Method

A content Analysis (CA) measured how broadcasters covered the election campaign. The method provided an efficient means for analyzing the election coverage, turning "words into numbers" in order to infer larger meaning and understandings about how the electronic media represented the democratic process (Franzosi, 2004, p. 4). This CA examined six news programmes – BBC TV News at 22:00; ITV News at 13:30; Sky News at 19:00; Channel 4 News at 19:00; BBC Radio Four's Today Programme (08:00-08:30) and PM (16:00-16:30) – over the course of the six weeks of the election campaign (March 30 – May 7, 2015)[1]. The coding frame (see Appendix I) aligns with this research's aims to: (1) assess how broadcasters covered the election campaign; (2) quantify how much coverage the campaign received; (3) measure the prominence of TV debates in the news coverage; and (4) gauge how polls and horse race reporting and analysis factored into news reporting about the election campaign.

Two trained researchers assessed broadcasts (*n* = 211) over the course of the six-week long campaign. The coding frame was refined slightly during the first week of the campaign to reflect unanticipated campaign issues such as Labour's pledge to repeal the non-dom regime. Attention was paid to applying a systematic interpretation to all the samples (Bauer, 2007; Deacon et al., 1999; Krippendorff, 2013). This research's project leader randomly checked 20 per cent (*n* = 42) of the two researcher's coding This intercoder reliability — r = agree / (agree + disagree) — produced reliability above 80 per cent for all variables. Of note, a majority of the variables were above 85 per cent (see Appendix II) for the intercoder reliability percentage, Scott's Pi, nominal Krippendorff's alpha, and Cohen's Kappa for all the variables). Reliability higher than 80 per cent is considered high and indicates a well-defined coding scheme that can stand the test

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[1] The analysis was daily – but some programmes such as ITV's 13:30 Lunch Bulletin is not broadcast on the weekends and Radio Four's Today doe not broadcast on Sundays.

of being replicated (Bauer, 2007; Krippendorff, 2013).

Content Analysis — Coding Schedule

This codebook contains 13 variables that aim to quantify how UK broadcasters covered or represented the 2015 UK General Election

V1 — ID Number — Unique identification number consecutively numbered from 01 (for the first sample), 02 (for the second sample). Each sample gets a unique ID number.

V2 — MEDIA - Record the media type. Each media organization either 1 - 6.   For BBC Radio 4's Today programme, we are only concerned with the newscast beginning at 08:00.

1.   BBC TV News 22:00
2.   ITV News 13:30
3.   Sky News 19:00
4.   Channel 4 News 19:00
5.   BBC Radio 4 Today Programme between 08:00 - 08:30
6.   BBC Radio 4 'PM' - 17:00 – 17:30

V3 — Date — DD/MM/YY — Record month, day and year. May 3, 2015 = 05.03.15

V4 — Lead — Does the election campaign lead the broadcast? This code asks you to assess if the election is the first story in the news bulletin. Headlines do not count. If yes, code 1 and if no, code 0.

0 = No
1 = Yes

V5 — Broadcast Lineup — Where in the news bulletin does coverage of the election begin? If there is no election coverage, please code 0. There may be multiple election stories in the bulletin, but this variable is only concerned with where the coverage of the election begins. Stories are defined as distinct subsets of information about a topic, issue or event. The broadcast may, for example, begin with a story about ISIS executing a hostage. The presenter may begin with breaking information followed by a reporter story and then voice over clips of political reaction from U.S. President Barack Obama and then Prime Minister David Cameron. After that, the bulletin then may move to another story about a plane crash in Africa. After that, the broadcast may move to the election. In this case, the election would be the third story in the news bulletin.

