"It's Funny to Hear a Female Talk About Routes": Social Media Reaction to Cam Newton's Comments About a Woman Reporter

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In October 2017, NFL quarterback Cam Newton made a sexist comment at woman reporter Jourdan Rodrigue. The next day, racist tweets from Rodrigue's past were discovered. This research examines the evolution of the social media discourse on Twitter regarding Newton's comments and then Rodrigue's past. The order of the events created a conflict between race and gender on Twitter from social media users. Using network framing, results demonstrate that the tone varied based on the gender of the user and the time frame in which it was sent.

Keywords: gender, football, racism, framing, NFL

In October of 2017, *The Charlotte Observer*'s Carolina Panthers beat reporter, a woman named Jourdan Rodrigue, asked Panthers' quarterback Cam Newton about the recent play of wide receiver Devin Funchess and the "physicality of his routes." Newton laughed and responded, "It's funny to hear a female talk about routes. It's funny" (Vrentas, 2017). Reaction from media members throughout the United States was swift and almost universally negative towards Newton. Rodrigue's colleague at *The Charlotte Observer*, Scott Fowler, wrote, "It wasn't funny at all. To state the obvious, this is 2017, and not 1967" (Fowler, 2017, para. 4). Newton was labeled a "sexist" and a "jerk," and even an NFL spokesman called the comments "just plain wrong and disrespectful" (Fowler, 2017, para. 15; Grossman, 2017, para. 1; Perez, 2017, para. 5; Vrentas, 2017, para. 15). Meanwhile, Rodrigue herself tweeted, "I don't think it's 'funny' to be a female and talk about routes. I think it's my job" (Rodrigue, 2017a). Two days after the comments,

Newton issued a video apology in which he said, "My word choice was extremely degrading and disrespectful toward women" and "If you are a person who took offense to what I said, I sincerely apologize to you" (Newton, 2017).

In the days following Newton's comments and apology, Twitter posts written by Rodrigue from 2012 and 2013 were uncovered that contained racist language and references to racist jokes told by her father (Alexander, 2017). This time, it was the writer who issued the apology, as Rodrigue tweeted, "There is no excuse for these tweets and the sentiment behind them. I am deeply sorry and apologize" (Rodrigue, 2017b). Three days later, Rodrigue was not in Detroit for the next Panthers game, and *The Charlotte Observer*'s executive sports editor Mike Persinger said that Rodrigue was "taking some time off" (Newton, 2017, para. 9). On the same day in which she returned to the beat, October 19, Newton, for the first time in his career, did not show up for his mandatory weekly news conference with the media, fueling speculation that he did not appear because Rodrigue had returned (Breech, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to examine online reaction to Newton's initial comments and the discovery of Rodrigue's past tweets the next day. While previous research has examined race and the feminist movement (Loza, 2014) and how women and minorities are treated on Twitter (Ash, Sanderson, Kumanyika, & Gramlich, 2017), this research is one of the first to explore the online reaction following a conflict between different races and genders on Twitter. Due to the fact that Rodrigue is a White woman in a male-dominated profession, covering male athletes, with a passionate male fanbase, – and Newton is a star Black quarterback – it is worth examining how both were perceived by men and women over the two-day period. Twitter posts from both days were collected and analyzed to create themes and categories to show the evolution of online sentiment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women in Sports Journalism

The sports and media industries have engaged in a symbiotic relationship that traces back to the American Industrial Revolution according to some scholars (Gorn & Goldstein, 2013; McChesney, 1989) and the American colonial era according to others (Bryant & Holt, 2009). This relationship has had longstanding social and economic

ramifications for sports and media. Just as whatever happens to sports affects media, and vice-versa, the invisibility of women on the court, rink, and field, in various ways, has negatively impacted the visibility of women in the broadcast booth and at the editor's desk, and vice-versa. Women have long been – and remain – at the margins of sports media. This is in spite of the 1972 passage of Title IX, which has increased women's access to – and interest in – organized athletics (Cahn, 1994; Schell & Rodriguez, 2000; Snyder, 1994).

