Title

"No Men in Women's Bathrooms:" A multimodal political discourse analysis of the Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO)

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/52b0z3kk

Author

Aitken, Brian

Publication Date

2023

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

"No Men in Women's Bathrooms:" A multimodal political discourse analysis of the Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO)

By

BRIAN AITKEN
THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

COMMUNICATION

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DAVIS

Approved:

_____

Laramie Taylor, Chair

_____

Magdalena Wojcieszak

_____

Jaeho Cho

Committee in Charge

2023

"No Men in Women's Bathrooms:" A multimodal

political discourse analysis of the Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO)

Brian Aitken, MPA

Abstract:

On November 3, 2015, the majority (61%) of Houston voters voted to strike down Proposition 1: Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance. Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO) sought to expand anti-discrimination protections based on 15 demographic classifications including both sexual orientation and gender identity (Morris, 2014). The original passage of HERO in May 2014 by Houston's City Council sparked not only a legal battle but also an 18-month-long media battle in which both supporters and opponents worked to sway voters to their side of the issue. This paper examines the political discourse surrounding the failed passage of HERO in three key arenas: media coverage of the event, campaign materials from both sides of the issue and politicians' comments on the issue. In order to examine the discourse around the bill, I analyzed newspaper articles about the issues (N=358), campaign ads (N=29) and tweets from prominent local and state politicians (N= 776). Using the hybrid model of moral panics framework (Klocke and Muschert, 2010), this paper argues that the political discourse around HERO served as the catalyst for America's newest moral panic: transgender bathroom access.

"No Men in Women's Bathrooms:" A multimodal

political discourse analysis of the Houston's Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO)

Introduction:

When Houston residents headed to the polls on November 3, 2015, the expansion of

equal rights protections was on the ballot, with people voicing their support or opposition of

Proposition 1: Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO). HERO was one of the first laws in the

United States to extend discrimination protections to members of the LGBT+ community based

on sexual orientation and gender discrimination. As such, HERO has a lasting legacy of serving

as the country's first "Bathroom Bill," a nickname given to laws that attempt to either expand or

restrict access to public restrooms based on gender identity. Although originally passed by

Houston's City Council in May 2014, the ordinance faced a series of legal challenges which

prompted the issue to be placed on the 2015 general election ballot, allowing the public to decide

the fate of the ordinance.

In the lead up to the 2015 general election, both pro- and anti-HERO advocates launched

media campaigns to sway public opinion. The purpose of this paper is to examine the political

discourse around HERO from 2014 to 2015 within three different sites of discourse, namely

news coverage, campaign materials, and public comments by local and state officials. The

political discourse surrounding HERO, especially the conversations that focus on bathroom

access, were examined through the lens of the hybrid moral panic framework (Kloke and

Mushert, 2010). This framework highlights both the processual aspects of moral panics as well

as the elements that make a moral panic. By analyzing newspaper articles, campaign materials

and tweets, I investigated how the conversations about HERO map onto the hybrid moral panic

framework.

Background

   HERO was originally passed by Houston's city council (11-6) with the support and backing of Annise Parker, the city's mayor. The purpose of the ordinance was to extend ant-discrimination protection to Houston residents based on sex, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, disability, pregnancy, genetic information, family, marital, and military status with regard to city employment, services, contracts, housing, public accommodations, and private employment (Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, 2014). Additionally, HERO extended these protections against discrimination to LGBT+ individuals by including "sexual orientation and gender identity" as protected classes (Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, 2014). HERO was one of the first pieces of legislation in America that faced heavy criticism and pushback from the far right for including sexual orientation and gender identity within its anti-discrimination policy (Stryker, 2017). The backlash from the conservative right led to anti-HERO opponents successfully petitioning the courts to have a referendum vote on HERO during the November 2015 election. HERO was placed on the 2015 election ballot as Proposition 1 in which Houston voters could vote "yes" to keep the legislation in place or vote "no" to overturn the legislation. In the end, the people of Houston voted against passing Proposition 1 with 61% of voters voting to overturn the ordinance, and 39% voting in favor.

   Anti-HERO organizations and politicians' main argument against the ordinance was that by extending anti-discrimination protections to include gender identity, the ordinance allowed for the expansion of transgender rights. HERO opponents were quick to capitalize on anti-transgender sentiment with a series of radio and television advertisements that focused on one key supposed threat: predatory men dressed in drag in women's bathrooms. For example, Campaign for Houston, a HERO opposition group, launched its first one-minute radio

advertisement in August 2015 in which an unidentified woman talks about how the ordinance allows "men to freely go into women's bathrooms, locker rooms and showers" which is "is filthy…disgusting and…unsafe" (Driessen, 2015). Similarly, a television advertisement released by an anti-HERO organization in October 2015 showed a young girl being followed into the women's restroom by an adult male as a voiceover stated that "any man, anytime can enter a women's bathroom simply by claiming to be a woman that day" (Lowder, 2015). Opposers of HERO argued that their anti-HERO stance was rooted in the protection of women and children.

History of Social Anxieties and Public Restrooms

This tactic by the conservative right to frame the expansion of equal protection under the law as a bathroom issue is not new. In fact, public restroom access has been a source of anxiety at least since the 1940s (Garber, 2011). Public restrooms have been central to several key historical debates surrounding social change and the public anxiety that ensues. As the industrial revolution progressed and more and more women entered the workforce, public bathrooms began to be seen as a safe place for women outside of the home in which they could escape the dangerous outside world. The restroom became a haven for women. By 1887, the U.S. government began to insert itself in bathroom politics with Massachusetts passing a law requiring sex-segregated public restrooms (Kogan, 2007). In the next 30 years, an additional 34 states passed similar laws regarding public restrooms (Kogan, 2007). Even in the 1920s, the push for separate restrooms for men and women were rooted in the protection of (white) women. As the United States moved into a post-WWI era, debates over public bathroom access only increased.

Public restroom access once again became the center of attention in the 1940s as segregationists argued against the desegregation of public restrooms as "venereal diseases were

commonplace among blacks, and an integrated ladies' room would put white women at risk of catching VD from black women" (Young, 2016). To prevent integration, opposers used a similar narrative regarding public restrooms we see today: "racial integration would grant black men sexual access to white women" (Frank, 2015). As the United States moved out of the 1940s and into the 1950s and 1960s, a new deviant actor within the public bathroom arena was imagined: the homosexual menace, or the idea that homosexual men were sexual predators constantly on the prowl for new victims (Herman, 2005). "The Homosexual Villian" by Norman Miller linked homosexuality with evil (Senelick, 1993) and affected how people thought about homosexuality in the West (Kirchick, 2022). Several national public service announcements such as "Boys Beware" in 1961 painted gay men as pedophiles lurking in public bathrooms.

As the panic surrounding gay men in public restrooms began to decline in the 1970s, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) became the newest avenue of the conservative right to insert themselves in bathroom politics. The Equal Rights Amendment, which ultimately failed to be ratified, was passed by the U.S. Congress in March 1972. The ERA, similar to HERO in Houston, faced quick backlash from conservatives as opponents labeled the amendment the "Common Toilet" law. Conservatives posited that the ERA would get rid of sex-segregated bathrooms in America thus "grant[ing] men, including rapists and pedophiles, equal access to women's restrooms" (Young, 2016). The deep-seated history between the American conservative right, public anxieties and public restroom access is one that can shed light on the current Bathroom Bills circulating in America.

The Creation of a Moral Panic

Just like baseball and hoarding firearms, moral panics are one of America's favorite pastimes. From comic books in the 1950s to the Satanic panic of the 1980s, the U.S. lives up to

Cohen's (1972) assertion that "societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic" (p.9). Cohen (1972) identified the process through which moral entrepreneurs use the media and other institutions, such as the police, to label individuals as social deviants and crack down on their deviant behavior through social control measure.

Cohen presented a five-step process that highlights the emergence of a moral panic: the labeling of a folk devils' actions as a threat, the media's depiction of the threat in a recognizable form, the crackdown on the folk devils by the authorities, and the panic's recession occurring almost as quickly as it began. Cohen elaborated on how the media is involved in every step of the moral panic creation process by setting the agenda (i.e. choosing what stories get coverage), transmitting the images (broadcasting the claims about the folk devils by moral entrepreneurs) and also breaking the silence and making the claim themselves (i.e. functioning as a moral entrepreneur). The media play an important role in turning viewers' attention towards a certain societal villain that can be squashed through social control (Hall et al, 1978).

Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (1994) framework of moral panics is similar to Cohen's, but their framework includes two additional features of moral panics: disproportionality and volatility. One of the hallmarks of a moral panic is the disproportionate reaction by the public to the actual level of threat that is present. Moral panics are marked by "fear and heightened concern," and this concern is "above and beyond what a sober empirical assessment of its concrete danger would sustain" (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994, p. 156). Another key characteristic of a moral panic according to Goode and Ben-Yehuda is volatility. Moral panics disappear almost as quickly as they appear. While moral panics might be fleeting, the impact that these intense times of fear, anger, hostility and concern exert has societal and institutional

implications as elements of the moral panic can become integrated into society and institutions (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994).

Hybrid Model of Moral Panics

The Hybrid Model brings Cohen's process-model and Goode and Ben-Yehuda's element-based model together to create a model that focuses both on how moral panics are created (the process) and what happens during a moral panic (the elements). Klocke & Muschert (2010) break their model into three separate stages: Cultivation, Operation and Dissipation.

The cultivation stage typically begins with two competing groups fighting over morals during a time of economic stress (e.g.., recession, high inflation, etc.), political crisis (e.g., war), or breakdowns of social norms (i.e., youth culture, social movement, etc.). Moral panics begin with a clash of two groups over an issue of moral saliency. In this stage, the folk devils are labeled as deviants and their behaviors as a threat to society by the moral crusaders. Folk devils tend to be from lower social classes while the moral crusaders usually encompass societal leaders and members of the dominant culture (Kloke & Muschert, 2010). Within the cultivation stage, the media signals the dangers, risks and threats of the folk devils' actions to the public by using pre-existing symbols and images of deviance. In the cultivation stage, the media can serve as both the amplifier of claims and the claim-makers themselves, causing public fears and concerns around this group rise to give way to a panic amongst the people.

The operation stage of the hybrid model of moral panics begins with an event. In order for a moral panic to begin, there needs to be a catalytic event that contains the necessary elements of a moral panic (e.g., the passage of an anti-discrimination bill that protects members of the LGBT community). The first part of the operational stage of a moral panic elicits the episodic coverage of the event by the news in which not only is a social problem identified but

the folk devils are also labelled. Usually, the coverage of this catalytic event is riddled with dramatization, exaggeration and distortion. Similarly, the coverage of this event includes predictions of future deviance by members of the labelled group. The next process that occurs is the magnification of the event in which the media switches from fact-base reporting to value-laden coverage of the event in which the issue is seen through a moralized lens. During this phase of moral panics, moral crusaders such as police, politicians, experts and advocacy groups use the media to vilify the social deviants as such the media continues to amplify the messages from the moral entrepreneurs. During this time, moral entrepreneurs call for strong measures in order to suppress the social deviant group through increased police surveillance, the mobilization of funds and resources and the institutionalization of social control practices (e.g., new laws or tougher penalties).

The third stage of the hybrid model of moral panics is the dissipation stage. The dissipation stage occurs once the moral panic begins to retreat from the front pages of newspapers or the top of the news hour. As the moral panic becomes less salient to the public, three different outcomes can occur. First, the panic can reside and become normalized in society meaning that people become used to living with the threat from these so-called folk devils. The new laws passed in the operation stage as a reaction to the social deviant behavior of the labelled group can establish a pathway for social, ideological or institutional change in which the deviant behavior is no longer seen as a threat to society. Since disproportionality is a key aspect of moral panics, one possible driver of their dissipation is the possibility that the threat at the heart of the moral panic is revealed to be a myth. Similarly, as the moral panic continues over time, the amount of deviant behavior decreases, causing the panic to be no longer relevant as a new societal problem takes its place. Although moral panics dissipate as quickly as they rise into

existence, the discourse surrounding these moral panics do not just disappear from existence. Moral panic discourse is re-circulated again and again being applied to different moral panics. The ideologies, discourses and social dynamics that spur a moral panic do not suddenly disappear; rather, these facets are hidden just beneath society's surface waiting for the right conditions to be brought to the surface and begin another moral panic (Kockle & Muschert, 2010).

Mapping and Measuring a Moral Panic

The hybrid model of moral panic integrates the Cohen's (1972) procedural components with Goode and Ben-Yehuda's (1994) elemental components allowing for a more holistic evaluation of moral panics. The paper attempts to utilize a textual analysis approach to map the political discourse surrounding HERO using the hybrid moral panic framework. In this section, I detail how the elements of moral panics, as outlined in the hybrid model, were operationalized and measured.

Cultivation Stage

The process model of moral panics begins in the cultivation stage with the rise of moral entrepreneurs labeling a group of people as the next folk devils. With the creation of an immoral folk devil, we would expect to see the rise of moral language within news coverage as the moral entrepreneurs target and label the deviant group as immoral. The measure of moral language over time can illustrate how moral entrepreneurs use the media to vilify and immortalize a certain group in society namely transgender people in this case. If a moral panic is at play, we would expect to see a greater amount of moral language deriving from the opponents of HERO as they are the ones labeling transgender individuals as deviant.

Concern is one of the elemental aspects of a moral panic that begins within the cultivation stage. As the moral entrepreneurs use the media to vilify and blame a certain group of society, concern for and fear of members of this deviant group arise among members of the public. Within the moral panic framework, concern can be categorized as an increase in a negative tone and a decrease in a positive tone within texts discussing the panic's target, in this case, HERO. The level of anxiety within the political discourse surrounding HERO also serves as a sign of the public's concern about the issue. If a moral panic is occurring in relation to HERO, the results should indicate an increase in anxiety within the discourse over time with most of the anxious texts stemming from HERO opposition groups like Campaign for Houston. In keeping with the volatility aspect of moral panics, this anxiety should increase dramatically but then suddenly decrease.

In addition to concern, moral panics are defined by increased hostility within the public consciousness, especially towards the deviant social group. In public discourse around HERO, this hostility is likely to be expressed by the amount of anger within the political discourse about HERO and how the level of anger changes over time. The presence of hostility is also captured by an increased level of negative emotions among HERO-related texts.

Operationalization Stage

In the mixed model, the increase in hostility leads to the operationalization phase, in which moral entrepreneurs call for stronger measures to suppress the deviant group's actions. The operationalization phase of a moral panic is marked by the amplification of the justifications for why the folk devils warrant attack. Within this paper, we track three different types of moral justification related to moral panics. First, we evaluated deontological justification, as Haworth and Manzi (1998) have pointed out an association between the prominence of deontological

reasoning within political discourse and social control policies placed upon residents. If moral entrepreneurs are attempting to push social control policies to quell the deviant behavior of the folk devils, this attempt should manifest in an increase of deontological moral justifications for the advocated change. Second, within a moral panic, emotions often triumph over reason. If a moral panic is occurring, emotional justifications should increase, and these justifications should come primarily from the HERO opposition campaign. Finally, consequentialist moral justifications were also explored, as consequentialist logic creates an "instrumental" other (Balch and Balabanova, 2014). Essentially, consequentialist logic is rooted in the idea that social deviants have some sort of influence, meaning their immoral behavior can spill over to previously nondeviant individuals.

Dissipation Stage

Volatility is another hallmark of moral panics; focus on the target of the panic, the folk devil, is expected to rise to prominence quickly and fade from prominence quickly. To examine volatility, we examined how frequency of various elements of discourse around HERO changed over time. If a moral panic is occurring, the results will show a sudden increase and decrease in not only the number of articles discussing HERO but also the panic related emotions within texts discussing the ordinance.