0 = Not Applicable
1 = Lead
2 = Second Story
3 = Third Story
4 = Fourth Story
5 = Fifth Story
6 = Sixth Story
7 = Seventh Story
8 = Eight Story
9 = Ninth Story

10 = Tenth Story
11 = Eleventh Story
12 = Twelfth Story
13 = Thirteenth Story
14 = Fourteenth Story
15 = Fifteenth Story

V6 — Other Lead — If the news bulletin did not lead the broadcast, what other issue was first mentioned?

0.   Not Applicable
1.   Economy
2.   International News
3.   Cost of Living
4.   Deficit / Debt
5.   Immigration
6.   European Union
7.   National Health Service
8.   Housing
9.   Social Services / Welfare Benefits
10.   Military
11.   Crime
12.   Other
13.   Tax

V7 - Sequence or Drive Coverage - Does the news bulletin include a sequence or drive? That is, multiple stories about the election. For instance, three reports from journalists from three different parties presented in a series.

0 = No
1 = Yes

V8 - Lineup Combination — List multiple lineup combinations. (Does the election, for instance, make up the fourth, fifth and sixth story in the broadcast's lineup? If yes, code 4 + 5 + 6)   The first election story = its place in the lineup. (See V5 example. If three non-election stories lead the broadcast followed by three election stories, please code 4+5+6

0 = Not Applicable
OR: other combinations of numbers (see above)

V9 — Issue — What election issue, event, person or party was first mentioned in the news bulletin? What is the defining issue that is first mentioned?

0.   Not Applicable
1.   Economy
2.   Cost of Living
3.   Deficit / Debt
4.   Immigration
5.   European Union
6.   National Health Service
7.   Housing
8.   Social Services / Welfare Benefits
9.   Terror - internal or external
10.   Military
11.   Foreign Policy
12.   Crime
13.   Election or Campaign Strategy (gaffes, etc)
14.   TV Debate
15.   Coalition Speculation
16.   Leader Cameron
17.   Leader Miliband
18.   Leader Clegg
19.   Leader Firage
20.   Leader Bennett
21.   Leader Sturgeon
22.   Other Leader
23.   Conservative Party
24.   Labour Party
25.   Liberal Democrats
26.   Ukip
27.   SNP
28.   Green Party
29.   Other Party
30.   Other
31.   Multiple
32.   Tax

V10 — Televised Debates Lead — Did the televised debates lead the broadcast?

0 = No
1 = Yes

V11 — Frame 1 - Horse Race —   Are any of the election stories in the broadcast framed as a horse race? That is, did any of the stories focus on the campaign and political tactics instead of issues? Ask yourself: Do any of the stories provide a political 'insider' look at the campaign? Do any of the stories mention who's ahead and who's behind in winning the campaign or policy battle? Does the story focus on the *generals* and *lieutenants* involved, and the shifting strategies and tactics employed?

0 = No
1 = Yes

V12 — Frame 2 - Debate Strategy —   Do any of the stories detail debate strategies? That is, advice from pundits and experts about what the leaders need to do in the debate or how they should present themselves in the debate to win or score points with voters?

0 = No
1 = Yes

V13 — Frame 3 - Polling — Do any of the stories detail or mention polling results?

0 = No
1 = Yes

APPENDIX II – Intercoder Reliability

n = 42 (20 per cent of total population n = 211)

	Percent Agreement	Scott's Pi	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha
ID	100	1	1	1
Media	100	1	1	1
Date	100	1	1	1
Lead	100	1	1	1
Lineup Other	95.23809524	0.914893617	0.914979757	0.915906788
Lead Drive or	95.23809524	0.920642419	0.920679887	0.921587152
Sequence	83.33333333	0.650623886	0.660508083	0.654783125
Issue TV	85.71428571	0.842647518	0.842892768	0.844520762
Debate Horse	85.71428571	0.424	0.424657534	0.430857143
Rae TV Debate	95.23809524	0.896296296	0.896551724	0.897530864
Strategy	97.61904762	0.654320988	0.655737705	0.658436214
Polling	92.85714286	0.82038489	0.820512821	0.822523165

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