The marginalization of women in sports media is evident in the relatively small amounts of television airtime given to women's sports (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015; Creedon, 1994; Duncan, Jensen, & Messner, 1993; Eastman & Billings, 2000; Messner, Duncan & Cooky, 2003; Tuchman, 1979); the inferior descriptions, production values, and publicity given to televised women's sports (Duncan & Messner, 1998; Musto, Cooky, & Messner, 2017); the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity by the sports section of *The Associated Press Stylebook* (Bien-Aime, 2016) and sports journalism textbooks (Hardin, Dodd & Lauffer, 2006); the cross-linguistic trivialization of the female athlete's body (Ponterotto, 2014); and the small number of women in prominent sports journalism roles (Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; Papper, 2005; Sports Business News, 2015). These phenomena are all relevant to the extent that they contribute to women's perceived inferiority in sports media, a taken-for-granted assumption that perhaps formed the basis of Newton's response to Rodrigue.

Women in sports journalism have also faced a slew of challenges, leaving them to navigate double standards in the newsroom (Sheffer & Shultz, 2007) and to feel the weight of having to constantly prove their sports knowledge (Hardin & Shain, 2006). Ordman & Zillman (1994) studied perceptions of male and female reporter commentaries of collegiate men's basketball and women's gymnastics through print and radio, concluding, "[G]ender is an asset for a man seeking acceptance as an expert sports reporter but a liability for a woman" (p. 74). Similarly, Etling and Young (2007) conducted a study that measured the extent to which there is a sex bias as it relates to announcer authoritativeness – or expertise – among sports television viewers. The male announcer in the study was rated as exhibiting higher levels of authoritativeness. Etling and Young's 2007 study did not show the male and female announcers on camera, thereby precluding any correlation to

their attractiveness. However, Davis and Krawczyk (2010) conducted such a study and found attractiveness to be positively correlated with competence, expertness, dynamism, and trustworthiness, *except* when sportscasters are *highly attractive*, in which case female sportscasters face backlash for their extraordinary appearance. Perhaps most surprising about this collection of literature is that, in these three studies, women found the male journalists to have more expertise and be more competent and persuasive than men did, suggesting that women sports media consumers have internalized the marginalization of women in sports media. This literature is relevant to the study because it demonstrates social and industrial biases against women in sports journalism, all of which call into question their competence, credibility, and authority – much in the same way Newton did in response to Rodrigue's question about pass patterns.

Media Framing Theory

Media framing has evolved as numerous scholars, including Goffman (1974), Entman (1993), and Lind and Salo (2002) have offered various conceptualizations of the theory. Although the concept of media framing has evolved, at its core, it has long been understood as a framework through which scholars can study the way the news and sports media highlight certain aspects of an item or event to make them more salient. As a result of the framing process, media organizations report news items so that particular aspects of those items are more "noticeable, meaningful or memorable to the audience" than others (Entman, 1993). Framing can have a profound impact on media consumers insofar as a frame establishes the paradigm through which the audience understands the event that has been reported (Kuypers, 2002). Also, as it relates to the literature above, the framing of the Newton/Rodrigue case may serve as a normalization or repudiation of the assumption that women possess inferior sports knowledge, of racism, or some combination of the two.

As it relates to framing within sports media, the literature shows that linguistic framing of news stories concerning criminal acts by athletes can affect the way media consumers perceive those athletes (Seate et al., 2010). It has also been found that the media are more likely to focus on individual athletes whenever a team wins a sporting event, identifying heroes in this scenario while choosing to focus on the team's collective failure when it loses (Diana-Luiza, 2013). A large portion of sports media framing

literature is also focused on the ways in which the media practice gendered framing of athletes. Male and female sports writers frame male and female athletes differently (Kian & Hardin, 2009), to the extent that male sports writers are more likely to emphasize the athletic prowess of men while choosing to focus on female athletes' interpersonal relationships. Female sports writers are less likely to practice this framing technique. Smith (2014) found different media frames surrounding the removal of softball and baseball from the Olympic Games. The U.S. Softball Team was framed as being too dominant, thus receiving the blame for the removal of softball, while the U.S. Baseball Team was viewed as not dominant enough. Other studies (Bissell & Duke, 2007; Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Duncan & Messner, 1998; Halbert & Latimer, 1994) have parsed the language used by reporters and commentators that reinforces the male hegemony that pervades sports media. The NCAA itself—through its *NCAA News* publication—has also been found to frame its mediated stories in ways that are biased in the favor of male athletes (Cunningham et al., 2004).

