

Coverage of the 2008 Presidential Primary Campaign by Males, Females, and Mixed Journalist Groups



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This study examines the trait, issue and tone coverage of Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign by male, female and groups of male and female journalists in newspapers, newsmagazines and Sunday morning political television shows. Results indicate that the media focused more on traits than issues during the campaign. However, female and groups of male and female newspaper journalists focused more on issues than traits. All three journalist groups gave Hillary Clinton more negative than positive coverage and Barack Obama more positive than negative coverage. Female and groups of male and female journalists gave John Edwards more positive than negative coverage while coverage by male journalists was more negative than positive

Keywords: tone, trait, issue, primary, coverage, newspapers, newsmagazines, television, male, female, candidate

Average polling throughout December 2007 found Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton with 45 percent of the Democratic vote while Senator Barack Obama trailed by 20 points with 24.6 percent and former 2004 Democratic vice-presidential nominee, John Edwards, garnered 13 percent of the vote (Real Clear Politics, 2008). This marked the beginning of what would prove to be an unprecedented 2008 presidential primary campaign for the Democratic Party featuring a formidable female candidate campaigning against two male candidates for the highest office in the land. The eventual winner of this primary contest, of course, would then go on to serve as the nation's first African American president.

The media play a significant role in the presidential primary process by serving as the public's window into the campaign and providing information that shapes voters' perceptions of the candidates which, in turn, impacts polling numbers. Ridout (1991) explains that presidential nominations are vulnerable to the influence of early media coverage and that the media play a role in labeling who the "serious" candidates will be and may help candidates gain or lose momentum when they determine who is the "favorite" in the race (Trent & Friedenberg, 2000).

Traditional media such as national newspapers, newsmagazines, and political television talk shows are believed to contribute to a healthy democracy by offering voters differing perspectives on issues. They are thought to feature discordant or competing views that are necessary for healthy political discourse (Calhoun, 1988; Habermas, 1989; Mill, 1859). Pfau et al. (2007) argue that "traditional communication forms are more likely to provide a common

pool of information” (p.41) necessary for political discourse.

The media window was shaping perceptions of the candidates early in the campaign through descriptions such as, “She stands in her hardy brown ankle boots planted firmly center stage—the indomitable image of a seasoned, capable 60-year-old woman, handsomely groomed as always in her imperturbable (blue, this time) pantsuit, belting out bread and butter positions on health care, No Child Left Behind and college loans” (Brown, 2008, p. 30). And, “As a snow squall whirled outside, Sen. Barack Obama, in a black suit, told more than 500 people gathered at a downtown hotel here last week that he is running for president to ‘tell the corporate lobbyists that their days of setting the agenda are over’ and, in his rousing baritone, urged the crowd to ‘stand up.’ An hour later, at a theater a few blocks away, John Edwards, clad in jeans and a windbreaker, declared in a hoarse shout that the country is being done in by ‘corporate power and greed,’ then exhorted his audience to ‘rise up’” (MacGillis, 2007, p. A04).

These candidate portraits can be presented to the public in many different ways; all dependent upon how journalists choose to frame candidates in their stories. Such stories can highlight issue stands, character traits, horserace information, and the family life of a candidate. Journalists can also create perceptions of candidates that are mostly negative, positive or neutral during a campaign. Research suggests that male and female candidates are portrayed in the media according to gender stereotypes known as NewsStyle (Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid, &

Newsmagazines, political television talk shows and journalist groups consisting of male and female reporters have been greatly understudied in media research.

Robertson, 2004) and that male and female journalists report male and female candidates’ character traits and issue stands differently in the news (Aday & Devitt, 2001).

Traditional media are believed to contribute to a healthy democracy by promoting substantive

political discourse but does the sex of the journalist play a role in its success? The historic 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign provides a unique opportunity to compare how male, female and teams of male and female journalists working in traditional media portrayed male and female candidates through character trait, policy issue and tone coverage. Newsmagazines, political television talk shows and journalist groups consisting of male and female reporters have been greatly understudied in media research.