Finally, disproportionality, another element of a moral panic, is self-evident in the case of HERO. There have been no reported cases of a man pretending to be a transgender woman using a public restroom to assault a woman or child. This is the central threat raised by the moral entrepreneurs in the Campaign for Houston in arguing against the ordinance. Since there are no reported cases of this event occurring, any substantial outcry would demonstrate disproportionality; the establishment of advocacy groups, legal efforts to overturn a city

ordinance approved by the city council, hundreds of tweets and a dozen videos certainly demonstrate disproportionality in the case of HERO.

Methods

This study examined the political discourse surrounding the passage of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance by the city council in 2014 as well as the subsequent overturning of the ordinance by popular vote in November 2015. Analyses focused on the conversations about HERO occurring over the course of 2014 to 2015. Three key sites of public discourse were selected for examination: the media's coverage of the event, campaign materials from both pro- and anti-HERO organizations and comments on the issue from local and state politicians. These three groups of social actors were selected as they represent three of the five social actors addressed by Cohen (1972) in his process-model of moral panic creation, namely mass media, action groups and politicians, and are readily identifiable and searchable.

Sample

In order to collect timely and relevant articles about HERO, I utilized NewsBanks' Access World News Database, a database which consists of both current and archived newspaper articles from across the globe. NewsBanks' dataset allows for geographical searching of articles as well as selecting a time frame from which articles are drawn from. Using these features, articles were selected if they were written between January 2014 and December 2015 and came from a newspaper within the United States. Articles from this timeframe were selected as this two-year span included the period immediately prior to the passage of HERO, the actual passage of the ordinance in May 2014, the campaign against HERO and the referendum vote that overturned the ordinance in November 2015 as well as the period immediately following. Four topically relevant different keyword phrases were used to gather the news articles. The database

of articles was searched for articles that included the keywords: the formal name and nickname for the bill itself, namely "Houston Equal Rights Ordinance" and "Bathroom Ordinance", and the names of the relevant advocacy groups, namely "Houston Unites" and "Campaign for Houston". A total of 358 news articles was collected for analysis.

The passage of HERO created a divide among Houston citizens and spurred the creation of two different political action groups. Houston Unites represented the Houston citizens who were in favor of HERO, whereas Campaign for Houston consisted of citizens who were against HERO and were campaigning to overturn the ordinance. Action groups can serve as definers of morality during a moral panic; as such it is vitally important to examine the rhetoric within their campaign materials. Two different types of campaign materials were studied in this project: video campaign messages and tweets. The video campaign messages for both Houston Unites and Campaign for Houston were taken from their respective YouTube pages. The transcripts of all the videos available on both pages were collected for analysis. A total of 29 videos were collected for examination. Each campaign organization also had Twitter accounts through which they promoted their respective messages. Using Twitter's API, the timelines of both the Houston Unites (@Houston_Unites) and Campaign for Houston (@nohoustonprop8) were collected. A combined total of 617 tweets were collected from the campaign organizations' Twitter accounts.

Politicians' comments on the HERO debate were also collected through Twitter. Using the articles previously collected thorough NewsBanks' Access World News database, 12 politicians were selected a priori for further examination. Politicians were selected based on the quotes that appeared in news articles regarding the HERO issue, and their position on HERO was inferred from the contents and tone of their quotes. Both state (S) and local (L) politicians were selected. The six pro-HERO politicians included Annise Parker (L), Chris Bell (S), Stephen

Costello (L), Wendy Davis (S), Adrian Garcia (L) and Sylvester Turner (S). The six anti-HERO politicians include Greg Abbot (S), Dan Patrick (S), Pastor Ed Young (L), Jack Christie (L), Ben Hall (L), and Dave Welch (L). Using Twitter's advance search options, tweets were collected using the same four keywords used to search for the articles. To verify the inferred stance, the politicians' Twitter timelines were also searched for tweets that contained either #YesonProp1, #NOonProp1, or #HERO. A total of 149 tweets were collected from these twelve politicians about HERO.

Data Analysis Plan

Database Creation and LIWC Dictionaries

For this paper, I used a natural language processing approach to study the linguistic features, the psychological processes, and the emotional valence of the political discourse surrounding HERO. I used the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count-22 (LIWC) to capture the emotional expression within text as well as the social and psychological states and thinking styles evident. LIWC measures the psychological processes, emotional valences, and social states within text by using a list of dictionary words separated into different categories. LIWC calculates the number of words per dictionary category in each message (e.g., Tweet or news article) and divides that number by the total number of words in the text. This gives researchers a percentage of text that falls into each predetermined category. High percentages mean more of the text falls into that category, reflecting the construct represented by the category. LIWC was trained on a dataset that included all three media of texts (news articles, transcripts, and tweets) examined in this paper. The LIWC dictionary has been validated through multiple peer-reviewed studies (Bantum & Owen, 2009; Kahn et. al, 2007; Boyd et. al, 2022). Whereas some natural

language processing tools utilize a dichotomous outcome scale, LIWC provides the benefit of having a continuous scale for discrete and specific emotions rather than just overall sentiment.

The emotional tone of texts was evaluated using the positive and negative affect dictionaries in LIWC. The affect category dictionaries examine the overall positive and negative emotions within the text as well as breaking down the text into specific emotions such as anger, anxiety and sadness. Using LIWC's extended dictionary, the content covered within the text was examined. Three content areas were investigated: politics, religion and sexuality. LIWC's culture dictionary provides a politics category that counts the times political words are used in a text. Similarly, LIWC's lifestylle category includes a religion dictionary that was used to examine the possible religious framing of the opposition to HERO. LIWC's health category includes a sexuality variable that counts references to sex or sex related topics. These three variables (*politics*, *religion*, and *sexuality*) were used to examine the content of the text. The moralization evident within the text was analyzed using the moralization dictionary within LIWC, which contains words that speakers use when passing moral judgement or evaluation on another individual's character, morals or behavior. The moralization dictionary accounts for both good and bad judgements of morality. LIWC's internal dictionaries were used to compare the texts' tone, content and moral leaning.

One of the benefits of LIWC is the ability to not only use the program's internal dictionaries but also to use user-created and self-created dictionaries. For this project, I selected seven dictionaries developed by other researchers to examine the political discourse around HERO. The dehumanization dictionary (Platten, S. et. al, 2020) allows for the exploration of the types of dehumanization taking place in text such as animalistic dehumanization (i.e., framing individuals as animals). The extended moral foundations dictionary (eMFD) (Hopp et al., 2022)

enables researchers to examine the moral arguments within a text. The use of the eMFD means that I can track moral arguments over time as well as determine which of the five major moral foundations (care, fairness, loyalty, authority and sancity) are used the most in texts about HERO. The eMFD score also allows for the creation of moral agent – moral target networks which show can show both the moral actions of the agent as well as the moral words used in relation to the moral target. Since the topic of HERO is heavily rooted in gender and gender expression, the use of the Masculine and Feminine words dictionary (McCusker, 2011) were used to examine the gendering of texts related to HERO.

In addition to examining moral foundations, I am also investigating the moral justification within texts. The moral justification dictionary (Wheeler and Laham, 2016) consists of three categories in which moral appeals can reside: deontological, consequentialist, emotive. Deontological moral appeals refer to rules, principles, and duties. These appeals focus on the wrongness of committed actions. Consequentialist moral justifications stem from examining the morality of the consequences of an action rather than the morality of an action, and the idea centers around producing outcomes with the greatest positive outcome for the greatest number of people. Emotive moral justifications are based on the idea that moral evaluations are nothing more than emotional expressions. Emotive appeals utilize emotions to persuade others into thinking that the performed action is either moral or immoral depending on the emotion use to describe the action. The use of this dictionary allowed for the mapping of moral justification on average, between sides of the issues as well as overtime. The moral justification dictionary also includes a larger breadth of emotions to examine such as disgust, shame, embarrassment, guilt, compassion, gratitude, elevation and contempt. When discussing a marginalized community, it is not uncommon for stereotypes to creep into the conversation. As such, I used the stereotype

dictionary (Nicolas et. al, 2020) to capture common stereotypes about salient American social groups. The final user-created dictionary I used is the threat dictionary (Choi et al., 2022). This allowed me to track threatening language used in the text in addition to tracking words that represent threats to a community.

LIWC also allows researchers to create their own dictionaries for analysis. A dictionary was created to encapsulate HERO specific words such as bathroom, transgender, equality, assault, predator, safety, etc. The HERO specific keyword dictionary was created to analyze event specific coverage.

Out of an abundance of caution, human coding was undertaken to validate the automatic coding. In order to validate the LIWC results, 10% each of all newspaper articles, tweets and video transcripts in the sample were randomly selected and manually coded for each of the constructs in the study. Correlation tests were conducted to determine the relationship between the LIWC variables and their manually coded counterparts. All variables studied exhibited a significant, positive correlation between the LIWC results and the human coding results;; LIWC measurements were consistent with human subjective measurements of all study variables.

Table 1. Correlations between LIWC scores and human-coding scores for all study content variables

Positive Tone: .178
Negative Tone: .565
Positive Emotions: .424
Negative emotions .632
Anxiety: .414
Anger: .509
Politic: .647
Relig: .503
sexual_1: .655
Deontology: .41
Consequentialism: .44
Moral_Emotions_General: .44

Morality_Freq: .43	
Morality_Direction .213	
Work_Direction: 1	
Politics_Freq: .7	
Politics_Direction .616	
Religion_Freq: .54	
Religion_Direction: .54	
Body_Part_Freq: .673	

Data Analysis

The following section outlines how I analyzed the political discourse surrounding the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance. Two main types of analysis were conducted within this study. A comparison of variables means between the three text categories (article text, campaign transcripts and tweets) was conducted using a one-way ANOVA. This statistical test was conducted along with a planned follow up comparison using Bonferroni correction. Variable means were also compared across party affiliation, when possible, using a comparison of means t-test.

Tone

In order to evaluate the overall tone of the media coverage, campaign materials and comments regarding HERO made by state and local politicians, two variables were analyzed. An ANOVA was used to analyze how the tone of the political discourse varies across categories (i.e. articles, transcripts and tweets). The mean along with standard deviations were reported for the overall *tone_pos* and *tone_neg* for each category. Similarly, both the tweets from the two political action groups and the transcripts from the video advertisements were compared by political affiliation. Houston Unites represents the Democratic view on the issue, and Campaign for Houston is affiliated with the Republican's view on the policy. In order to capture the overall tone of the texts, a new variable (*overall_tone)* was constructed. This variable was constructed

by reverse coding the *tone_neg* variable and adding the reversed variable to the *tone_pos* variable. The *overall_tone* represented a positive tone if the number is positive and a negative tone if the number is negative. The larger the number in either direction the greater the overall positivity of the sentiment.

In addition to overall tone, the tone_neg and tone_positive variables were utilized to construct an ambivalence variable. Ambivalence is described as having mixed feelings towards a person, object or concept. Ambivalence is rooted in holding both positive and negative emotions regarding an attitudinal object. In order to measure ambivalence of the texts, I relied on the SIM method of measuring ambivalence (Thompson et. al, 1995). The SIM method first separates the tone variables into either the dominant variable or the conflicting variable. The dominant variable is the primary emotional tone of text, and it can be either positive or negative. The higher scored of the tone_neg or tone_positive variables serves as the dominant variable while the lower scored variable serves as the conflicting variable. I then used the ambivalence score equation $A = [(C + D)/2] - (D-C)$ (Thompson et. al, 1995) to calculate an ambivalence score per text.

Content

My first priority was to describe the overall content of the target texts by examining differences in content covered across both the message type and across the pro- vs. anti-HERO sources of those messages. Three content area analyzed for this project: *politics, religion* and *sexuality.* Using the *politics, religion* and *sexuality* variable from the LIWC dictionary, I was able to see the degree to which each content area is reflected within each text. The means and the standard deviation for each variable were displayed by category. This allows for the understanding of what content areas are being covered in each specific category. For example, do

news articles frame HERO as a more political issue whereas the video advertisements frame the issue as one about sexuality. To examine what content area is emphasized by the two sides of the debate, the tweets and video advertisements were also analyzed by party affiliation.

Another analysis of the type of content appearing within these three arenas was conducted using variables from the stereotype dictionary (Nicolas et. al, 2020). Political content was measured by two variables. The first variable is *politics_freq* which measures the number of times certain political words are mentioned within a text. Within the stereotype dictionary, the frequency of political words is not the only aspect measured. The dictionary also measures the direction of the category as well. Each overall category in the dictionary is on a scale from low-high, and the words within each category are assigned to be either low or high depending on where the word is in the scale. The politics scale is from progressive beliefs (low) to traditional beliefs (high). The *politics_direction* variable illustrates the average direction of all the words found in the text within the dictionary's category. A negative number represents a higher number of "low" words meaning that the text is more progressive than traditional. The stereotype dictionary also contains a *religion_freq* variable as well as a *religion_direction* variable. The religion scale has non-religious words as its low variables and religious words as its high variables. This would mean that positive numbers represent a more religious text. Unfortunately, the stereotype dictionary does not have a specific sexuality frequency or direction variable. However, I constructed a sexuality variable by combining the *body_part_freq*, the *body_property_freq*, *skin_freq*, and a reversed *body_covering_freq* variables. Unfortunately, no directionality for sexuality can be constructed. Similar to the other content area analysis, this analysis examined the frequency and directions of across text types as well as by party affiliation when applicable. Since this is a comparison of means, a Wilcoxon rank sum test was conducted

to see if any statistical differences appear between the content covered within each text type as well as between pro- and anti-HERO messages.

In addition to creating frequency, means and standard deviation tables for the content variables. I also tracked the type of content emphasized over time. This allows for the examination of when certain frames arise when it comes to HERO.

Emotion

Sentiment tone is different than emotions, so it requires its own analysis. While sentiment analysis focuses primarily on the texts' placement on a negative to positive scale, emotional analysis focuses on concrete emotions found within the texts. The purpose of these analyses is to examine what emotions are utilized across the types of texts as well as determine any differences, if any, between the emotions used in pro- and anti-HERO messages. Emotions were the first examined in the aggregate using the *emo_pos* and *emo_neg* variables from the LIWC dictionary. A means and standard deviation table was created for each type of text analyzed as well as by party affiliation for the tweets and the video advertisements. This analysis showed us on average not only what type of media coverage has the most positive or negative emotions, but it also informed us on what side of the uses positive emotions and which uses negative emotions. After looking at emotions in the aggregate, specific emotions were analyzed. One of the hallmarks of a moral panic is an increase in anxiety and/or anger surrounding a specific topic. The *emo_anx* and *emo_anger* variables from the LIWC dictionary were used to measure these two key emotions. In addition to the analysis described above, I also plotted the averages of the two emotions by month overtime to see any possible upticks in these two emotions. In addition to these two emotions, several emotions from the moral justification dictionary were also

analyzed (disgust, shame, embarrassment, guilt, compassion, gratitude, elevation and contempt). These additional emotions were also measured by type of text as well as across party affiliation.

Moral Justification

Using the moral justification dictionary, I was able to measure three different types of moral justifications that can exists within the texts: deontological, consequentialist, and emotive. In this analysis, I examined the different types of moral justifications used across the text mediums as well as delineating what moral justification are used most by both political action groups.

Moralization

The nature of the moral arguments or justifications offered within the texts were examined using two variables borrowed from the stereotype dictionary. Similar to the other variables from the stereotype dictionary, the moralization variables have two components: a measure of frequency and a measure of direction. The measure of frequency (*moral_freq*) counts the number of times predetermined moral words appear within the text. The measure of direction (*moral_direction*) represents where the overall text is on the moralization scale. In this case, lower scores mean more immoral whereas higher scores mean more moral. These two variables were used to determined not only which kind of texts included more assertions of morality or immorality as well as seeing which political action group draws on morality within their campaign materials and tweets.

Count of Articles overtime

One of the defining features of a moral panic is volatility, or the sudden upswing in coverage of an event. In order to determine if there was a sudden boom in coverage, I collected the number of articles per month per keyword. With this data, I can make an overtime graph that

shows the uptick in articles about HERO as well as the downshift that occurs later. Graphs were presented by keyword and by text medium.