While the traditional media has been studied frequently in regards to framing, Nisbet (2010) indicated the need for increased examination of bottom-up framing on social media. In this context, it is the producers of the online content who are doing the framing. Framing from this bottom-up perspective has provided increased awareness regarding social issues (Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012). Meraz and Papacharissi (2013) found that frames will rise to prominence through crowdsourcing practices, and are then reframed to remain relevant in the minds of the audience. This process is known as networked framing. Bottom-up framing research in the world of sports has examined how the audience can shape narratives around major sporting events. Researchers have determined that fans have used social media to discuss riots following the Stanley Cup Finals (Burch, Frederick, & Pegoraro, 2015), the death of a race car driver (Frederick, Stocz, & Pegoraro, 2016), a women's football league (Frederick, Pegoraro, & Burch, 2017), the Olympics (Blaszka, Frederick, Newman, & Pegoraro, 2016; Frederick, Pegoraro, & Burch, 2016), and national anthem protests before sporting events (Schmidt, Frederick, Pegoraro, & Spencer, 2018). In all these studies, the social media discussion helped to shape the online narrative surrounding the events. This study aims to add to that literature, while also introducing

gender and racial components to the body of research. The following research question was employed:

> **RQ₁:** How did individuals frame the comments made by Cam Newton and the tweets sent by Jourdan Rodrigue?

METHODS

To answer the RQ, social media data extraction software Sysomos was used to collect tweets that mentioned Jourdan Rodrigue or her Twitter handle @jourdanrodrigue from October 4 and October 5, 2017. Sysomos MAP is analytic software that has the capability to extract data from Twitter including demographic information (Dennis, O'Loughlin, & Gillespie, 2015). The data set collected was first cleaned to remove unreadable text that results when emojis or other image-based text is converted during extraction. The second step involved removing all retweeted and quoted tweets. This was done to remove noise in the data and ensure that just organic content was analyzed. This resulted in a data set of 9,289 tweets for October 4 and 23,455 for October 5. Sysomos collects additional data for each tweet, including the Twitter name of each user and the gender of that user in the data set. To ensure that the gender recorded by the software was reliable, the researchers selected 200 tweets randomly from each data set and used the Twitter name to manually code the gender as presented by the user. The researchers visited each Twitter account, read the Twitter biography, and analyzed the profile picture provided for each user in the 200 tweet sets to then assign a gender to the user. This manual coding check demonstrated that the software was correct in assigning gender 92% of the time, and the researchers deemed this 8% error rate to be acceptable for the study.

To analyze the content of the tweets in both data sets by date and by gender, the qualitative software Leximancer was used. Leximancer conducts thematic and semantic analysis on text-based data (Bals, Campbell, & Pitt, 2012) in two stages, characterized as conceptual extraction or the determination of dominant themes, followed by relational extraction, which involves the mapping of relationships of the themes against each other (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). Leximancer, through its automated analysis, generates a concept list (i.e. descriptors) that is statistically reliable and reproducible, as it was

generated from the input text itself, whereas the generation of lists manually requires checks for coding reliability and validity (Angus, Rintel, & Wiles, 2013).

Leximancer produces a conceptual map as the primary output that identifies and situates the dominant themes contained within the textual data set. The relative importance of the word descriptors or concepts is determined based on where the words on the concept map appear (Bals et al., 2012). Therefore, in the output concept map, words representative of the top themes appear closer to the center of the map, while those that are less important are located on the periphery. Concepts that are strongly semantically linked appear near each other, and possibly overlap, while concepts that are not semantically linked are further away on the map. In addition, the output is also heat mapped, which identifies the emergent themes' importance in the text. The top theme is red, followed by bronze, and then gold. The themes on the periphery are cooler in color, light blue and purple, for example. Leximancer also allows the identification of file tags to show which text is associated with which tags. These tags can relate to any aspect of the data, such as, dates, separate data files, gender of Twitter users, and any other data point collected.

