success, particularly when from flipped districts. Their

central claim was that because these freshmen members not only flipped their districts but also

the House of Representatives from a Republican majority to the current Democrat majority,

people across the country support them as representatives and, by implication, the policies they

create.

Lastly, Democrat members of Congress emphasized a *historically progressive* frame

when communicating through videos on Twitter. Several Democrat Congress members claimed

that *H.R. 1* is the largest policy reform in recent history. Some of the progressive components of

H.R. 1 framed as *historically progressive* included voting access, election and campaign policies

– especially campaign finance policies, and ethics in government. Interestingly, Democrat

Congress members also connected *H.R. 1* to historical progressive movements and values. For example, Representative Barbara Lee addressed *H.R. 1* with other progressive policies, both contemporary and historical, in the "Democratic Weekly Address" video series, which was shared by both Rep. Lee and Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Rep. Lee related *H.R. 1* and other policies proposed by the current Congress with Black History Month. Additionally, Rep. Katie Hill aligned *H.R. 1* with Women's History Month by previewing her intention of "highlighting the voices of [her] fellow women freshmen members" and reiterating that her class "is a truly historic class on so many levels" after explaining *H.R. 1*'s anticipated trajectory. Though neither representative claims that *H.R. 1* is explicitly and necessarily a part of these months dedicated to highlighting histories of traditionally marginalized groups, including references to these months and *H.R. 1* implies that *H.R. 1* is at least congruent with the goals of these typically progressive ideals to recognize and promote traditionally marginalized voices.

Republican Frames

While Democrat members of Congress most consistently emphasized a *government for the people frame*, Republican members of Congress most consistently emphasized a frame of *federal overreach*. This frame often returned to the implicit dichotomy of state's rights versus federal authority, noticeably when referencing authority over electoral processes. *H.R. 1* was often described as an encroachment by the federal government into state authority. The primary issue used to advance the *federal overreach* frame was electoral processes. Many Republican representatives expressed outrage that the federal government would intervene in the electoral processes that the Constitution designates as under states' authority. For example, Representative Mark Green from Tennessee exclaimed multiple times, "how dare you [the federal government] tell Tennessee" how to conduct various parts of their elections. Rep. Green's comments are more

impactful because they were proliferated through video footage rather than through exclusively a

textual tweet. The video footage allows audiences to infer passionate outrage through his facial

expressions and intonation. However, knowledge of the Republican party's conservative

ideology could easily anticipate the *federal overreach* frame given that the frame favors a

smaller federal government (Grossmann & Hopkins, 2015).

Another interesting frame commonly shared by Republican Congress members was their

perceived role of *truth-tellers*. For example, in a video shared multiple times by Republican

members of Congress, particularly Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the video aimed to

correct the "myth" that *H.R. 1* is an election and campaign finance reform bill. Further,

Representative Mark Walker shared a sort of mock-campaign advertisement to expose that

"you," the tax-payer, paid for the advertisement regardless of your level of support for him. This

frame is particularly interesting when placed in the larger context of polarization and accusations

of "fake news." Partisan Republicans are not only more likely to encounter or share false or

misleading information (Marwick, 2018) but also show stronger hostility towards fact-checkers

(Shin & Thorson, 2017). Future research of misleading, partisan information ought to more

thoroughly investigate the contradictions of sharing demonstrably false information while

promoting an image of *truth-tellers* (e.g., Marwick, 2018).

Source Frames

This section of analysis addresses frames common within specific sources of videos. The

sources of videos are broken into three types: news media clips, C-SPAN clips, and office-

produced videos. Both news media clips and C-SPAN clips required an official logo to be within

the video's frame. News media and C-SPAN were designated as different types because they are

fundamentally different styles of reporting about congressional activity. News media clips

incorporate a wider variety of reporting styles such as interviews and chamber footage. Meanwhile, C-SPAN is not concerned with providing commentary; instead, C-SPAN serves to provide public access to public policy discussions from public officials and other policy influencers. Lastly, office-produced videos are those produced or edited by the representative themselves or their office. Examples of office-produced and edited videos include videos that were filmed in areas such as airports or offices, videos that were noticeably edited beyond adjusting for length, and videos that either did not feature an official news station or C-SPAN logo or did feature the representative's office or campaign logo. The frames that were tied to the video's source are predominately presentational frames. C-SPAN videos, for example, were more official and policy-oriented while videos produced by a congress member's office better conveyed the representative's authenticity.