Results

ANOVA and Wilcoxon Results

Tone

In order to examine the tone of the texts studied in this paper, four different tone measures were used. Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviations for both the positive tone measure and the negative tone measure by media type. The table highlights that campaign tweets had higher averages of positive and negative tone compared to articles and transcripts. In order to examine the differences among the three media types, I conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA results presented in show that there is a main effect of media type on positive tone, $F(2, 1150) = 160.89, p < .001$. Since ANOVAs can only provide information on whether or not there is a difference among means and not the specific differences among the three groups, planned comparisons using Tukey's Honest Significant Differences (Tukey HSD) were made. Tukey HSD tests pairwise differences in medians for all possible combination of pairs while also controlling for the probability of Type 1 errors. The results of the positive tone Tukey HSD are presented in Table 2. The post-hoc test shows that no statistically significant difference exists between the positive tone of the transcripts and the news articles. However, the test does show significant differences between the tweet and article comparison and the transcript and article comparison; tweets contained a greater portion of positive words than either articles or campaign message transcripts. Given Twitter's character limitation of 140 characters in 2014-2015, the greater proportion of positive words might just be a function of the character restriction as one positive word in a tweet would be weighted greater than one positive

word in a news article. However, the sheer difference between the positivity of the tweets and the other two media might indicate that when given less space to write, the tone is overall positive.

Table 1: Positive and Negative Tone Means and SD by Media Type

Media Type	Positive Tone Mean	Negative Tone Mean	Positive Tone SD	Negative Tone SD
Articles	2	1.84	.94	.95
Tweets	6.91	3.38	5.3	4.23
Transcripts	2.42	1.94	1.81	1.48

Table 2: Tukey HSD Results for Positive Tone

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	4.91	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	0.42	0.87
Transcripts:Tweets	-4.49	< 0.001

Similarly, an ANOVA was conducted to test differences between the three media types when it comes to negative tone. The negative tone results $F(2, 1150) = 37.66, p < .001$ that indicated a significant difference in negative tone exists among the three groups. Since the main results were significant, planned comparisons using Tukey's HSD test were conducted (see Table 3).

Table 3: Tukey HSD Results for Negative Tone

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	1.9	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	-1.48	0.87
Transcripts:Tweets	-4.49	0.01

Once again, we saw no significant difference in negative tone between the campaign video transcripts and the news articles. We did find that a significant difference in negative tone does exist between the tweets and articles comparison as well as the transcripts and tweets comparison but to a lesser extent; tweets contained more negative tone words than either news articles or campaign message transcripts.

We also examined the differences, if any, that existed in positive and negative tone by the political affiliation. Comparisons by political affiliation focused solely on video transcripts and

campaign tweets. In order to check for statistically significant differences, a series of Wilcoxon signed-rank test were conducted. Wilcoxon signed-rank test allow for pairwise comparison among non-parametric data. The Wilcoxon test for the positive tone ($r = 0.34$, $p = <0.001$) found significant differences among campaign tweets between Houston Unites and Campaign for Houston as well as significant difference in positive tone among campaign transcripts ($r = 0.44$, p-value = 0.01) with Houston Unites unsurprisingly having more of a positive tone in their tweets and campaign transcripts. The negative tone analysis found a small significant difference among campaigns tweets ($r = 0.1$, p-value = 0.01) with Campaign for Houston's tweets having a larger negative tone, but no significant difference was found in negative tone among video transcripts.

Next, we examined the overall tone of the texts as well as the level of ambivalence within the texts. Overall tone was measured by adding a reverse coded negative tone value with the positive tone value so that more positive tones are represented by a more positive number. Table 4 shows the average overall tone and ambivalence as well as the standard deviation by media type. The results indicate that overall tone is positive but to various degrees. The overall tone of the tweets was much more positive compared to the article and transcript tones which are barely positive. Ambivalence scores show that while articles and transcripts' texts showed some ambivalence the tweet texts were not ambivalent as represented by the negative mean score. An overall tone ANOVA was conducted revealing a small main effect among the three groups $F(2, 1150) = 33.95$, $p < .001$. As such, a post-hoc Tukey test was conducted which found a statistically different overall tone between the tweets and the articles as well as the transcripts and the tweets. In both cases, the differences suggest that the overall tone of the tweets were more positive than the overall tone of the articles and video transcripts. The analysis of variance

of ambivalence resulted in a small main effect of media type on ambivalence $F(2, 1150) = 7.72$, $p < .001$ with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test showing only a statistically different result between the ambivalence level of tweets and articles. According to these analyses, the campaign tweets seem to contain the highest amount of positive and negative words, but the tweets do not reach a level of ambivalence that is statistically relevant. This disconnect can be explained by the fact that while individual tweets are emotionally charged, demonstrated by either a positive and negative tone, the 140-character limit restricts tweets from containing a substantial amount of both positive and negative words which is needed to create a meaningful ambivalence score.

Table 4: Overall Tone and Ambivalence Means and SD by Media Type

Media Type	Overall Tone Mean	Ambivalence Mean	Overall Tone SD	Ambivalence SD
Articles	0.16	0.93	1.37	.93
Tweets	3.17	-0.12	7.05	5.04
Transcripts	0.47	.28	2.43	1.6

Table 5: Tukey HSD Results for Overall Tone

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	1.9	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	-1.48	0.87
Transcripts:Tweets	-4.49	0.01

Table 6: Tukey HSD Results for Ambivalence

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-1.04	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	-0.65	0.7
Transcripts:Tweets	-1.45	0.87

In addition to examining overall tone and ambivalence across media type, Wilcoxon signed-rank test were used to compare overall tone and ambivalence by party affiliation. The Wilcoxon tests for overall tone was significant with a moderate effect for both the campaign tweets ($r = .30$, p-value = <0.001) and the video transcripts ($r = .44$, p-value = 0.02). Ambivalence levels were statistically different between Campaign for Houston and Houston

Unites when it comes to campaign tweets ($r = 0.12$, p-value $= 0.003$). No statistically significant difference was found between the level of ambivalence within Campaign for Houston and Houston Unites' video transcripts.

Content

After examining the tone of the texts, our focus shifted to investigating the content areas covered within the texts. Three content areas were chosen to be examined: politics, religion and sexuality. Table 7 presents the means and standard deviations for the three politics measures. The first measure (politic) presents a proportional score accounting for how much of the text is political. The second measure (politics frequency) counts the number of political words within the text while the third measure (politics directions) provides a valence with a higher score representing more conservative ideology. The proportion of political text within the articles and tweets are similar while the video transcripts contained a lower proportion of political text. The transcripts also had considerable fewer political words. Despite having both a lower proportion of political text and fewer political words, the video transcripts had the highest politics directional score among the three media types. The politics directional score indicates that the video transcripts use more conservative political words.

Table 7: Means and Standard Deviations for Politics Measures

Media Type	Politics Mean (Proportional)	Politics SD	Politics Frequency Mean (Count)	Politics Frequency SD	Politics Direction Mean (Valence)	Politics Direction SD
Articles	3.48	1.76	162.51	94.33	0.018	.42
Tweets	3.53	4.84	105.63	253.89	-0.27	1.9
Transcripts	1.98	1.72	-0.002	0.37	48.88	95.38

An ANOVA was conducted for each of the three politics content measures. The politics proportional measure ANOVA produced a non-statistically significant result meaning that the

proportion of political text did not depend on media type. Politics frequency resulted in a significant difference with a small effect $F(2, 1150) = 13.39, p < .001$ with a post-hoc Tuckey HSD finding a significant difference between all comparisons. These results indicate that while all three media types cover politics, they do so to different extents with news articles using political words most frequently. The analysis of political direction indicated a large significant effect of media type $F(2, 1150) = 151.93, p < .001$ on the valence of the political words used within the text. The post-hoc analysis showed no significant difference between the political valence of the news articles and campaign tweets; however, a significant difference was found between the transcripts and the other two media types. In both comparisons with the transcripts text, the difference between the groups is positive highlighting the conservative nature of the political text within the video transcripts.

Table 8: Tukey HSD Results for Politics Frequency

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-56.87	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	-162.51	<0.001
Transcripts:Tweets	-105.63	0.02

Comparisons across party affiliation were also conducted for both the campaign tweets and the video transcripts. Wilcoxon rank sum tests were conducted for each of the three politics variables. The results show no significant difference between the frequency and the direction of political words used within the text. Surprisingly, the politics portion measure Wilcoxon rank sum tests showed a small effect size ($r = 0.17, p = < 0.001$) difference among the two campaigns indicating that while the number and direction of political words do not significantly vary the proportion of political texts within the tweets does vary based on campaign. A similar result occurred in the comparison of video transcripts in which political word frequency and direction were insignificant while the portion of political texts was significant. The Wilcoxon rank sum

tests showed a moderate effect size ($r = 0.40$, p-value $= 0.03$) of media type on the proportion of

political text. The results allude to not a difference in the overall amount of political text but

rather a difference in the proportion of how political each campaign tweet or video transcript has.

Table 9: Tukey HSD Results for Politics Direction

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-0.29	0.95
Transcripts:Articles	48.86	<0.001
Transcripts:Tweets	49.15	<0.001

Religion was the second content area examined within this study. Similar to the politics

measures, three different measures were used to capture the amount of religious text within the

three media types: a proportion measure, a count measure and a valence measure. Table 10

provides the means and standard deviations for each measure. In evaluating the means, we see

that religion is covered less than politics both by portion and by count. We also see that the news

articles contained a higher average of religious text compared to the other two media types. The

religion direction scores indicate that all three groups use more religious words than non-

religious words as shown by the positive number. The religiosity of the articles and tweets were

very small while the number of religious-valent words in the video transcripts was much greater.

Table 10: Means and Standard Deviations for Religion Measures

Media Type	Religion Mean (Proportional)	Religion SD	Religion Frequency Mean (Count)	Religion Frequency SD	Religion Direction Mean (Valence)	Religion Direction SD
Articles	0.92	1.3	69.64	76.12	0.65	.74
Tweets	0.41	1.82	30.97	144.79	0.31	1.45
Transcripts	0.49	1.18	0.43	0.95	21.66	34.02

ANOVAs were conducted to determine statistically differences among the means of each

media type. Both the religion portion measure $F(2, 1150) = 11.46$, $p < .001$ and the religion

frequency measure $F(2, 1150) = 13.24$, $p < .001$ produced statistically significant differences

with a small main effect of condition. The religion directionality ANOVA was also significant

with a large effect size $F(2, 1150) = 214.99$, $p < .001$. Tukey HSD tests for the proportional religious text measure shows only a significant difference between campaign tweets and news articles. The planned post-hoc comparisons for the religion frequency measure showed a significant difference in religious frequency among tweets and articles and transcripts and articles. The results from the Tukey HSD indicate that news articles had a higher frequency of religious words than the other two media types. While articles might have had the highest frequency of religious words, the Tukey HSD test of the religion direction measure highlights that overall video transcripts used the most religiously salient words. The difference between the video transcript median and both the news article and campaign tweets is positive indicating a more religious text. The Tukey HSD test provides insight into just how much more religious the video transcripts texts are compared to both the news articles and campaign tweets.

Table 11: Tukey HSD Results for Religion Proportional

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-0.51	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	-0.44	0.36
Transcripts:Tweets	0.07	0.97

Table 12: Tukey HSD Results for Religion Frequency

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-38.68	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	-69.21	0.01
Transcripts:Tweets	-30.53	0.4

Table 13: Tukey HSD Results for Religion Direction

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-0.34	0.6
Transcripts:Articles	21.01	<0.001
Transcripts:Tweets	21.35	<0.001

Next, we compared the difference in religious text between video transcripts and campaign tweets based on political action group. All Wilcoxon rank sum tests resulted in non-

significant results highlighting that while the religiosity of the texts varies significantly by media type, the amount of religious text used by each political action group is not different.

Sexuality is the last content area examined in this study. Sexuality was measure by both a proportionality variable and by a frequency variable. Sexuality proportionality and frequency were greatest among news articles. Campaign tweets talked the least amount about sexuality. An ANOVA of the proportionality sexuality variable was statistically significant with a medium effect size $F(2, 1150) = 58.30$, $p < .001$. However, the sexuality frequency ANOVA resulted in only a very small significant effect $F(2, 1150) = 4.70$, $p = 0.009$ of media type on sexuality frequency.

Table 14: Means and Standard Deviations for Sexuality Measures

Media Type	Sexuality Mean (Proportional)	Sexuality SD	Sexuality Frequency Mean (Count)	Sexuality Frequency SD
Articles	0.9	0.8	188.42	82.4
Tweets	0.22	1.03	137.14	314.74
Transcripts	0.53	0.71	145.5	133.4

Post-hoc Tukey HSD tests were conducted for both sexuality variables. The only significant difference in proportions of sexual words is between the campaign tweets and news articles. The other two comparisons were not significant. The Tukey HSD test for the sexuality frequency scores conclude the same results in that the only differences in the amount sexual content is between campaign tweets and news articles.

Table 16: Tukey HSD Results for Sexuality Frequency

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-51.26	0.006
Transcripts:Articles	-42.96	0.67
Transcripts:Tweets	8.31	0.98

Wilcoxon rank sum tests were conducted to examine the differences between the political action groups' use of sexuality both on Twitter and within their video advertisements. Only a significant difference was found between the proportion of sexual content within the two campaigns' tweets ($r = 0.1$, p-value $= 0.01$) with Campaign for Houston framing the issue as more sexual than Houston Unites.

Emotions

Next, we turned our focus to the latent emotions found within the texts. Emotions were first analyzed on the aggregate, accounting for the overall positive emotions and overall negative emotions within the text. The negative emotions on average across all three media types were higher than the average amount of positive emotions within the texts. Differences across media types seem apparent with the Tweets containing the most negative emotions out of the three groups. A one-way ANOVA examining positive emotion across the three media types found no statistical difference; however, negative emotions were significant different by media type, $F(2, 1150) = 96.87$, $p < .001$. A post-hoc Tukey HSD analysis showed significant differences in negative emotions among both tweets and articles as well as transcripts and tweets. The test also highlights the high median negativity that occurs among the tweets about HERO.

Table 17: Means and Standard Deviation of Positive and Negative Emotions

Media Type	Positive Emotion Mean	Positive Emotion SD	Negative Emotion Mean	Negative Emotion SD
Articles	0.26	0.27	.51	0.43
Tweets	0.35	1.83	2.53	2.82
Transcripts	0.19	0.4	0.74	0.72

Table 18: Tukey HSD Results for Negative Emotion

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	2.02	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	0.23	0.13
Transcripts:Tweets	-1.79	<0.001

In order to examine aggregate emotional tone differences across the two competing campaign groups, Wilcoxon tests were conducted. Positive emotions in both the video transcripts and the tweets were not statistically influenced by the side of the HERO campaign the text was derived. Negative emotions were also not different depending on political affiliation for both the video transcripts and the campaign tweets.

Next, two specific emotions related to hostility and the moral panic framework were analyzed: anger and anxiety. Table 19 presents the average anger and anxiety by media type as well as standard deviations. ANOVAs for anger and anxiety revealed a small significant difference of the anger $F(2, 1150) = 10.13$, $p < .001$) while anxiety was not different depending on media type. Post-hoc Tukey HSD analysis on the level of anger (see Table 20) showed that the level of anger in the campaign tweets was significantly lower than either the news articles or the video transcripts. No difference was found between the level of anger in the video transcripts and the news articles. Further analysis was conducted to see if any differences in the levels of anger and anxiety appeared when looking at the texts based on the political action group the text is from. Wilcoxon rank sum test showed a moderate difference ($r = 0.37$, p-value < 0.05) for anger among the video transcripts but no difference for anxiety. Comparisons between the tweets from Campaign for Houston and Houston Unites found a small effect of party affiliation on anger ($r = 0.08$, p-value $= 0.05$) and anxiety ($r = 0.08$, p-value $= 0.04$) with Campaign for Houston's tweets containing slightly more anger and anxiety.