Sports communication scholars have used Leximancer to investigate how social media users respond to events as they unfold in the digital world. Billings, Burch, and Zimmerman (2014) utilized Leximancer to determine differences in tweet content from a nationalistic perspective during the 2014 World Cup, while Pegoraro et al. (2015) utilized the software to analyze the hijacking of a sponsorship activation program on Twitter during the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games. Frederick et al. (2016) analyzed the content produced by Twitter users on the hashtag #sochiproblems during the 2014 Winter Olympic Games.

Leximancer as a qualitative analysis software provides several advantages, one of which is that it can analyze vast sets of texts that contain a large number of concepts, making it an effective tool to analyze large sets of social media posts (Bals et al., 2012). However, Neuendorf (2002) stated that one cannot rely on a computer alone, and that human contributions to data analysis are paramount. Therefore, for this study, the researchers viewed and extensively discussed the thematic results from the Leximancer analysis through a thorough examination of the long lists of descriptors and posts within

each of the themes and gender subgroups to fully understand both what was being discussed and also the sentiment of the discussion. This addressed the possible limitations of computer coding and any issues related to coding for the context of content (Macnamara, 2005). Once a complete understanding of the themes was attained, the researchers reduced the themes into frames. This is commonly referred to as axial coding in traditional textual analysis, the process by which themes are regrouped or reduced based upon similar dimensions (Saldana, 2009). Through the utilization of this two-step approach (i.e. human coding and computer coding), the researchers were able to examine a large data set while also being able to examine smaller sets of the data to ensure that a complete and thorough analysis was conducted.

RESULTS

Through the Leximancer analysis process, the results were divided into two different days, October 4, 2017 (when Newton made his comments in the press conference) and October 5, 2017 (when Rodrigue's racist tweets were revealed). Concepts from Twitter for each day were then analyzed by gender of the Twitter user.

October 4, 2017: Newton's press conference comments to Rodrigue

On the day Cam Newton said that women talking about football players running routes was "funny," both male and female Twitter users expressed disappointment in the Carolina Panthers star. The media was framing Newton as the one in the wrong, and the online community primarily agreed. Many attempted to write directly at the quarterback through his username @CameronNewton. These comments included, "you are my quarterback and a great person in our community, but you were really disrespectful to @JourdanRodrigue today." The Leximancer thematic map for October 4 is provided in Figure 1.

The two most discussed concepts that day from female Twitter users about the incident were "women" and "job," implying that Rodrigue was a woman simply trying to do her job. Specific tweets from female users demonstrated a sense of unity among the women. In response to a comment about Cam's laughter, one wrote, "Or perhaps treating women w/respect & professionalism in the work place?" Other comments aimed directly at Rodrigue included, "keep doing what you do," "You're doing a great job and it's irrelevant