There are two similar yet distinct frames within official C-SPAN footage: *congressional function* versus *congressional procedure*. Democrat members of Congress highlighted *congressional function* more often than the *congressional procedure*. As a frame, *congressional function* refers to the ways that Congress either is or ought to function. Democrat Congress members used *H.R. 1* to illustrate congressional dis-function. A prominent critique following *H.R. 1*'s passage in the House of Representatives was Senator McConnell's refusal to allow a Senate vote on the bill. Meanwhile, Republican members of Congress highlighted *congressional procedure* or the rules and expectations of policymaking in Congress. For example, Representative Jim Jordan, among other Republican congress members, shared multiple videos criticizing Democrat members of Congress violating the expected congressional procedure of committee markup meetings. It is important to note, though, that neither party monopolized these frames through C-SPAN footage. For example, Representative Ted Lieu shared a clip of

congressional procedure involving floor commentary on *H.R. 1* in which he and Rep. Jordan gave speeches both in favor and opposition to sections of *H.R. 1*. Representative Jared Huffman also explained the congressional procedure for introducing and adopting his proposed amendment to *H.R. 1* within the bill text.

When sharing C-SPAN footage to explain policies and policy positions, the footage functions as both argument and evidence (Blair, 2012; Dove, 2012; Roque, 2012). Like with other videos, using C-SPAN footage allows congress members to take advantage of a tweet's infrastructural capabilities to condense more of an argument's information, 280 characters plus a video, into a tweet. C-SPAN footage specifically, though, lends an aura of credibility not afforded by other video sources. A foundational purpose of C-SPAN is to provide public access to congressional proceedings and other forums involved with public policy "all without editing, commentary or analysis and with a balanced presentation of points of view" ("Our Mission," n.d.). C-SPAN's reputation is intimately connected to its commitment to balanced and objective programming (C-SPAN, 2013; 2017). It is important to reiterate: this framing analysis is not concerned with the representative's intent for using C-SPAN footage, but rather potential interpretations of frames within representatives' tweeted videos. Therefore, it is unknowable whether representatives utilize C-SPAN footage to intentionally align themselves and their policy positions with C-SPAN's reputation or because of its accessibility. Nevertheless, C-SPAN, as a source of information and shared by elected representatives, is an important influence on how the footage could be interpreted by audiences.

A representative's presentation of self can influence their explanation of Washington activity. A major intersection of these two components of a representative's home style is their cultivated authenticity (Evans, Cordova, & Sinpole, 2014; Fenno, 1978; Golbeck, Grimes, &

Rogers, 2010; McGregor, 2018; McGregor, Lawrence, & Cardona, 2017). When fostering an

authentic presentation, representatives are also building their constituents' trust in them. While a

representative's presentation of authenticity spans all three types of content, it is practiced the

most through office-produced and edited videos. In office-produced videos, representatives have

more control over the final editing and presentation stages. Thus, a prominent frame used

predominately by Democrat congress members in office-produced videos is *authentic*. Several

Democrat representatives filmed videos in various locations outside of a news media set and

congressional chambers, such as airports, hallways, and offices. Importantly, though, the content

of their videos often included accessible explanations of their policy positions. Representative

Katie Porter, for example, explained different aspects of *H.R. 1* across multiple videos without

using jargon-laden language.

Conclusion

Using a framing analysis with a rhetorical perspective (Kuypers, 2005; 2010), this study

investigated eighty-nine videos shared by congress members through Twitter. There were

numerous frames identified across partisan lines and the different types of videos: news media

and C-SPAN clips and videos produced by a representative's office. The frames used by

congress members that were identified in this study contribute to both constituent

communication strategies and framing contested policies.

In terms of constituent communication of policy, this analysis found that representatives

use videos to both expand and illustrate policy positions. Representatives such as Katie Porter

and Jared Huffman used videos produced by their offices to elaborate on policy positions and

explanations. Though videos on Twitter are necessarily brief to conform to the platform's

infrastructure, consistent features of such videos, predominately produced by Democratic offices,

were conversational tones and easily understandable explanations. This finding is significant because it suggests an effect from some politicians that makes political processes more accessible to constituents unfamiliar with political processes and jargon, regardless of the constituent's partisan orientation. This could potentially complicate previously held assumptions, including that politicians prioritize constituents that agree with them (Butler & Dynes 2016). Additionally, representatives are likely to address federal issues in more local frames. Representatives in this analysis claimed different ways that *H.R. 1* would affect local and state politics as well as conceptualized constituencies, including and beyond their own constituencies, at the state and local level rather than national. This is a particularly interesting observation given their Twitter presence is on a national stage.