Table 19: Means and Standard Deviation of Anger and Anxiety Emotions

Media Type	Anger Mean	Anger SD	Anxiety Mean	Anxiety SD
Articles	0.18	0.25	0.15	0.19
Tweets	0.06	0.55	0.1	0.72
Transcripts	0.30	0.54	0.25	0.42

Table 20: Tukey HSD Results for Anger

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets: Articles	-0.12	<0.001
Transcripts: Articles	0.23	0.43
Transcripts: Tweets	0.23	0.02

Disgust and shame were the next two emotions analyzed. Disgust and shame appeared dramatically less often than anger and anxiety. ANOVAs for both disgust and shame resulted in no statistical differences between media type and level of each emotion. Wilcoxon rank sum test were conducted to compare shame and disgust by party affiliation for both the campaign tweets and the video transcripts, but these results were insignificant too.

Table 21: Means and Standard Deviation of Disgust and Shame Emotions

Media Type	Disgust Mean	Disgust SD	Shame Mean	Shame SD
Articles	0.03	0.09	0.01	0.05
Tweets	0.07	0.6	0.01	0.26
Transcripts	0.03	0.1	0.05	0.13

Moral Justifications

Next, moral justifications used within the texts surrounding HERO were examined. Three different moral justifications were evaluated. Deontological justifications referred to moral rules and principles, consequentialist moral justifications referred to the morality of an action based on the action's consequences, and emotive moral justifications reflected the use of emotions as moral statements. Table 22 displays the means and standard deviations of each moral justification by media type.

Table 22: Moral Justifications Means and SD by Media Type

Media Type	Deontological Mean	Consequentialist Mean	Emotive Mean	Deontological SD	Consequentialist SD	Emotive SD
Articles	0.98[a]	0.18[c]	0.24	0.28	.24	1.37
Tweets	0.64[b]	0.07[d]	0.19	1.03	0.61	7.05
Transcripts	0.01[b]	.56[e]	0	0	0.58	2.43

Interestingly, emotive moral justifications did not appear within the video transcripts at all. ANOVAs were conducted to evaluate differences among the means of the three moral justification categories. The results indicated a small significant effect of media type on deontological moral justification use within the texts, $F(2, 1150) = 5.94$, $p = 0.003$. Similarly, consequentialist moral justifications were affected by media type with a small main effect, $F(2, 1150) = 16.26$, $p < .001$. No difference was found among emotive moral justification based on media type. In order to determine which comparisons were significantly different, post-hoc Tukey HSD test were conducted for the deontological and consequentialist moral justifications measures. The deontological analysis revealed differences between the amount of moral rule-based justifications among the news articles and the other two media types. No differences in deontological moral justifications were found between the video transcripts and the campaign tweets. The consequentialist Tukey HSD found significant differences among all three comparisons.

Table 23: Tukey HSD Results for Deontological Moral Justification

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-0.34	0.01
Transcripts:Articles	-0.97	0.02
Transcripts:Tweets	-0.63	0.18

Table 23: Tukey HSD Results for Consequentialist Moral Justification

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	-0.11	0.003
Transcripts:Articles	-0.97	<0.001
Transcripts:Tweets	-0.63	<0.001

Comparisons between the campaign tweets and video transcripts from the Campaign for Houston organization and the Houston Unties organization were conducted using a Wilcoxon rank sum test. Emotive moral justification use was the only significantly different within the video transcripts with media type having a large effect ($r = 0.53$, $p = 0.004$) on the amount of

emotive moral justification within the text. Similarly, emotive moral justifications varied significantly by party affiliation among the campaign tweets but with only a small effect (r =0.13, p = 0.001). The analysis found that Campaign for Houston used more emotive moral justification within their transcripts and tweets than Houston Unites perhaps as the Campaign for Houston organization was attempting to spur an emotional response.

In addition to evaluating the moral justifications rooted within the texts, we also examined the level of moralization within each of the media types. Moralization was measures by both the frequency of using moral words as well as directionally in which lower scores represent more language reflecting *im*morality. Table 24 presents the means and standard deviations for both the moralization frequency and direction measures. The comparison of the means revealed an unexpected discrepancy between the frequency of moral terms and the direction of moral terms within the video transcripts. The results appear to indicate that while the video transcripts on average had an extremely low number of moral terms, the valence of the limited number of moral terms within the transcripts was extremely high. Conversely, the opposite appears within the news articles in which there are on average several moral terms found in the articles, but the valence of these terms on the morality scale is almost directly between immoral and moral highlighting a more balanced use of moral words across the news articles.

Table 24: Moralization Frequency and Direction Means and SD by Media Type

Media Type	Moralization Frequency Mean	Moralization Direction Mean	Moralization Frequency SD	Moralization Direction SD
Articles	301.49[a]	0.07[d]	105.17	.98
Tweets	831.55[b]	3.72[e]	647	6.04
Transcripts	-0.94[c]	122.92[f]	2.05	103.64

Main effects of the media type on both moral frequency, $F(2, 1150) = 143.67$, $p < .001$, and moral direction, $F(2, 1150) = 721.46$, $p < .001$, were found to be statistically significant and large. Since the main effects of both ANOVAs were significant, post-hoc Tukey HSD tests were conducted on each model. Both the moral frequency and moral direction Tukey HSD tests found significant differences among all three comparisons. The Tukey HSD highlight the difference between the moral direction of the news articles and campaign tweets compared to the video transcripts.

Table 25: Tukey HSD Results for Moralization Frequency

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	530.06	<0.001
Transcripts:Articles	-302.43	0.009
Transcripts:Tweets	-1068.20	<0.001

Table 26: Tukey HSD Results for Moralization Valence

Comparison	Difference	p-value
Tweets:Articles	3.65	0.002
Transcripts:Articles	122.85	<0.001
Transcripts:Tweets	119.2	<0.001

Wilcoxon rank sum tests were conducted to evaluate the difference in moral frequency and direction for the video transcripts and campaign tweets by political action group association. Both moral frequency and direction Wilcoxon tests for the video transcripts were not significant meaning that both Campaign for Houston and Houston Unites used similar moral frequency and direction within their video campaigns. Significant differences did occur when comparing the moral frequency and direction of the two organizations' campaign tweets. Wilcoxon rank sum test found a moderate difference in moral frequency ($r = 0.36$, p-value = <0.001) and in moral direction ($r = 0.31$, p-value = <0.001) between the two campaign organizations messages on Twitter. Surprisingly, the analysis found that Houston Unites used moral words more frequently

than the Campaign for Houston, therefore, the finding that the moral direction of these words
was more immoral is unsurprising.

Over-time Analysis Results

Tone Over Time

In order to visualize how the tone of HERO coverage changed from its introduction in
May 2014 to its overturning by popular vote in 2015, over-time graphs were constructed for each
of the tone measures. Time analysis graphs were created based on the media type (i.e. newspaper
articles, campaign tweets and video transcripts) and also by party affiliation for both tweets and
video transcripts.

Figure 1: Positive Tone Overtime
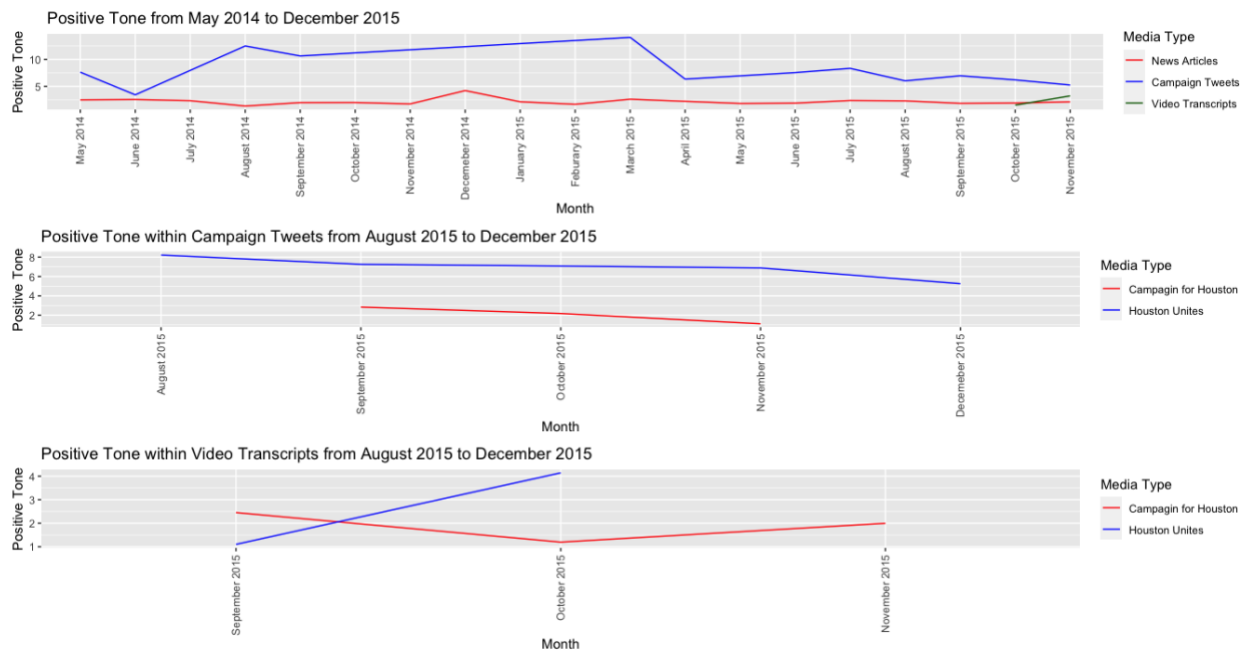
The graphs indicate that over time the newspaper articles around HERO were less
positive than the campaign tweets. The graph also highlights the increase in overall positive tone
in video transcripts from October 2015 to November 2015. The party affiliation overtime
analysis for campaign tweets indicates a decline in overall positive tone in Houston Unites'

tweets from November 2015 to December 2015. This decrease in overall positive tone might

reflect the organization's response to HERO failing to get passed by popular vote. The positive

tone within campaign tweets graph also shows that the tone of Campaign for Houston's tweets

became less positive as election day drew closer.

Figure 2 presents the proportion of negative tone over time by media type and party

affiliations. The figure shows that negative tone of news articles stayed fairly consistent during

the HERO debate, whereas the negative tone of the campaign tweet increased starting in March

2015. Unsurprisingly, the figure highlights the greater negative tone of Campaign for Houston's

tweets compared to Houston Unites tweets. The negative tone of the Campaign for Houston's

tweets increased dramatically in October 2015, which was one month prior to the general

election. This finding might reflect an effort on the part of Campaign for Houston to portray

HERO as negatively as possible right before people were supposed to vote on the issue.

Surprisingly, Campaign for Houston became less negative within their video advertisements for

October 2015 to November 2015.

Figure 2: Negative Tone Overtime
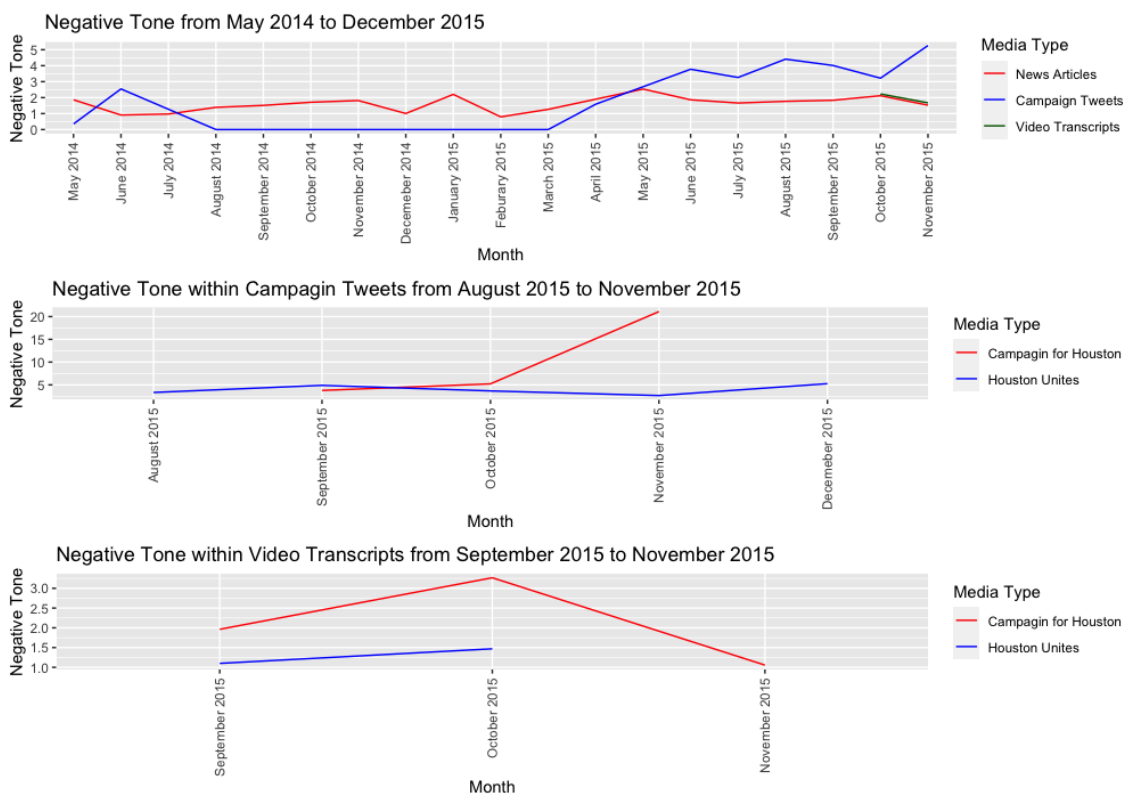
The time analysis for the overall tone of the news articles, tweets and video transcripts appears indifferentiable from the positive tone over-time analysis with campaign tweets having a higher overall tone than news articles. The similarities between the over-time overall tone and the over-time positive tone indicate that in the aggregate the overall tone was positive. Differences appear, however, when examining the overall tone over time by party affiliation. The most notable difference is the degree to which the Campaign for Houston's tweets are negative. The Campaign for Houston tweets were extremely negative, whereas the Houston Unites tweets were barely positive. Comparing across the positive, negative and overall tone graphs for the campaign tweets, we can see that Campaign for Houston's tweets quickly took on a more negative tone as election day approached. Interestingly, the overall tone for all campaign tweets was positive, likely a function of the number of tweets each organization posted during the timeframe; Houston Unites tweeted almost 7x more than Campaign for Houston.