what your gender is," and "Keep doing work sister." Others noted that Rodrigue, a female in a male-dominated profession, likely already had it difficult: "Props to you all for doing great work in challenging environments."
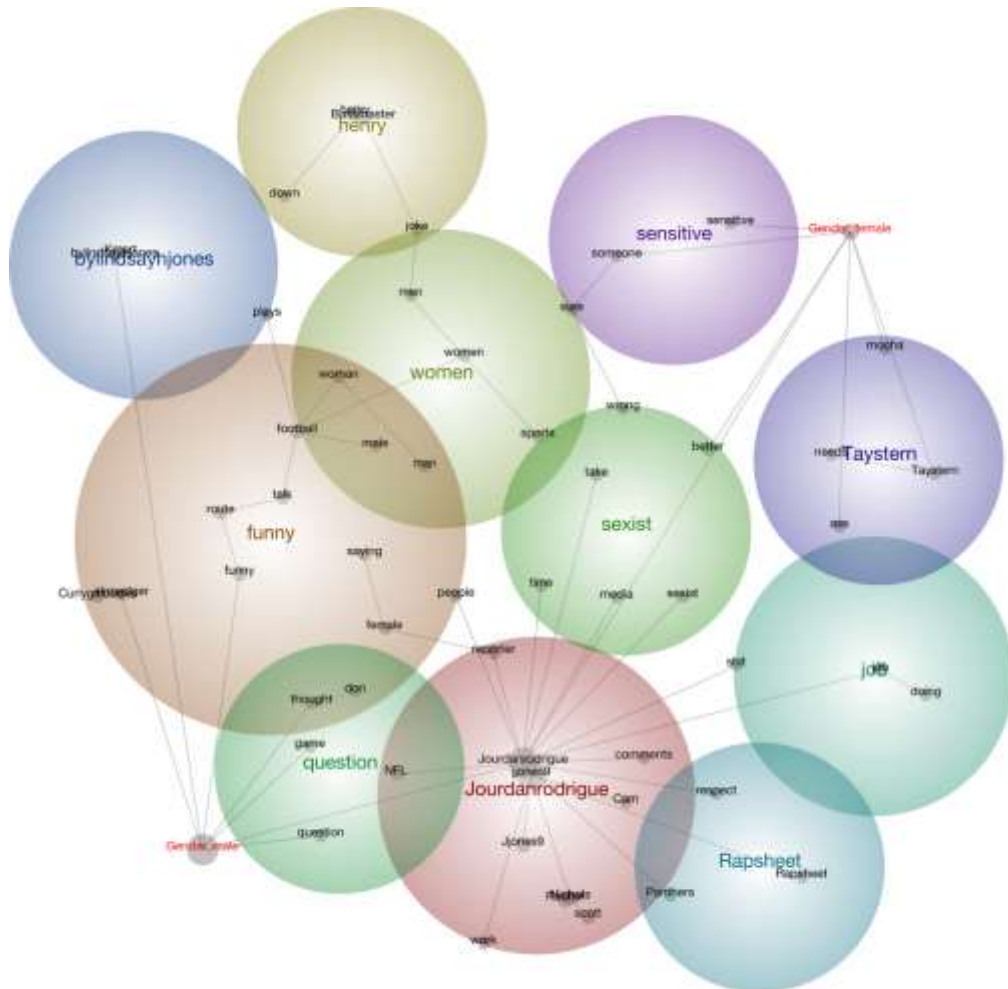

Figure 1. Leximancer themes for October 4, 2017.

Rodrigue's football knowledge, and in turn, the football knowledge of all women, also became a popular topic. The concepts of "women and football" appeared in many of the tweets from women creating an emerging theme from the data. Tweets included: "Some guys just can't handle it when women know football!," "There are women (me included) that have been watching football long before Cam was born," and "Cam Newton is a jerk that can't respect women that actually understand the game better than he does. RESPECT." However, many men took the opportunity to question Rodrigue's knowledge of

the game. Some commented that it was indeed "funny" for her to ask about specific plays because there are no professional female football players: "might be because every NFL route run, passed to, defended, game-planned, or coached never involved a female," "How female route runners are there in the NFL?," and "When's the last time you seen a female running routes in an NFL game?"

For the males on Twitter, the top concept discussed in relation to the case was the idea of the "route," demonstrating a thematic focus on the football aspect of the comments. When linked with the concept of "female," the male Twitter users approached the topic from a variety of angles. Many came to the defense of the Panthers' quarterback, pointing out that, in their opinion, Newton was correct – there are not a lot of women who discuss football. Tweets included: "OMG He thought it was funny cuz MOST women don't talk routes" and "If your mom came into the room talking about check down, out routes & slants, you'd laugh or at least be caught off guard."

Other men appeared to defend Newton, but did not justify or agree with the comments. One wrote: "Cam should have rephrased what he said. Instead of females talking route running as comical, Jourdan Rodrigue talking route running is comical." Another tweeted: "I'm sure he doesn't get a lot of female reporters talking specific wide receiver routes unless they really study." Men did also show outrage at Newton's laughter: "Super disappointed with Cam's comment" and "Yea, my wife and daughter talk routes too."