Research suggests that the sex of the journalist impacts the type of media coverage male and female candidates receive during a campaign. Did male and female reporters cover the male and female candidates of 2008 similarly to candidates in the past? It is unknown how male and female journalist groups cover male and female candidates. This study seeks to determine how these groups of reporters portray candidates and whether they help traditional media promote healthy substantive political discourse during a campaign. First, this study compares the character trait and policy issue coverage among male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups to determine which group contributes most to substantive political discourse.

Second, it compares the character trait and policy issue coverage of the three journalist groups according to media type to determine which media type contributes most to substantive political discourse. Third, it compares the tone coverage of male and female candidates by male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups.

Issues

Candidates need the media to inform the electorate about their stances on various policy issues. However, the media may not always communicate these issues to the public. Previous research has shown that the media seem to focus more on horserace coverage rather than issue positions (Graber, 1989; Patterson, 1980). In addition, the media have the ability to alter candidate images according to policy issue coverage. Wright and Berkman (1986) argue that the media can influence a voter's perceptions of a candidate by the way the media report or frame a candidate's issue stance.

A debate still exists over whether male or female candidates receive more policy issue coverage during a campaign. Earlier studies on election coverage showed that female candidates received less issue attention than male candidates overall (Kahn, 1994; Powers, Serini & Johnson, 1996; Serini, Powers & Johnson, 1998). Kahn's (1994) study of newspaper coverage of female U.S. Senate and gubernatorial candidates from 1982-1988 found that women received less issue coverage than their male counterparts overall, even after examining the candidate's own campaign communication. The author found that even though females discussed policy (65%) more than males (58%) in their televised advertisements during these campaigns they found that issues covered in the news corresponded with the issues presented in political advertisements of male candidates more often than those issues found in political advertisements of female candidates. In a series of studies examining issue coverage for Elizabeth Dole's campaign in 1999, Dole received significantly less issue coverage than George Bush, as well as Steve Forbes and John McCain who both trailed Dole in the polls (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Bystrom, 1999; Heldman et al., 2005).

However, other studies show that male and female candidates receive similar amounts of issue attention from the media. For example, Bystrom et al. (2001) found a greater lack of issue coverage for both male and female candidates in primary races for governor and U.S. Senator in 2000. Furthermore, Smith (1997) and Jalalzai's (2006) long term study of newspaper coverage of male and female gubernatorial and senatorial candidates from 1992 to 2000 found that, overall, women running for the U.S. Senate and governor did not have a significant advantage in number of paragraphs about issues over men.

Image

The media also play an important role in their reporting of races between male and female candidates in the way they cover a candidate's image. Political scientists argue that candidate image evaluations have become more important during the media age (Alger, 1994) and that perceptions of candidate character traits influence voter attitudes and behavior. A

politician or candidate's character can influence voters' decisions in elections (Benoit & McHale, 2003). Heldman, Carroll, & Olson (2005) found that three fifths of the stories in their study referenced a candidate's personality trait at least once. Aday and Devitt (2001) also found in their study of newspaper coverage of the 2000 U.S. presidential election that Elizabeth Dole received less coverage of her issue positions than her personality and character traits.

Other studies, however, have found that male and female candidates receive similar amounts of character trait coverage, but these studies are primarily of U.S. Senate candidates rather than gubernatorial candidates. For example, Kahn and Goldenberg (1981) found that personality traits were covered with equal frequency for female and male U.S. Senate candidates. The media have also been found to alter their trait coverage according to level of office. Kahn and Goldenberg (1981) found that the media mentioned fewer personality traits for senate candidates than they did for male and female gubernatorial candidates and newspapers mentioned personality traits more in their coverage of female gubernatorial candidates than in the coverage of their male counterparts (21% to 15%). However, the greater amount of trait coverage of female candidates may have occurred because they talked about these matters more than male candidates (Kahn, 1994).

Tone

Some research has shown that the media cast their coverage of male and female candidates differently using negative, positive and neutral tones during a campaign. Scharrer (2002) found that the media coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton's bid for U.S. Senator from New York was much more negative than the media's coverage of Rudy Giuliani. This coverage attacked Clinton's character, image, and personality as well as her position on issues, and strategies used in her campaign.