Figure 3: Overall Tone Overtime
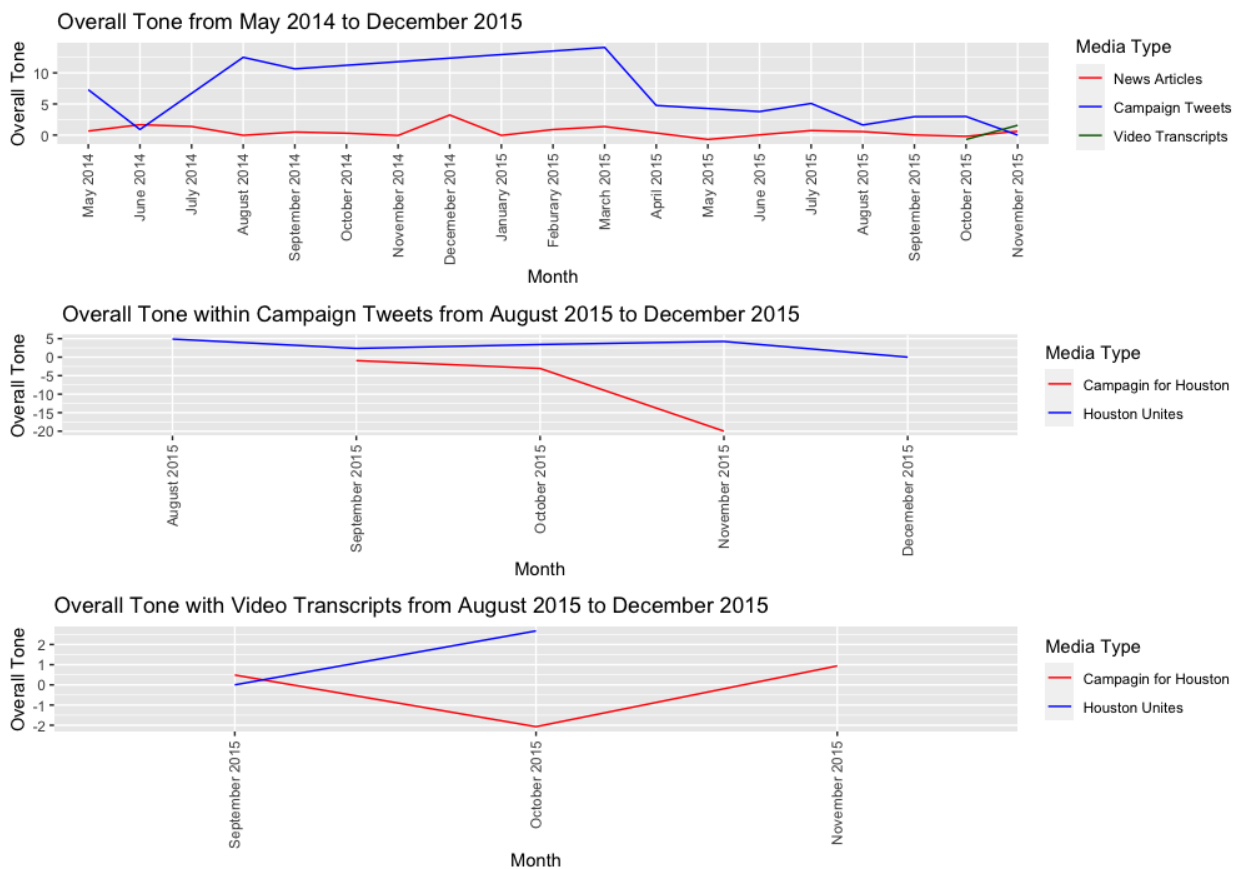
Content Over-time

Next, we turned our attention to the examination of content. Figure 4 shows the results for both the proportional politics measure, or the percentage of each text related to politics, as well as the politics frequency measure, which counts the total number of political words in each text.

Figure 4: Proportion of Political Words and Politics Frequency Overtime
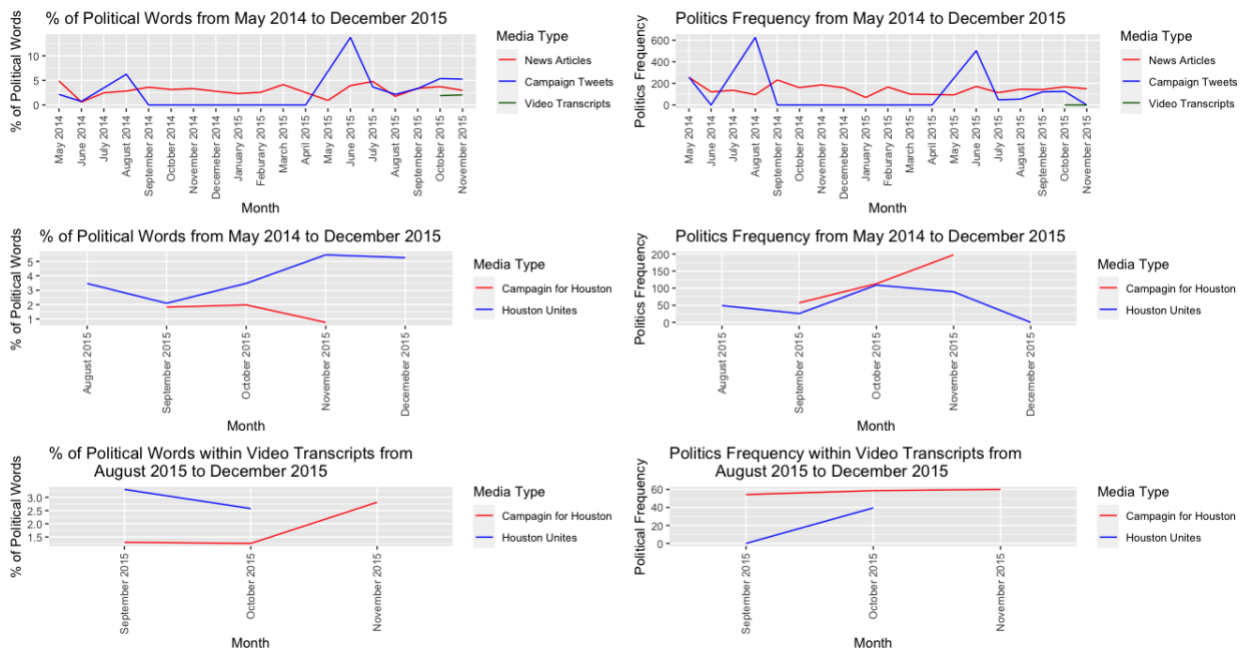
As might be expected, the examination of the proportion of political words and the frequency of political words by media type over time showed consistency in not only which media type framed HERO as a political issue but also in when a greater mention of politics was used. The first row of Figure 4 illustrates that overall, the news articles had a greater proportion

of political text as well as a higher frequency of political words. However, the graphs also show moments throughout the HERO discourse in which political framing spikes among the campaign tweets. These spikes of political framing occurred at two key moments in the campaign to get HERO passed. The first spike appeared between June 2014 and September 2014, right after the ordinance was passed by the city council. A second spike occurred during the summer of 2015 while HERO was undergoing its legal challenges in the court, which outcome caused the ordinance to be placed on the 2015 general election ballot.

The video transcripts portion of Figure 4 highlights a trend for the Campaign for Houston organization in which their videos contained a relatively consistent frequency of political words, but the proportion of political words increased slightly from October to November 2015. Houston Unites, on the other hand, experienced an increase in the frequency of political words within their video transcripts; however, these political words made up a smaller percentage of the video transcripts' texts. One reason for the increase in frequency with a simultaneous decrease in proportion is that the length of the video advertisements got longer as election day drew closer. Longer videos can account for the increased number of political words as well as the decrease in the proportion these words take up as the script becomes longer allowing the advertisement to cover different content arenas within the video. A similar trend can be seen within the Campaign for Houston's campaign tweets, in which the frequency of political words increased from September 2015 to November 2015 while the proportion of political words decreased within the tweets during that same time period. Figure 4 shows that both Campaign for Houston within their tweets and Houston Unite within their video transcripts increased their use of political words over time, but the proportion of the text these political words occupied decreased as November 2015 approached.

While Figure 4 illustrates that Campaign for Houston and Houston Unites changed their frequency of political words over time, it does not address the political valence of these political words. Figure 5 highlights the direction of the political words used within the news articles, tweets and video transcripts; negative values represent more progressive ideas, and positive values represent more conservative ideas. Surprisingly, the political direction for both news articles and campaign tweets was zero. This means that the news articles and campaign tweets contained an equal amount of both conservative and progressive statements. Video transcripts on the other hand were very conservative but became more progressive over time with the introduction of more Houston Unites video advertisements.

Figure 5: Politics Direction Overtime
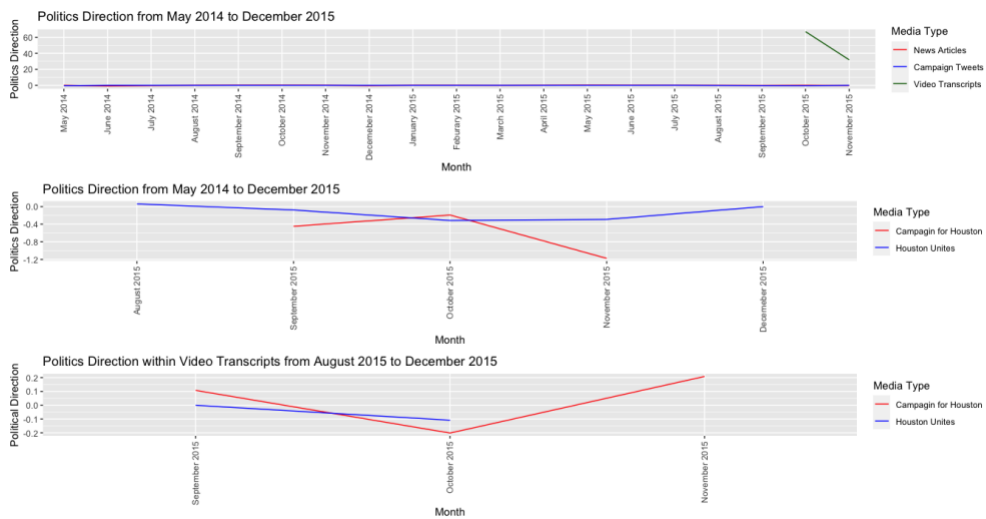
Unexpectedly, Figure 5 seems to show that Campaign for Houston's political words in both their video transcripts and campaign tweets register as more progressive words. By comparing the negative tone graphs to the political direction graphs, a story emerges that might

explain this disconnect. As mentioned earlier, the tone of Campaign for Houston's tweets was much more negative which could highlight that the organization's tweets are discussing progressive ideas in a negative light. A similar event might be occurring among the organizations video advertisements in which the first set of videos released from September to October discussed the liberals' ideas in a negative manner while in the second set of videos discusses more conservative in a more positive tone.

Figure 6: Proportion of Religious Words and Religious Frequency Overtime
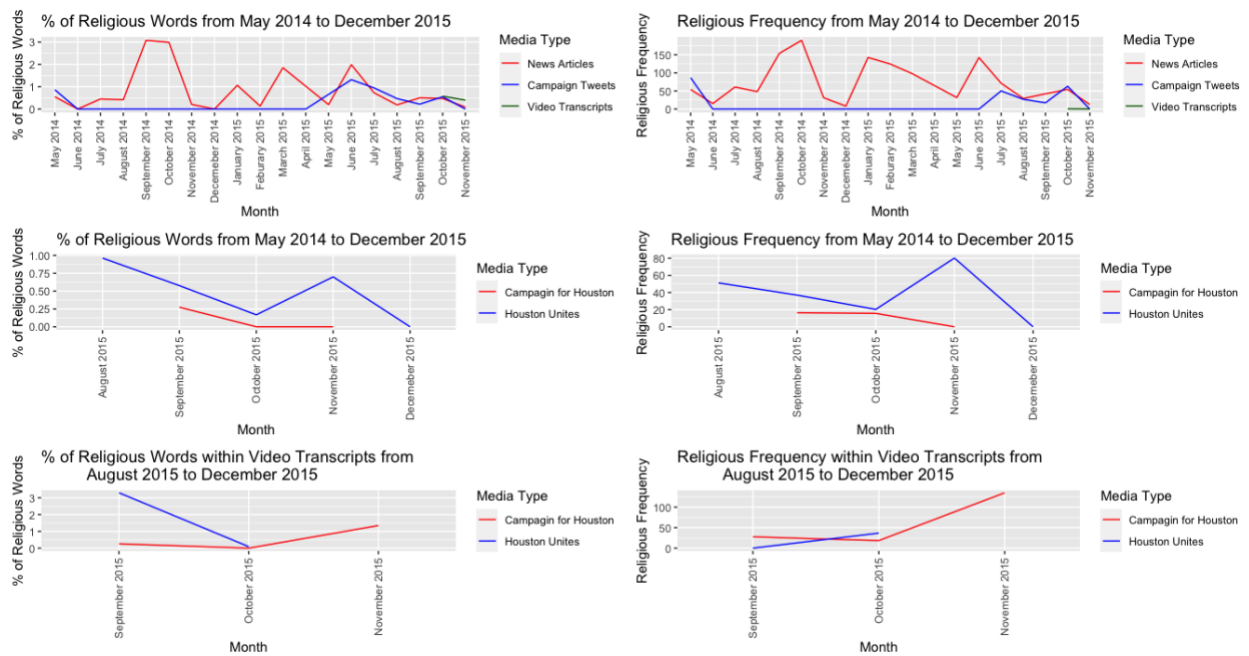
Religion was the next content area that was examined over time. Religious words took up a greater proportion of words and were mentioned more often in news articles than within campaign tweets or video transcripts. Campaign tweets and the video transcripts rarely mentioned any religious words. Spikes in the number and proportion of religious words within

the news articles appeared in Fall 2014 with few mentions of religious words in the last months leading up to the general election. Campaign for Houston had a lesser proportion and number of religious words within their tweets throughout the entire campaign compared to Houston Unites. The greater use of religious words from Houston Unites might be rooted in the lawsuit that occurred between Mayor Annise Parker and several religious leaders in Houston in the summer of 2015 in which the mayor wanted pastors' sermons to be submitted into trial evidence. The comparison of tweets shows that when Campaign for Houston increased the number of religious words within their tweets, these words took up a smaller proportion of the tweets. The video advertisements graphs show that Campaign for Houston increased religious proportion and words over time whereas Houston Unites increased their religious word count over time while these religious words simultaneously made up a lower percentage of the overall transcript texts.

Figure 7: Religious Direction Overtime
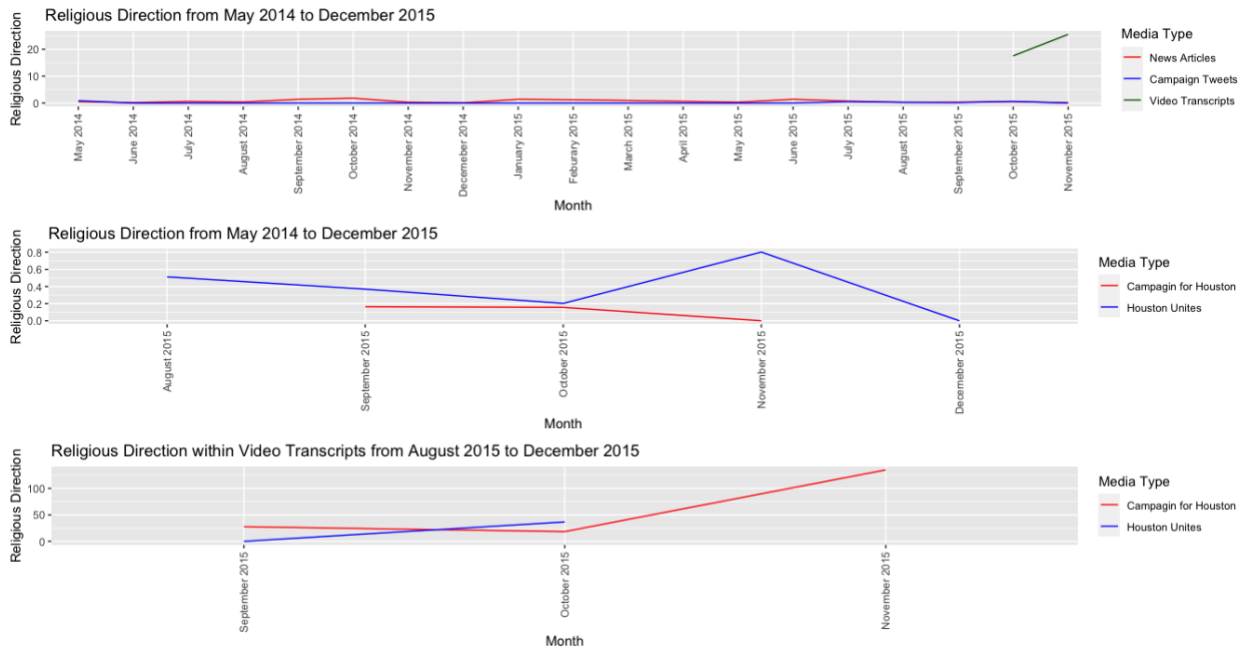
Similar to the politics direction, the religious direction for news articles and campaign tweets appears to be neutral. This means that both the news articles and campaign tweets contained an equal number of religious words (e.g. religious, believer, Christian, etc.) and irreligious (e.g. nonbeliever, atheist, secular, skeptic, etc.) words. Video transcripts became increasingly more religious overtime which can be attributed to the increase in text religiosity among the Campaign for Houston video advertisements. The religious direction of Houston Unites' tweets followed the same pattern as the frequency of religious words. Overall, Figure 7 shows that all the texts were religious, with no texts falling below the irreligious line (i.e. negative number).