Another common response from male Twitter users was that Rodrigue and other female Twitter users were blowing the incident out of proportion. Female Twitter users (including Rodrigue) who talked about the comment were told to "Relax," "Get the fuck over it," and "Stop trying to turn this into something it's not."

October 5, 2017: Rodrigue's racist tweets are revealed

While the narrative surrounding Rodrigue would shift later in the day, many females were still supporting her the day after Newton's press conference. The combination of the categories "Cam" and "sexist" revealed a large number of women who were still angered by the incident: "Shame on Cam for saying something sexist in this situation," "Don't you also love how Cam being sexist gets written off as his lack of maturity?," and "Beyond disturbed by

@CameronNewton disgusting, cocky, and demeaning attitude and remark." The Leximancer thematic map for October 5 is provided in Figure 2.

The day after Newton's press conference, Rodrigue's previous tweets in which she used racial slurs and described her father making racist jokes were discovered by an unknown Twitter user. While Newton's comments were still a part of the online discussion, a new component appeared. The online conversation shifted from a focus on gender to one about race, as the theme of "racist" became one of the most populated concepts of the day. Many users were quick to point out that, in their opinion, Rodrigue's comments were more offensive than what Newton had said before. Following Rodrigue's tweet in which she apologized for the tweets, users sent messages saying, "Your white ass ain't sorry," "Apologies like this only work for other white folks because we know you truly don't mean it," and "How s that saying go, you shouldn't throw stones when you're a white chick dropping N bombs?" Even some women, who strongly came to Rodrigue's defense the day before, began distancing themselves from Rodrigue: "Looks like she has her own issues with racism."
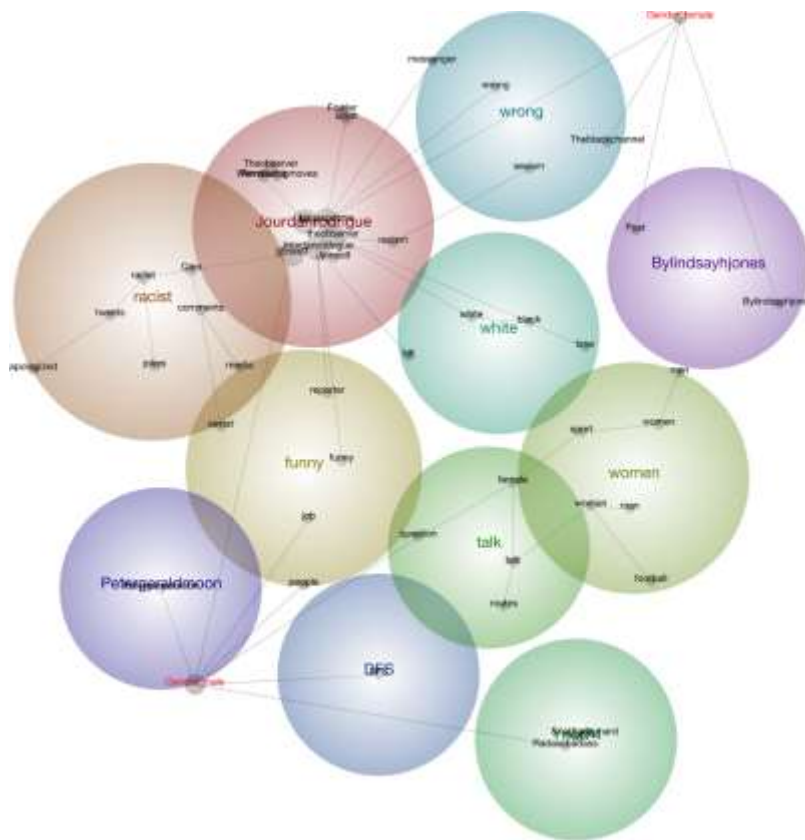

Figure 2. Leximancer themes for October 5, 2017.