In terms of argumentation utilizing social media, and especially remediation of video, a multimodal argumentation approach helped identify potential functions of native- and multi-platform video footage. This study suggests that videos on social media highlight authenticity performances' larger, more nuanced role in constituent communication of policy than previously considered. Representatives in this study referenced their policy position record in terms of authenticity, such as Rep. Katie Hill's claim that the issues addressed by *H.R. 1* have always been important to her since before her 2018 campaign. Additionally, videos from other sources, news media, and C-SPAN can function as evidence for their authenticity. If a politician campaigns on issues raised by *H.R. 1*, then their public statements to news media and on the floor of Congress ought to be consistent with their previous positions, implying that those positions are an authentic reflection of the politician's values. Within argumentation, this raises interesting questions about authenticity's connection to credibility, a prominently studied area of

argumentation (Reke, Sillars, & Peterson, 2013), and how a multimodal and remediated approach complicates it.

In terms of contested policy communication and HR 1 specifically, my analysis revealed that the main issue within *H.R. 1* that is consistently addressed by both political parties is money's influence in politics and campaigns. However, partisan representatives articulate, or frame, their positions in significant terms. Whereas Democrat members of Congress claim that *H.R. 1* would decrease the presence "dark money" and lobbyist influence, Republican members claim that *H.R. 1* would increase money's influence in politics instead at the expense of the taxpayer. Beyond money in politics, there was minimal clash in support and opposition to *H.R. 1*. Republican members of Congresses consistently criticized *H.R. 1* as an overreach of the federal government into states' affairs regarding electoral processes. Rather than directly responding to Republican claims of federal overreach by *H.R. 1*, Democrat members of Congress emphasized the policy's measures to make voter registration and elections more accessible. Indirectly, Democrat members challenged Republican frames of federal overreach by claiming that *H.R. 1* is not a power grab for federal politicians, instead restoring political power to the people. These incongruencies between partisan frames of *H.R. 1* raise interesting questions of how politicians communicate information and positions of contested policies in a hyperpolarized political context.

In attempting to be thorough, this study could inspire a number of future research programs of questions raised by and unaddressed by this analysis. Future research could strengthen the generalizability of the observations of this study by conducting a similar analysis of a different contested policy, either historical or in the future. Alternatively, a content analysis could be conducted using these videos, also strengthening the present study's validity.

Furthermore, a specific area that would benefit more robust, generative investigations includes authenticity's role in multimodal argumentation and constituent communication of policy. Authenticity is a growing area of interest in political communication in mediated contexts (Evans, Cordova, & Sinpole, 2014; Fenno, 1978; Golbeck, Grimes, & Rogers, 2010; McGregor, Lawrence, & Cardona, 2017). However, there has been little theorization of its influence on politicians' communicative strategies regarding policies (Fenno, 1978; Grose, Malhotra, Van Houweling, 2015) and how different types of videos enhance or inhibit performances of authenticity.

Constituent communication is a vast and prominent area of political communication. Fenno's (1978) home styles continue to be a lasting and foundational area within constituent communication scholarship, included in numerous other areas of study such as policy communication. Constituent communication of policy is an important segment of political communication. Representatives are primary sources of political proceedings (Fenno, 1978). As representatives incorporate social media platforms, notably Twitter (King, 2018), into their communication strategies, scholars must revisit and challenge existing assumptions of constituent communication. An assumption to problematize is political communication's text-centric study of Twitter. Though Twitter does not prioritize images and other types of media on the platform, media is commonly included in tweets (Kharroub & Bas, 2016). Multimodal argumentation provides a productive theoretical base to understand media's persuasive attributes (Dove, 2012; Kjeldsen, 2015; Kress, 2010; O'Keefe, 1977; Tseronis, 2018). Additionally, multimodal argumentation creates constructive and cohesive extension of visual argumentation to account for situations that audiences encounter more than one type of media (Kjeldsen, 2015; Tseronis, 2018).

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