Sexuality was the next concept examined, and the over-time plots reveal that overall, a higher proportion of sexual words and number of sexual words occurred within news articles. The plots also show that within campaign tweets the proportion of sexual words in Campaign for Houston's tweets were greater than that of Houston Unites' tweets. Houston Unites' first few video advertisements contained a larger proportion and greater number of sexual words, but this use decreased over time.

Figure 8: Proportion of Sexual Words and Sexuality Frequency Overtime
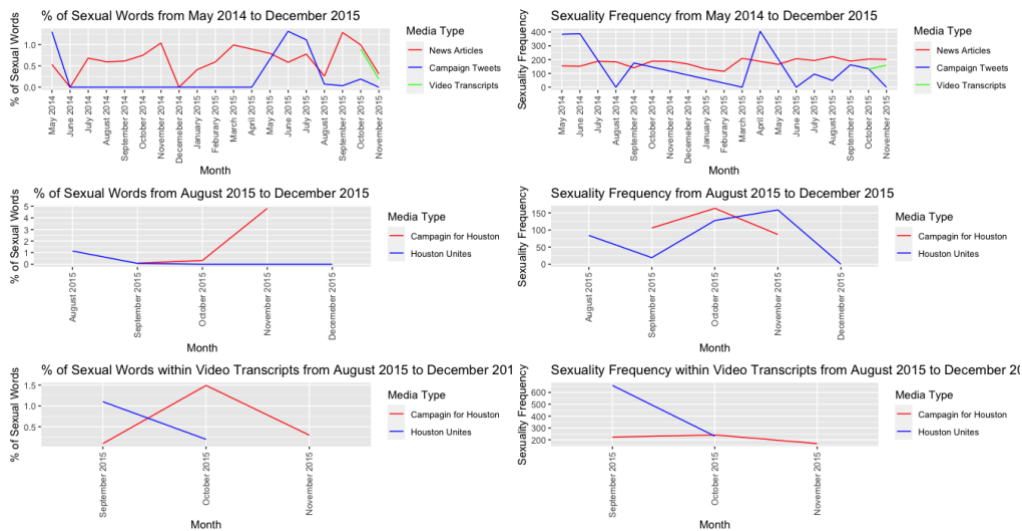
Emotions Over Time

 As the HERO made its way from the halls of Houston's city council to the general

election ballot, the emotional sentiment regarding HERO evolved. My evaluation of emotions

over time began by exploring the aggregated positive and negative emotions. As reported earlier,

negative emotions were significantly different by media type. Figure 9 below shows how

negative emotions evolved over time based on media type. Negative emotions were highest

among campaign tweets consistent with the findings presented earlier. The stark difference in

negative emotions within campaign tweets increase drastically the month before the election,

which can be attributed to the increased number of tweets posted by Campaign for Houston

during the month of October 2015.

Figure 9: Negative Emotions Overtime by Media Type
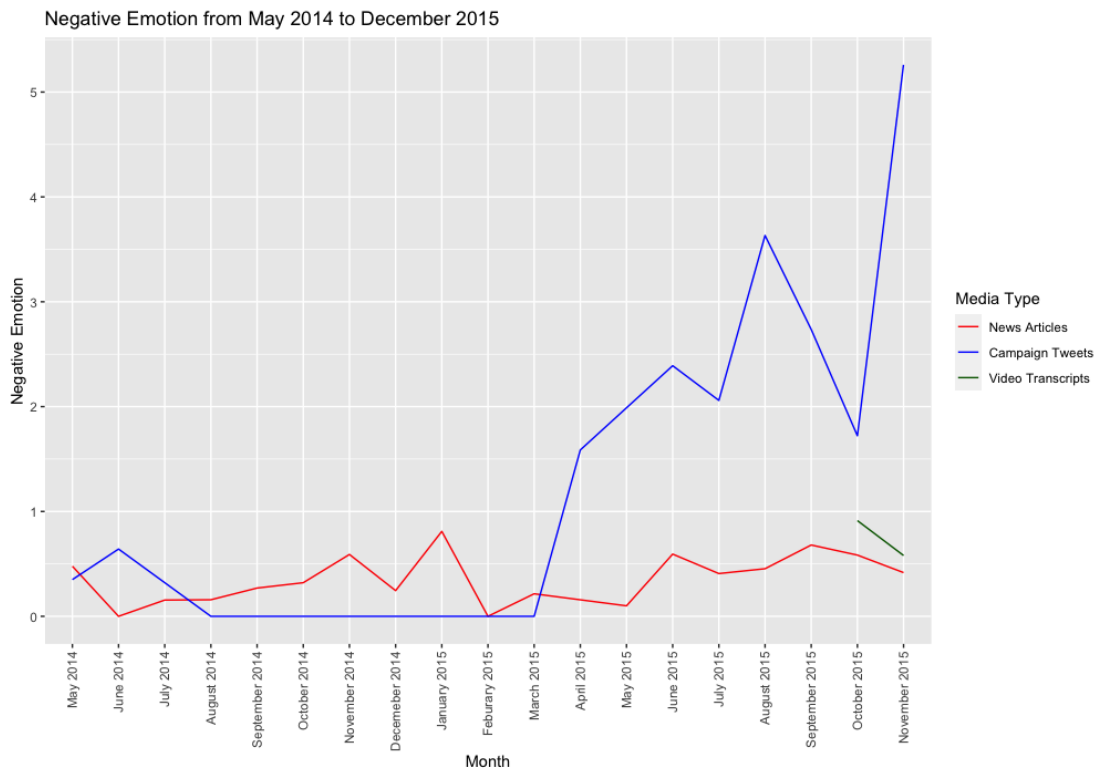
Figure 10: Anger Overtime
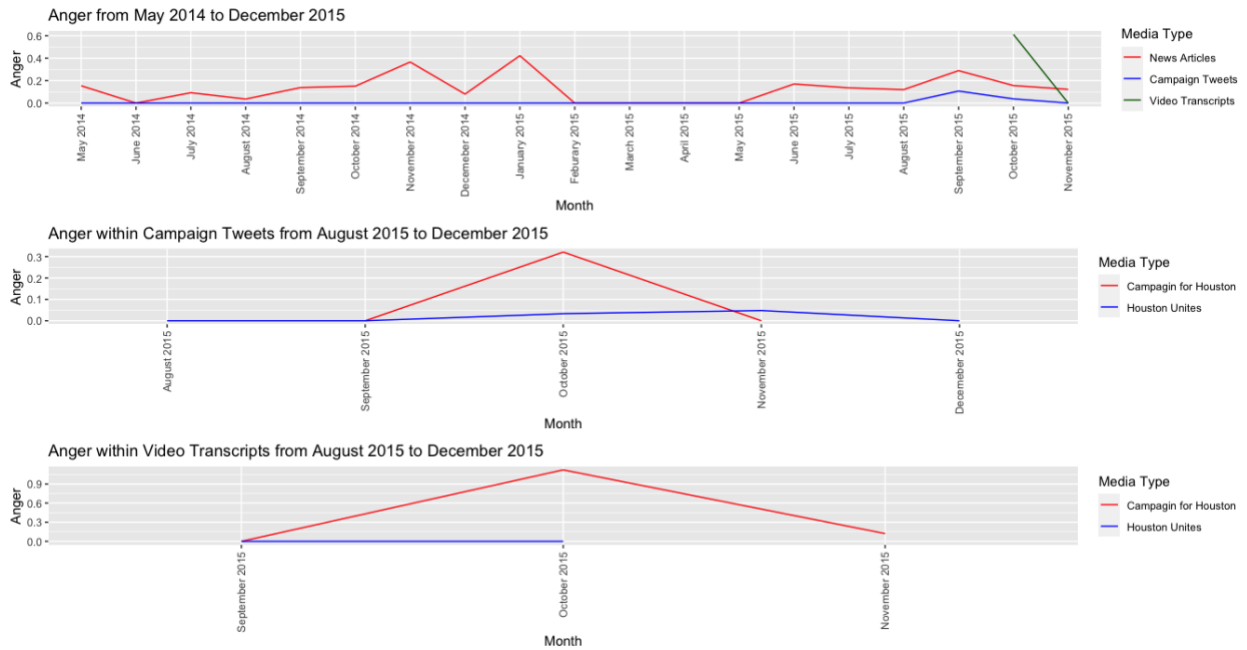
having more anger than Campaign for Houston's tweets. Figure 10 highlights an increase in
anger within Campaign for Houston's materials from September 2015 to October 2015, but this
amount of anger dips within the month before the election. Anxiety found within Campaign for
Houston's tweets follows a similar pattern of increasing anxiety from September to October with
a decrease in anxiety between October and the election. Perhaps these two graphs reveal that
anger and anxiety go hand in hand within Campaign for Houston's messaging.

Figure 11: Anxiety Overtime among Campaign Tweets
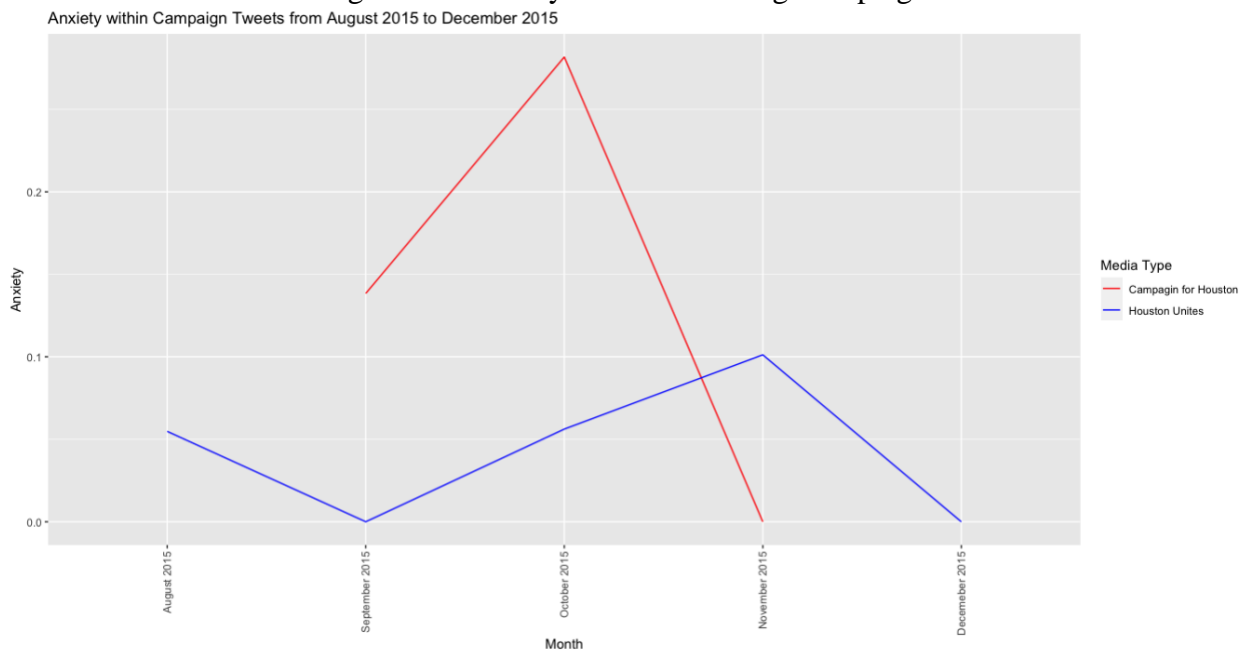
Moral Justifications Over Time

Moral justifications used within the political discourse surrounding HERO varied not only by media type but also by time. Figure 11 provides the overtime analysis for deontological and consequentialist moral justifications. Deontological moral justifications were present and greatest among campaign tweets when HERO was first passed in 2014, highlighting duty and rule-based appeals, yet these appeals faded until April 2015, corresponding with the first decision of many legal battles related to this case. Deontological justifications were used within campaign tweets during the duration of HERO's legal battle which ended in late July 2014. While deontological justifications were extremely present among campaign tweets, consequentialist justifications were noticeably missing within the tweets until September 2015 when Campaign for Houston first began tweeting about HERO.

News articles varied their use of both deontological and consequentialist moral justifications overtime. Consequentialist moral justifications usage increased dramatically from March 2015 to April 2015. This spike in consequentialist moral justifications in news articles during that time may be a result of a judicial ruling passed in mid-April which supported the Houston Unites campaign. Consequentialist appeals within news articles seem to align with key legal events related to HERO in which consequentialist appeals increased whenever a judicial ruling was reported (i.e. in January 2015 with the start of the trial, in August 2015 with the announcement of HERO being placed on the general election).