For males, the concepts of "tweets" and "media" were highly populated. A closer look at the tweets in this joint concept revealed that the media was being blamed for not vilifying Rodrigue for her comments as strongly as Newton was the day before. Comments included: "All these media peeps who were fake outraged over Cam's sexist comment yesterday are completely silent about @JourdanRodrigue racist tweets" and "Shame on the media for their one sided reporting on Cam's comment & turning a blind eye to @JourdanRodrigue tweets loving her dad's racism."

Also on October 5, *The Charlotte Observer*'s Scott Fowler wrote a column supporting Rodrigue. This story framed Newton's comments as "inexcusable" (Fowler, 2017, para. 1) and received a great deal of positive attention from females, becoming one of the most tweeted-about events of the day. Comments included: "What he said is wrong and sexist." Even after her tweets were revealed, someone wrote "what she says wrong, doesn't make what he said right." However, not everyone was supportive: "Apply the same critical lens to @JourdanRodrigue as you did to @CameronNewton IN PRINT."

While the column was mostly receiving praise, her newspaper, *The Charlotte Observer*, earned negative attention. Many users, both male and female, called for the newspaper to punish Rodrigue for her comments. The hashtag #FireJourdanRodrigue appeared on some feeds, with one user writing, "It is time for @theobserver to fire her for her overtly racist comments." Another directed a tweet at the newspaper's account: "Now that I see your standards of employment I'll think I'll be canceling." Others felt that it was not fair that Newton was facing the brunt of the public outcry (including losing an endorsement deal with yogurt company Dannon), while Rodrigue was seemingly going unpunished: "So can @theobserver explain how @JourdanRodrigue can make racist tweets and its all good but @CameronNewton makes a joke and he out here losing endorsements."

Another theme that emerged during October 5 was the idea that, essentially, everyone involved in the situation was at fault: both Newton for his "funny" comment and Rodrigue for her past tweets. Instead of separating the two into a right and wrong side, many now put them together on the wrong side. Comments included: "We can gather up Jourdan Rodrigue for her racists tweets AND Cam Newton for his sexist comments," "If you were calling for #CamNewton to apologize for his comments use that same energy with Jourdan Rodrigue racist tweets," and "I don t care if they're 4 years old or 4 hours

old, neither Jourdan Rodrigue nor Cam Newton should be allowed to skate on their comments."

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine online discourse from a "bottom-up" approach; in this case, how Twitter users framed the discussion surrounding the Rodrigue and Newton fallout, especially as more information became available. The analysis reveals how frames emerged from social network users that shifted the discussion away from gender and sexism to racial issues. These results provide evidence that suggests for women, sports media can be an inhospitable space. Female sports reporters operate under little margin of error, and missteps, especially those involving race, are used as rhetorical instruments to discredit female journalists.

It is evident that, for many users, Newton's comments met their basic definition of sexism. But as the story grew in notoriety, more male users came to his defense by either downplaying Newton's comments or criticizing other posters who called the comments sexist.

As for Rodrigue, she was initially supported by mostly female users, but that support dissipated as her past racial tweets were revealed during the second day of the controversy. At that point, she fell under fire by nearly everyone. The core of the discussion quickly shifted away from how a quarterback in the National Football League addressed a female member of the media to her past indiscretions on Twitter. Race became the topic de jour rather than gender. Yet, as others have observed, Rodrigue's past tweets had little bearing on the ethical discussion of Newton's sexist comment; however, that discussion faded from the public conscience, reframed by users' perception of racial injustice. Rodrigue's case demonstrates the power of networked framing: a topic surged to the top of the discussion—powered by comments, retweets, or shares—and therein overwhelmed other voices and reframed the original discussion to the newly emergent ideas.

The study highlights the difficulties female sports journalists face. As outlined in the literature review, female sports journalists routinely operate in the margins of sports media and few are given the opportunity to work in high profile jobs. In Rodrigue's case,

working as a beat writer for an NFL franchise qualifies as a higher profile position, and the latitude for missteps may have been less forgiving than her male peers. Support for her position, even before her racial tweets were discovered, was mixed but almost instantly evaporated as the news spread through social networks. Perhaps if something similar occurred with male sports journalists, there would still be some support or a quicker acceptance of an apology for posting something in the distant past. For Rodrigue, there was little support remaining or a rationalization by her initial supporters. These struggles reinforce existing literature on the challenges facing female sports journalists and how forgiving the public might be towards them.