Some of the negative media coverage of female politicians is also due, in part, to reports that emphasize conflict and aggression. Gidengil and Everitt (2003) found that the media used more negative and aggressive language to describe female candidates' speech than they did for male candidates' speech. Conflictual behavior is believed to be especially newsworthy and unexpected from women who are running for office (Everitt, 2005). Everitt (2005) notes "combativeness, a quality that is considered important for politics, is not viewed as a positive quality when possessed by women" (pp. 388-389).

Female politicians receive negative media coverage when described as combative but they also receive as much neutral coverage as their male counterparts. Bystrom et al. (2004) found that male and female candidates for U.S. Senate and governor's races were both treated in a neutral manner by newspapers in 1998 (Males treated positively 20% and females 15% of the articles; males treated negatively 5% and female candidates treated negatively 6% of the time). In 2002, the coverage was even more neutral for both groups of candidates (positive coverage 23% for males and 24% for females; and negative 8% for males and 9% for female candidates). Smith (1997) concluded that there is parity in news coverage of male and female candidates and Robertson et al. (2002) also found that female candidates received more neutral coverage than

male candidates.

Research also shows that female politicians receive positive coverage from the media (Kropf & Boiney, 2001). Robertson et al. (2002) found that female candidates received more favorable coverage than their male counterparts during the 2000 U.S. Senate and gubernatorial campaigns. Bystrom et al (2004) found that in 2000, women were treated more favorably in articles than men (21% to 12%), and that men received more negative coverage than women (11% to 7%). Carroll and Schreiber (1997) found the dominant themes that were covered during the 1992 election were images of women as agents of change, actors bringing new perspectives to politics, and as team players working together on issues where they had common interests. Coverage of Nancy Pelosi as House Minority Leader in 2002 was relatively positive and balanced in tone (Dolan et al., 2007) and Kahn (1994) found that press coverage of female gubernatorial candidates was more favorable than press coverage of female U.S. Senate candidates.

Male and female candidates receive mostly neutral coverage and female candidates receive more positive coverage than male candidates, especially when running for governor. Females receive more negative coverage than males in debate articles which focus on conflict.

In general, research has found that male and female candidates receive mostly neutral coverage and female candidates receive more positive coverage than male candidates, especially when running for governor. However, more recent research shows that females receive more negative coverage than male candidates in debate articles which focus on conflict and trivialize female candidates by using gender specific terms.

Journalists and Gender Bias

Much of the previous literature on quantity, substance and tone of media coverage of male and female candidates can be interpreted through the lens of gender bias including constructs such as NewsStyle (Bystrom et al., 2004). However, gender bias may also be influenced by the sex of the journalist writing the story.

There have been varying perspectives on the benefits of having more female journalists cover female politicians. Some scholars suggest that increasing the number of female journalists will help bring about better coverage of female candidates by focusing on substantive issues thus helping them to be taken more seriously (Dolan et al., 2007). Other scholars believe that female reporters may try to fight stereotypes of weakness by not favoring and being more critical of female politicians when writing about them (Braden, 1996). Ross (2002) argues that, “Women in the media have to compete in a man’s world, and they often have to play by the big boys rules if they are going to survive. This inevitably means adopting the male-oriented ethos of the newsroom and taking on a determinedly masculine gaze when writing about women” (p. 109). Female politicians argue that the sex of reporters is of little consequence because they believe reporters oversimplify issues in general (Braden, 1996). Gallagher (2001) believes that

institutional constraints and professional socialization negatively impact a female journalist's ability to offer a different and more equitable style of coverage.

There is debate over whether female journalists are allies of female politicians when covering them, however, research indicates that female journalists cover candidate personality traits less than male journalists. For example, Aday and Devitt (2001) found that female journalists were more likely to cover Dole's issue position (25%) in their articles than male journalists (14%). In addition, of the articles written by men, 39 % were devoted to personality traits while 27% of the articles written by female journalists contained discussion of personality traits.

Female candidates seem to benefit from the coverage of female journalists because they tend to focus on issue discussion as much, or more, in their reporting and focus less on candidates' personal aspects than do male journalists in their stories. Female journalists also seem to provide substantive coverage for male candidates running for office. For example, Aday and Devitt (2001) found that female reporters gave a similar amount of issue coverage to both male and female candidates. Similarly, Devitt (2002) found that male reporters wrote significantly fewer articles that focused on issues when reporting for female candidates (28%) than they did for male candidates (34%). Also in this study, male reporters were found to cover significantly more personal aspects (18%) of the female candidates than those of the male candidates (10%).