Figure 12: Deontological and Consequentialist Moral Justifications overtime
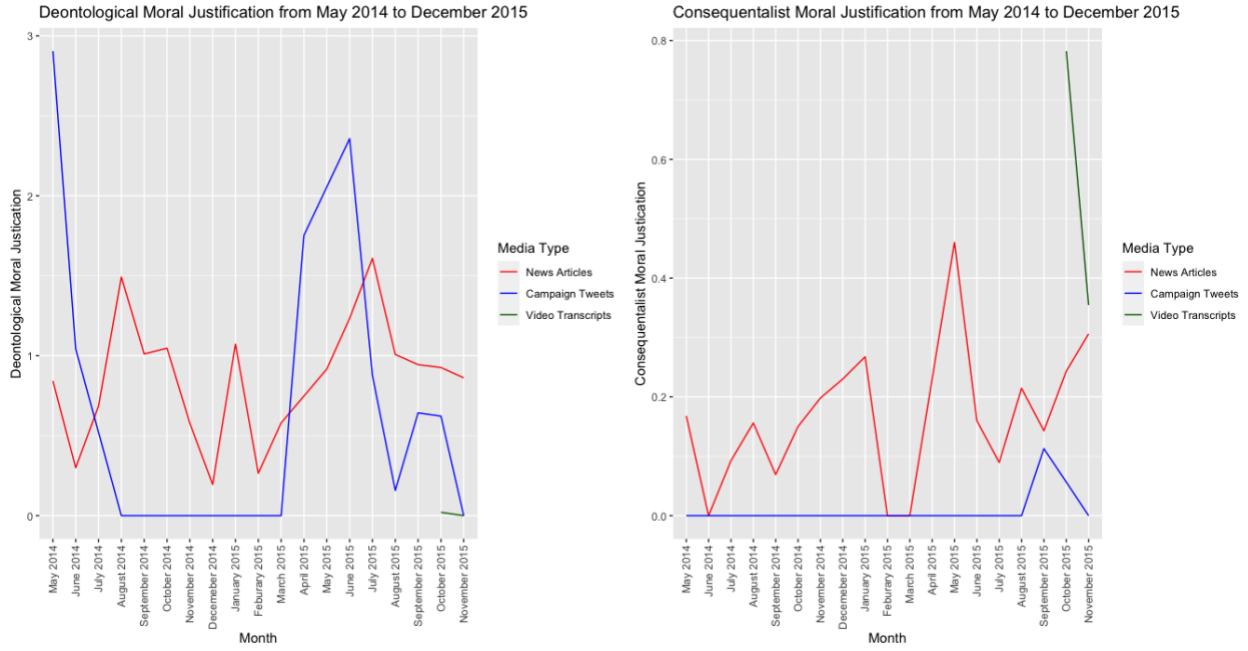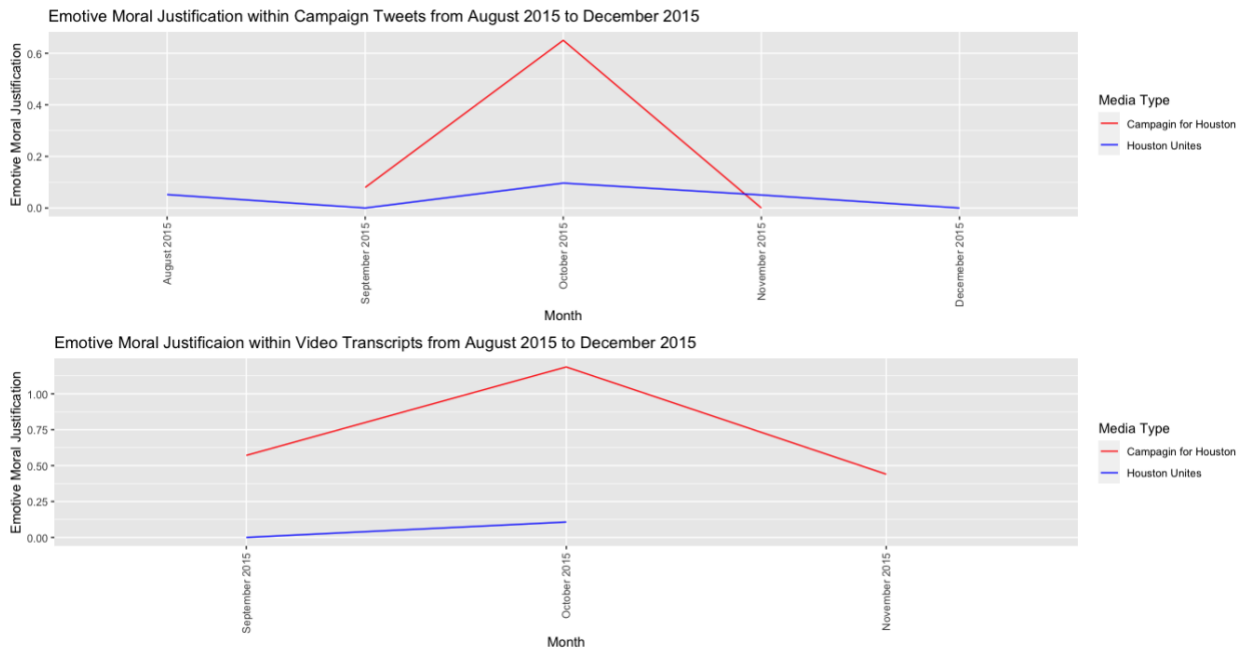

Figure 13: Emotive Moral Justification Overtime

Although emotive moral justifications did not vary by media type, this kind of moral justification did occur more often within text from the Campaign for Houston. As Figure 12 clearly shows, the amount of emotive moral justification increased within the months before the election. Moral justifications were not the only measure of morality in this paper as we also examined mentions of moral words and the direction of these moral words. Figure 13 shows how moral frequency and moral direction changed throughout the HERO discourse.

Moral Frequency and Direction Over Time

According to figure 13, morality mentions in news articles held steady over time compared to morality mentions among campaign tweets. Morality frequency increased from August 2014 to September 2014 when several local Houston pastors were subpoenaed by the Texas Department of Justice to submit their sermons for the ongoing HERO legal battle. Morality frequency also increased in April 2015 to July 2015 within campaign tweets. This period is another important moment within HERO's legal journey from Houston's City Hall to the general election ballot.

Figure 13: Moral Frequency and Moral Direction overtime
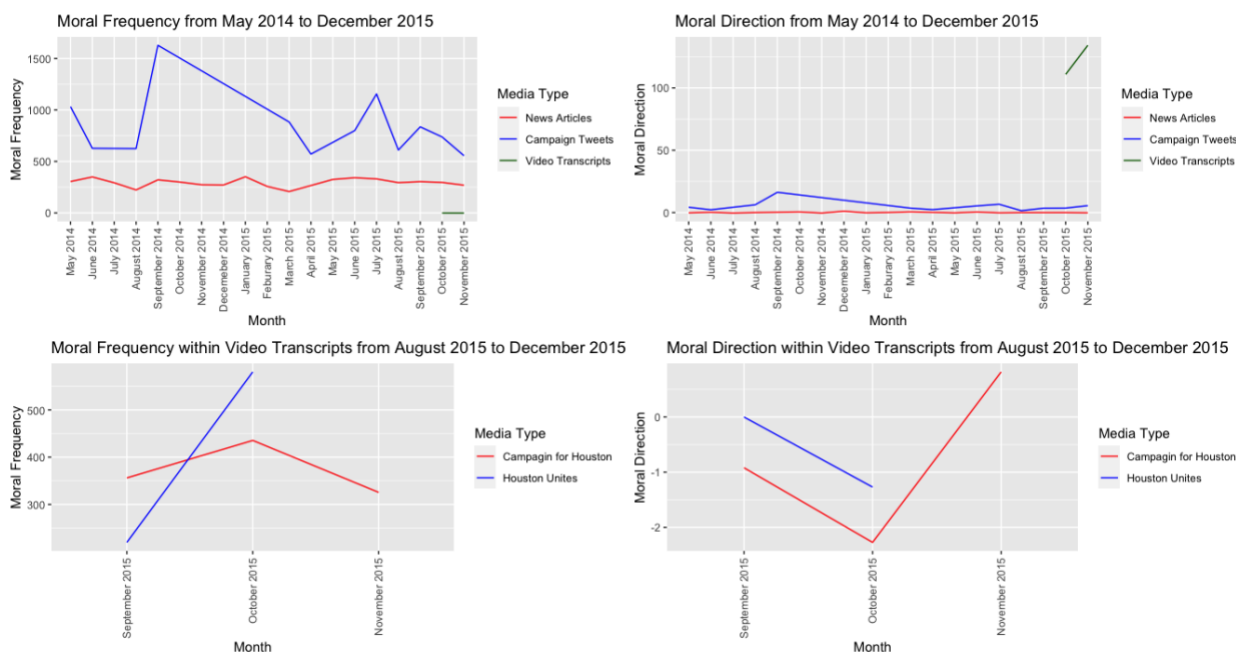
The moral direction within news articles hovered around zero throughout most of the time period studied, revealing that while news articles used moral-adjacent words, the words used were equal moral and immoral. Figure 13 illustrates that even though campaign tweets contained far more moral words than news articles, the moral direction of these words are quite similar to that of news articles. August 2014 to September 2014 seems to be an exception in which the moral direction of the words used within the campaign tweets became more moral. This increase in morality might also be rooted in the pastors being subpoenaed. As stated earlier, moral frequency and moral direction were statistically different with the video transcripts depending on party affiliation. Figure 13 highlights how Houston Unites utilized more moral words as election day approached, but these words shifted from reflecting morality (e.g. words like trustworthy, fair, tolerant, etc.) to words showcasing immorality (e.g. words like unfair, insincere, untrustworthy, etc). The figure also shows how Campaign for Houston used fewer moral words from October 2015 to November 2015 with their video advertisements; however, these moral words leaned heavily in the direction of morality.

Articles Over Time

In addition to tracking the variables of interest over time, we were also interested in examining how the number of articles changed overtime both in the aggregate and by keywords. Figure 14 presents the number of articles over time from May 2014 to December 2015. As expected based on the moral panic framework, the graphs points out the volatility of the topic with rapid increases and rapid decreases occurring.

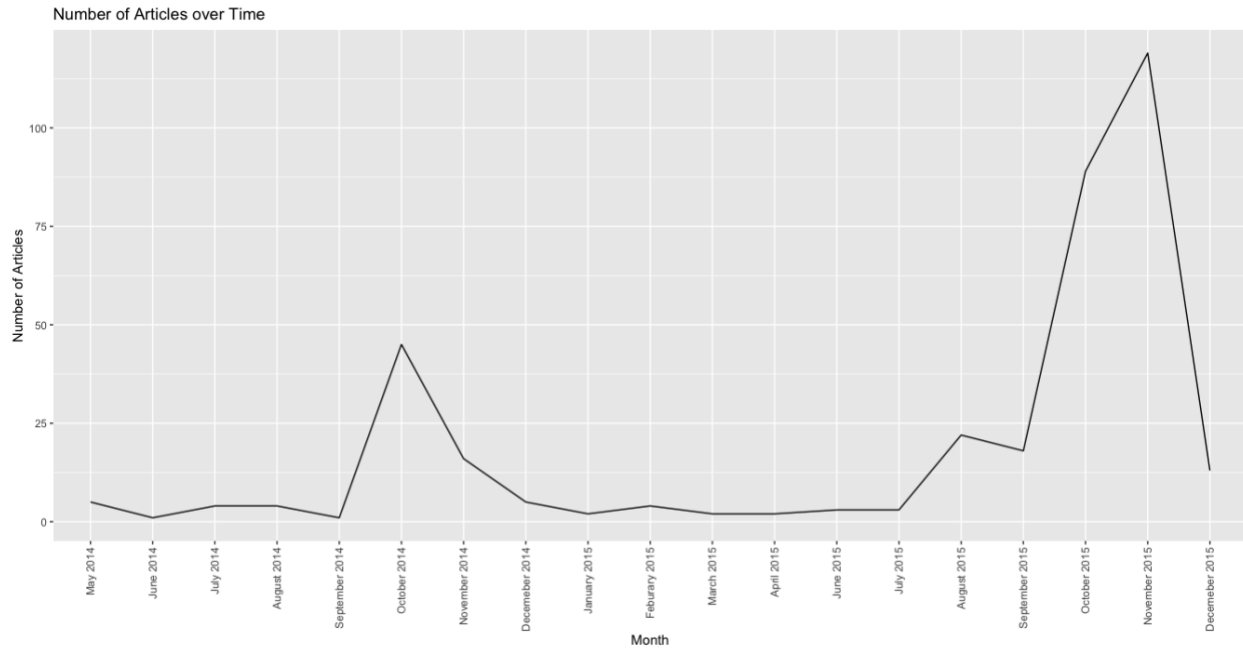## Figure 14: Number of Articles Over-time

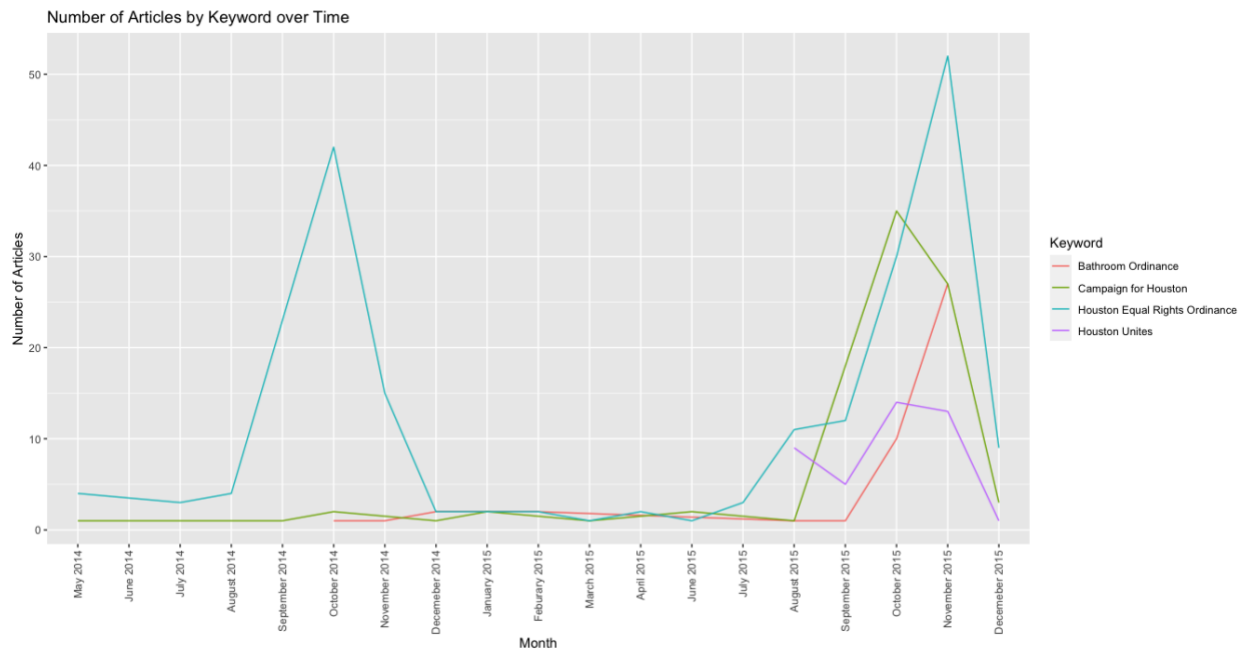## Figure 15: Number of Articles by Keyword Over-time

Figure 15 shows a similar pattern in which there are rapid increases and decreases among coverage of HERO. The number of articles by keyword graph tells us that the first newspaper article to refer to HERO as a "Bathroom Ordinance" appears in October 2014. The number of articles using the phrase "Bathroom Ordinance" increases suddenly in September 2015, yet it rapidly declined in November 2015. The keyword graph also illustrates when each of the two campaigns were created, with Campaign for Houston first appearing in May 2014, the month that HERO was originally passed. Unsurprisingly, Houston Unites did not appear until August 2015 when HERO was officially put on the general election ballot. Overall, the keyword graph indicates that most news articles refers to HERO as Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, not the Bathroom Ordinance.

Discussion

The attributional model of moral panics presented by Goode and Ben-Yehuda highlights four fundamental elements: concern, hostility, volatility and disproportionality. Unlike previous moral panic research that relied mainly on historical or qualitative methods to examine the rise and fall of a moral panic, this paper used a quantitative, textual analysis approach to determine the presences of these four core attributes. Using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count-22 (LIWC), this paper explored the tone, emotions, and moral justifications within the political discourse surrounding the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance from its creation by the Houston City Council in May 2014 through the lengthy legal battle to its eventual overturn by popular vote in the November 2015 general election. Newspaper articles (N= 358), campaign tweets (N= 617) and campaign video advertisement transcripts (N=29) served as instances of the public discourse around the ordinance.

Negative tone and anxiety served as measures of concern. The hybrid moral panic framework posits that during the creation of moral panic concern would increase over time as the moral entrepreneurs vilify, demonize and denounce the group they labeled as folk devils. Moral entrepreneurs using both traditional media as well as owned media push a narrative meant to evoke anxiety within the audience. The results indicated that the level of negative tone was dependent on the type of media (i.e. news article, tweet or transcript) in which campaign tweets had a greater negative tone than the other two types of texts. Unsurprisingly, a campaign level comparison of tweets showed that Campaign for Houston, the HERO opposition group, had a drastically more negative tone. The negative tone among the Campaign for Houston's tweets skyrocketed in the month before the election (see Figure 2). This reflected Campaign for Houston's function as a moral entrepreneur who decided not only who is immoral but also what actions were immoral. This negative tone with the campaign tweets can be attributed to Campaign for Houston using their Twitter account to urge Houston residents to "bring morals and common sense back to city hall" (Campaign for Houston, 2015) by voting no in the general election. The over-time analysis of negative tone highlighted that while Houston Unites' messaging on Twitter approached neutrality, Campaign for Houston's tone quickly became increasingly negative as election day approached.