Interestingly, the study also showed the intolerance the online community has toward racial indiscretions – more so than sexism. Newton, despite his comments, maintained some support from users. However, Rodrigue's inappropriate tweets, long buried on her Twitter account and having little bearing on the current discussion, subsumed all other discourse surrounding the situation. During the second day of the controversy, the users seemingly pitted the two ideas against each other—race versus gender—with the public weighing race as the greater wrongdoing. Rodrigue was stripped of her credibility in the eyes of some users and was identified as "having issues." Eventually, there appeared to be some balance as the controversy entered its final stages. Some users admonished both Newton and Rodrigue for their comments and asked that both seek public remediation. However, this too is troubling for female sports reporters. If their past missteps are given equal equivalence to current crisis, it only magnifies the pressure placed on them and distracts from core issues.

Using feminist theory as a guide, it is apparent that gender inequality in the world of sports is not a topic that journalists or fans appear to be interested in fixing. Women's sports get less coverage in the media (Cooky et al., 2015), causing female athletes to remain on the periphery of the sports landscape, even among female sports fans (Whiteside & Hardin, 2011). This leads to discrimination against female athletes among sports fans. However, due to the large number of minority athletes who are showcased in the sports media on a daily basis, fans appear to be more willing to protect their favorite minority athletes. This leads to an increased anger towards racism from the sport fans. In this study, Newton's sexist comments were met with disappointment, but were quickly

brushed to the side by outrage over Rodrigue's racist tweets. Newton's comments did not become less sexist in a day. Instead, the public simply found something that was more offensive to them. Without increased exposure for women's sports, reaction to sexism against women in the sports media will remain apathetic at best from the general public.

Returning to network framing, the analysis of the controversy delineates how network framing shifts as new topics and discussion points arise within online discourse. As scholars have suggested, framing lenses can be reshaped from the "bottom-up" or, in other words, from within online communities rather from traditional, external media sources. This suggests scholars take a broader approach to traditional media framing theory and consider how social networks drive frames to prominence through user engagement.

Limitations and Future Research

The study only examined Twitter user responses to the event. Other forms of social media such as Facebook should be examined in more detail and compared to the findings of the current study. Additionally, examining a wide array of user-generated comments on a variety of websites beyond social media would provide additional context for this research. Comments on newspaper websites, Panthers' fan websites, and the discussion website Reddit could be utilized. Sports fans, both male and female, could be surveyed regarding their opinions of female sports reporters. The implications from this study are that female sports reporters have less room for error and that any mistake will be magnified due to their gender. A survey could help determine why that might be and what female sports reporters could do to combat that.

Additionally, using software for critical analysis could be seen by some as a potential limitation. It is possible that there is an inherent limitation in using a machine to critically analyze Twitter content rather than a human researcher trained in theory and critical analysis. While the software looked at search criteria, it is possible that it missed some nuance in the data.

Conclusion

Ultimately, there were no winners following the incident between Newton and Rodrigue. Newton was labeled a sexist, while Rodrigue was called a racist (Barnes, 2017; Heilbrunn, 2017). Both issued apologies, Newton in a video and Rodrigue in a tweet

(Batten, 2017). The NFL issued a strongly-worded condemnation of Newton (Perez, 2017), but he did not miss any games following the incident. Rodrigue, on the other hand, was not in the press box for several games after the reveal of her tweets (Newton, 2017), either voluntarily or by management decree. One can certainly debate, as many media members did, which is worse: sexism or racism? (Barnes, 2017; Heilbrunn, 2017). However, what cannot be debated is that Newton was immediately able to get back to work, while Rodrigue was not. This further demonstrates the difficulties female sports reporters face in a male-dominated workplace. They must essentially be perfect, or else face harsh consequences from the public.

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