Although female candidates seem to benefit more from stories written by female journalists than male journalists, male reporters do offer female candidates an advantage by having their stories placed prominently in the news. For example, Carroll and Schreiber (1997) found that male journalists are more likely to have their articles about women in Congress published on the front page or news section (61%) of the newspaper, versus female journalists' front page or news section articles (47%). Also, female journalists' stories about women in Congress were found on the style page of the newspaper more often (20%) than the stories written by male journalists (8%). Although male journalists may offer female candidates news coverage advantages through story placement, those advantages may be minimized if male reporters focus more on character traits than policy issues.

In general, female journalists seem to offer many more advantages than male journalists when covering political candidates during a campaign. Female journalists avoid candidate personality traits and focus on issues more when covering female candidates and also seem to provide similar amounts of substantive coverage to male candidates. The historic 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign provides a unique opportunity to investigate how male and female journalists as well as teams of male and female journalist may impact the coverage of a candidate.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Based on the literature discussed, the following hypotheses and research questions are

proposed. Past research has found that female journalists are more likely than male journalists to cover candidates' issue position rather than report on personality traits (Aday & Devitt, 2001). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Female journalists will report more candidates' policy issues than male journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

H2: Female journalists will report more policy issue topics than character trait topics in their coverage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.

H3: Male journalists will report more character trait topics than policy issue topics during their coverage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.

There is scant research on candidate coverage by male and female co-authors. Articles written by male and female co-authors are included to find out if journalists working together offer candidates balanced coverage on policy issues, character traits and tone during a campaign. Therefore the following research questions are asked.

RQ1: What is the distribution of candidate character traits and policy issues in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?"

RQ2: What is the frequency of candidate policy issue and character trait references in articles featuring male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?

RQ3: What is the frequency of candidate issue and character trait references in articles featuring male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?

RQ4: What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by male and female co-authors during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?

RQ5: What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by male journalists?

RQ6: What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by female journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?

Design and Procedures

Sample

The study's sample was drawn from three elite U.S. newspapers, including the *New York*

Times, the *LA Times* and *Washington Post* (326 articles). Also included are the three main U.S. newsmagazines, including *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* (185 articles). The sample also includes the three main television network Sunday morning political television shows, including NBC's *Meet the Press with Tim Russert* with 3.8 million viewers, ABC's *This Week with George Stephanopolous* with 2.5 million viewers, and CBS's *Face the Nation with Bob Schieffer* with 2.8 million viewers (Journalism.org, 2007) (42 programs). The sampling unit drawn from the population of content is an entire story or news program and includes news articles, commentaries, feature articles, interviews or editorials that mentions or quotes Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards during the 2008 primary campaign.

Time Period

This study analyzes the 2008 presidential primary campaign coverage of U.S. Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards during the preprimary and the early primary phase as captured in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows. Content analysis was performed on stories and transcripts about the Democratic candidates for a three month period, including two weeks during the preprimary phase and two and a half months during the primary phase from December 17, 2007 until March 17, 2008. Articles from the newsmagazines and transcripts from the Sunday morning political television shows were retrieved weekly. Articles from the daily newspapers were

This study analyzes the 2008 presidential primary campaign coverage of U.S. Senators Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and former Senator John Edwards as captured in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows.

obtained using a constructed-week method. The constructed-week sampling approach allows sample dates to be stratified by day of the week over the three month period therefore allowing for systematic news variation due to the day of the week (Stempel, 1989).

Variables

Issues. Such reporting includes mentions of domestic and international policies or candidates' positions on such policies during the campaign. These issues include taxes, Social Security, military, defense, international activities, crime, education, health care, the elderly, child care, poverty, immigration, energy policy, transportation, and reproductive concerns.