Anxiety served as another measure of concern within the public discourse surrounding HERO. The results reflected Campaign for Houston's role in inducing anxiety within the public discourse. The tweets produced by Campaign for Houston were starkly more anxiety filled than the tweets created by Houston Unites. Figure 11 indicates Campaign for Houston's role in creating anxiety around HERO with the amount of anxiety increasing dramatically in October 2015.

Figure 11 also highlights another key component of a moral panic: volatility. Volatile coverage of folk devils' existence and their immoral actions is marked by a sudden eruption of coverage, yet this eruption is short-lived and temporally limited (Hier, 2008). The rapid increase in the amount of anxiety present within the text followed by an equal rapid decrease in anxiety indicates the volatility of the concern surrounding HERO. we also see a rapid increase followed by a rapid decrease in the amount of emotive moral justification used by Campaign for Houston highlighting volatility. A sudden increase in media coverage filled with concern, anxiety and anger followed by an equal rapid decrease in media coverage describes the events that unfolded between May 2014 and November 2015 over HERO. Figure 14 which illustrates the amount of news articles overall and by keyword highlight the volatile nature of the news coverage surrounding HERO. Sudden upticks in news coverage occur starting in August 2015, but this news coverage all but disappears after November 2015. Again, if the campaign against HERO reflected concern over an actual, persistent problem, expressions of concern would also be persistent; this is not what was observed. When examining emotions like anxiety and anger over time, we see a similar trend of rapid increases and decreases in the amount of these emotions within the texts. This rapid increase and decrease are a sure sign that a moral panic surrounding HERO occurred in 2015.

Hostility, the next key component of a moral panic, was measured through examining the anger as well as negative emotions found within the three types of texts. The labeling of a certain group as immoral folk devils whose behaviors threaten the current way of life produces a division among the public. An "us" versus "them" narrative emerges that situates the issue within the timeless "good" versus "evil" frame. This division sparks hostility from the "morally good" side as they resent the folk devils for threatening current societal norms, values and way

of life. The results indicated that anger was greater among news articles and video transcripts than it was among campaign tweets. In fact, the level of anger within the aggregated campaign tweets was basically none. However, the level of anger within the campaign tweets varies greatly when examining the tweets by party affiliation. Figure 10 illustrates the stark difference between the amount of anger within Campaign for Houston's tweets and Houston Unites' tweets in which Houston Unites contains barely any amount of anger while Campaign for Houston's tweets contain a comparatively great amount of anger. As the moral entrepreneurs within this moral panic, Campaign for Houston's materials having a greater amount of latent anger makes sense as this group is angry at HERO's passing as they believe it to be a dangerous law. Figure 10 also displays a similar trend in the volatility of anger within campaign tweets as well as video transcript than that of anxiety in which there appears to be a sudden increase in anger in the month before the election. However, this anger is not sustained throughout the election.

Negative emotions also stood as a measure of hostility. The first indication that a moral panic is afoot is presented in Table 17 which shows the average amount of both positive and negative emotions within each type of text. Table 17 highlights that on average within all forms of texts studied in this paper negative emotions were much more prevalent than positive emotions. The greater number of negative emotions aligns with increased hostility. The ANOVA findings indicate that the campaign tweets contained the greatest number of negative emotions compared to news articles and video transcripts. Surprisingly, negative emotions were not dependent on party affiliation. Negative emotions increased over time within both the campaign tweets and news articles. On the side of the moral entrepreneurs, this reflects the 'work' of the moral panic, inciting panic with fear- and anger-inducing language. On the part of the moral panic's victims, the increase in negative emotions likely reflects the tendency of the attacked

party to respond to their demonization. Reasonable responses to such demonization might include expressions of regret, anger, resentment, and fear, all of which would be manifest as negative emotional language.

Moral justifications used within each text over time were also examined. Claims about the morality of action spur from the moral entrepreneurs who use moral justification such as deontological, consequentialists and emotive moral justification to substantiate their vilification and demonization of a specific group of people. Deontological justifications are used to advocate for social control while consequentialist justifications describe the immoral behavior as a contagious disease that needs to be contained. Emotive moral justification highlight the emotionally charged rhetoric used to instill anger towards and anxiety about the immoral folk devils. Table 22 highlights the average use of each of the three moral justifications by text type in which deontological is used most within the news articles while consequentialist justifications are greatest among the video transcripts. While the findings about the different usage of deontological and consequentialist moral justifications within each text highlight different strategies for different media, the most interesting finding related to moral justifications is found within Figure 13. Figure 13 illustrates the use of emotive moral justifications over time by both Houston Unites and Campaign for Houston. Two things are clear. First, figure 13 highlights the limited use of emotive moral justifications by Houston Unites. Second, the figure shows a drastic increase in the amount of emotive moral justification within both Campaign for Houston's video transcripts and their campaign tweets. The use of emotive moral justification is an indication of Campaign for Houston attempting to spur an emotional response among its audience. Since one of the hallmarks of moral panics is the fact that emotions outweigh reason within people's

response to the issue, Campaign for Houston's use of emotive moral justification plays a role in making HERO a moral panic.

The results of this paper indicate that a moral panic surrounding the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance did take place from May 2014 to November 2015. Within this moral panic, the conservative right working through the Campaign for Houston organization served as the moral entrepreneurs framing HERO as a "Bathroom Bill" and labeling transgender individuals as immoral and folk devils. While the moral panic surrounding transgender bathroom access has subsided in recent years, new moral panics concerning transgender individuals have been on the rise since 2015. We have seen an increase in panic surrounding transgender youths' participation in sports and more recently about gender affirming care for transgender children. This paper provides a quantitative approach to studying aspects of moral panics which is notable absent from the literature. Moral panics are not going to stop any time soon because as one ends another one will begin which is why this topic is important for further research inquiries. More research should be conducted to explain the effects of moral panic-riddled texts on people's beliefs about and attitudes towards the group labeled as folk devils. Similarly, research should explore the disproportionally feature of moral panics in which the perceived threat is much greater than the actual threat.

The findings of this paper also revealed the differences that occurred by the type of media the claim-makers were using as their morality pulpit. Both Houston Unites and Campaign for Houston relied heavily on owned media (i.e. their tweets and video advertisements) to push the narrative that supports their agenda. Although traditional media was used to garner support or opposition for HERO, traditional media did not produce a strong leaning towards either of the viewpoints regarding HERO. Many of the over-time graphs showed relatively stable measures of

our variables of interests among newspaper articles compared to the both the tweets and video advertisements. Instead, Campaign for Houston and Houston Unites relied heavily on their self-created content to produce or pushback against the moral panic. The results indicate that moral panics are no longer being driven primarily by traditional media coverage of socially deviant groups.

While Cohen as well as Goode and Ben-Yehuda's moral panic frameworks contributed immensely to the literature, the frameworks fail to incorporate today's fragmented media landscape. Cohen's model of moral panic relies heavily on moral entrepreneurs' use of mass broadcasting (1972). Similarly, Goode and Ben-Yehuda emphasizes that moral entrepreneurs tend to be individuals who "work in close relation with mass-media institutions to establish a preferred position in, and gain control over, media narratives and public claims-making" (Hier, 2019). Within both these frameworks, traditional mass media takes center stage as either an agent of or accomplice to the creation, dissemination or amplification of moral panics. However, the media landscape has changed drastically since the creation of these two moral panic frameworks. Media fragmentation combined with the rise of digital communities and social media dismember the elite-driven moral panics of the past and enable the construction of grassroots moral panics. In their critique of the current moral panic frameworks, McRobbie and Thornton (1995) argue that "the traditional theoretical models are outdated in so far as they could not possibly take account of the labyrinthine web of determining relations which now exist between social groups and the media" (p.560). As such, moral panic researchers must recognize the profound effect that social media has on not only moral panic creation but also who serve as the moral claim-makers in these social media produced moral panics. Social media enables any individual with access to the internet to be a moral entrepreneur. The rise of social media has

altered the one-way flow of information and power (Falkof, 2020), stripping the elites of some portion of their power over the media and distributing that power among ordinary citizens. The platform features and affordances of social media sites enable the proliferation of key moral panic concept such as increased online shaming for minor moral transgressions (Ingraham and Reeves, 2016), increased awareness of societal changes which spur moral backlash (Walsh, 2020) and facilitation of intolerance and hostility (Murthy, 2013). Overall, the shift in the media landscape indicates that the next moral panic will arise from social media sites before spreading into the traditional media system. As such, researchers need to examine more in-depth the role social media plays in platforming moral entrepreneurs and creating moral panics.

Despite a more limited role due to social media, journalistic practices still play a foundational role in the creation of moral panics. In McRobbie and Thornton's (1995) moral panic critique, the authors hypothesize that moral panics were at first an unintended consequence of journalist practices, but now moral panics seem to be the goal. The profit motivations driving current day journalism lays the foundation for journalists to assist in the creation of moral panic as these emotional salient articles become "click-bait" thus producing not only a greater affective response in the audiences but also a larger amount of sales (Vaidhyanathan, 2018). Working on even tighter budgets and deadlines than the 1990s, journalists and news organizations today depend more heavily on information produced by the claim makers themselves in the form of sound bites or op-ed articles.

One journalistic practice ripe for investigation when it comes to examining the role journalist currently play in provoking moral panics: digital spillover. Digital spillovers occur when journalist report on an event that happened online as they believe it to have news value. This type of journalism typically occurs following an "online firestorm" in which "a "sudden

discharge of large quantities of messages containing negative word-of-mouth and complaint behavior against a person, company, or group in social media networks" (Pfeffer et al., 2014, p. 118). Some researchers today might consider online firestorms to be an integral part of "cancel culture" (Costa, 2022) but also their own type of moral panic (Johnen et. al, 2017). One recent example of an online firestorm is intense online backlash and product boycott of Bud Light after the organization partnered with Dylan Mulvaney, a transgender influencer. Digital spillovers amplify moral panics as even though journalists are just reporting on the controversy, in doing so they regurgitate the rhetoric of the moral entrepreneurs. While some digital spillovers attempt to rectify the incorrect information, the fact that the articles reproduce the harmful, misinformed narratives about the folk devils prior to correcting them might create "belief echoes" (Thorson, 2016) allowing for the audience to retain some of their negative attitudes towards the deviant group. Since moral panics are more likely than not to occur online and journalists are increasingly utilizing digital spillovers to produce content, more research needs to be conducted on how journalists can report on the controversy without instilling negative beliefs about the targeted folk devils. While few moral panics have long-term consequences for society, all moral panics provide real-world problems for the folk devils at the center of the moral panic. Journalists must do a better job in their coverage of these kinds of issues moving forward. Moreover, researchers need to investigate the effects of current journalistic practices on creating and amplifying moral panics. It is not enough to report that the deviant behavior is not actually happening and that the threat is overblown.

References:

Balch, A., & Balabanova, E. (2016). Ethics, politics and migration: Public debates on the free movement of Romanians and Bulgarians in the UK, 2006–2013. *Politics*, *36*(1), 19-35.

Bantum, E. O. C., & Owen, J. E. (2009). Evaluating the validity of computerized content analysis programs for identification of emotional expression in cancer narratives. *Psychological assessment*, *21*(1), 79.

Boyd, R. L., Ashokkumar, A., Seraj, S., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2022). The development and psychometric properties of LIWC-22. *Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin*, 1-47.

Campaign for Houston [@nohoustonprop1]. (2015, October 17). Bringing morals and common sense back to city hall #houvote #houdecide #votenoprop1 [Tweet]. Twitter.

Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers.* Routledge.

Costa, C. S. G. D. (2022). *Cancel culture: what does it mean for a brand to be cancelled?* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Minho Library. https://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt/handle/1822/81637

Davis, S. (Director). (1961). *Boys Beware* [Film]. Sid Davis Productions.

Driessen, K. (2015). "Anti-HERO campaign releases new ad, recycles bathroom clip." *HoustonChronicle*. https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/houston/article/Anti-HERO-campaign-releases-new-ad-recycles-6636335.php

Falkof, N. (2020). On moral panic: Some directions for further development. Critical Sociology, 46(2), 225-239.

Frank, G. (2015). "Stalling Civil Rights: Conservative Sexual Thought has been in the Toilet Since the 1940s" *NOTCHES.*

Garber, M. B. (2011). Vested Interests: Cross Dressing & Cultural Anxiety. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.

Goode, E., Ben-Yuheda, N. (1994). *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. Macmillan Education UK, 1978

Harwell, D. Z. (2016). *Wednesdays in Mississippi: Proper Ladies Working for Radical Change, Freedom Summer 1964*. University Press of Mississippi

Haworth, A., & Manzi, T. (1999). Managing the'underclass': Interpreting the moral discourse of

housing management. *Urban studies*, *36*(1), 153-165.

Herek, G. (2018). Facts About Homosexuality and Child Molestation.

Herman, P. A. (2005). From the Fairy to the Social Vagrant: The Making of the Homosexual Menacne, 1895-1918. Stanford University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing

Hier, S. P. (2008). Thinking beyond moral panic: Risk, responsibility, and the politics of moralization. Theoretical Criminology, 12(2), 173-190.

Hier, S. (2019). Moral panics and digital-media logic: Notes on a changing research agenda. *Crime, media, culture*, *15*(2), 379-388.

Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (2014) City of Houston, Texas, Ordinance No. 2014-530

Ingraham, C., & Reeves, J. (2016). New media, new panics. *Critical studies in media communication*, *33*(5), 455-467.

Johnen M, Jungblut M and Ziegele M (2017) The digital outcry: What incites participation behavior in an online firestorm. New Media and Society 20(9): 3140–3160.

Kahn, J. H., Tobin, R. M., Massey, A. E., & Anderson, J. A. (2007). Measuring emotional expression with the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count. The American journal of psychology, 120(2), 263-286.

Klocke, B.V. and Muschert, G.W. (2010), A Hybrid Model of Moral Panics: Synthesizing the Theory and Practice of Moral Panic Research. Sociology Compass, 4: 295-309. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2010.00281.x

Kogan, T. (2007). Sex-Separation Public Restrooms: Law, Architecture, and Gender. 14 MICH. J. GENDER & L. 1.

Kirchick, J. (2022). The Long, Sordid History of the Gay Conspiracy Theory Today's right-wing campaign against "groomers" is America's latest moral panic. *Intelligencer NYMag*

Lowder, J.B. (2015) Outward: "This Anti-HERO Ad Is the Definition of Transphobia." *Slate* https://slate.com/human-interest/2015/10/hero-trans-bathroom-battle-campaign-for-houston-ad-is-most-transphobic-yet.html

McRobbie, A., & Thornton, S. L. (1995). Rethinking'moral panic'for multi-mediated social worlds. *British journal of sociology*, 559-574.

Morris, M. (2014a). "Mayor's Plan Allows Fines for Bias." Houston Chronicle, April 22, 3 STAR edition.

Murthy D (2013) Twitter. London: Polity Press.

Pfeffer, J., Zorbach, T., & Carley, K. M. (2014). Understanding online firestorms: Negative word-of-mouth dynamics in social media networks. *Journal of marketing communications*, *20*(1-2), 117-128.

Senelick, L. (1993). The Homosexual as Villain and Victim in Fin-de-Siècle Drama. Journal of the History of Sexuality, 4(2), 201–229. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3704288

Stryker, S. (2017). Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution. Seal Press.

Thompson, M.M. & Zanna, M. P. (1995). The Conflicted Individual: Personality-Based and Domain Specific Antecedents of Ambivalent Social Attitudes. Journal of Personality, 63(2), 259–288. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1995.tb00810.x

Thorson, E. (2016). Belief echoes: The persistent effects of corrected misinformation. *Political Communication*, *33*(3), 460-480.

Vaidhyanathan S (2018) Antisocial Media. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Walsh, J. P. (2020). Social media and moral panics: Assessing the effects of technological change on societal reaction. International Journal of Cultural Studies, 23(6), 840-859.

Young, N. J. (2016). "How the Bathroom Wars Shaped America It's not just North Carolina. Some of America's great political struggles have pivoted around who uses which toilet." *Politico*