Tone. For this evaluation, each sentence that references a candidate's name is coded as either positive, negative or neutral. Based on Budd, Thorp and Donohew's (1974) coding, a positive sign is given to a sentence when the news source statement put the candidate, party or campaign in a favorable light or showed that the news source agreed with the issue it was reporting. Statements, for example, that portray the candidate and his or her campaign as strong, organized, focused, and relaxed are considered favorable. A negative sign is given for news source statements that put the candidate or campaign in an unfavorable light or show that the news source disagrees with the issue it is reporting. Statements, for example, which portray the candidate or campaign as weak, disorganized, confused, unfocused, or tense are considered

unfavorable. A neutral sign is given for statements which are neither favorable nor unfavorable, such as statements of fact or those that provide background for a given issue or news story. Statements that listed polling results showing candidates ahead or behind were coded as neutral factual statements.

Tone was also determined by counting instances of attributional bias to investigate subtler forms of negative tone in media coverage. Attributional bias occurs when a journalist substitutes the word “said” with more aggressive verbs such as “lash out”, “snapped”, “attacked”, “blast”, “accuse”, “fire at”, “ridicule”, “slam”, “hammer away”, “shoot back”. These words tend to portray candidates in a negative light.

All coding materials were copied from newsmagazines, newspaper articles and television show transcripts printed out from the Lexis Nexis database. The researcher used words Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards to search for relevant newspaper and newsmagazine articles and transcripts. Statements that referred to one, two or all three candidates were coded in newspaper and newsmagazine articles. Statements were coded if they were spoken/quoted by candidates (Senator Obama said), were direct references to candidates (Senator Clinton), or alluded to them (She said). If the reporter used one candidate to describe or attack another candidate on a theme, the theme was recorded for both candidates unless they were character trait themes. Character traits were only recorded for the candidate being described.

In transcripts, only statements made by media personnel about the candidates were coded. This included questions and statements made by the anchor as well as comments made by other journalists and pundits in roundtable discussions about the campaign. Interviews with candidates, their surrogates and those guests who publicly stated their partisanship were excluded from the analysis. One of the concerns of this study is to examine how media personnel, who also serve as pundits, and journalists portrayed the candidates in their coverage. Although editors act as gatekeepers for news content, the assumption for this study is that journalists exert the most control over content by initially choosing the way they want to portray candidates in a story. Journalists relinquish much of that control when they interview candidates and their surrogates on news programs except when they ask questions or are part of a discussion. Including candidates and surrogates may also skew tone results as they highlight the positive aspects of their campaign and criticize the actions of their opponents.

Next coders identified character traits written or uttered by male, female or groups of authors/speakers/journalists. After looking at the name (s) associated with an article or transcript, an Internet search for the name and picture of the person was conducted to determine the sex of the journalist/speaker. Articles that did not contain a name or contained a name that could not be found were excluded from the analysis. Tone was recorded for every sentence in an article or transcript that contained candidate names or alluded to one or all of the candidates.

In newsmagazines, 105 (57%) articles were written by men, 31 (17%) by women, and 49 (26%) by mixed sex journalist groups. In newspapers, 190 (58%) articles were written by men, 69 (21%) by women, and 67 (21%) by mixed sex journalist groups. In television, 17 (40%) of the

shows contained comments only made by men, 0 (0%) only made by women, and 25 (60%) by mixed sex journalist groups.

Two coders were recruited and trained to code the 89 articles and transcripts from a sample of 598 (15% of the total sample) using the written codebook and code sheet. A subset of 76 (26 male, 25 female, 25 mixed sex journalist groups) newsmagazine articles, 125 (43 male, 42 female, 41 mixed sex journalist groups) newspaper articles and 25 shows (58 female journalists/pundits, and 58 male journalists/pundits) were used for the analysis. The subset provided a similar number of male and female journalists in order to determine media coverage differences according to sex. Television shows with male only journalists were excluded from the analysis due to the small number of issue and trait mentions within shows. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa. Cohen's *kappa* was 0.64 for character traits, 0.76 for issues, and .81 for tone. These results suggest fair to excellent reliability as Fleiss (1981) suggests a *kappa* of 0.75 or higher as excellent reliability.

Analysis of Data

The coded data was analyzed by using the VassarStats website for statistical computation. The data in this analysis is presented as descriptive statistics to report the frequency of categories. To examine the differences in categories reported by the media, crosstabs were used. Chi Square statistics were used to test the differences in category reports by the media. The differences in reported categories (e.g. positive, negative, neutral tone, character traits, issue,) were tested among media type and among the three candidates. For significant findings or findings approaching significance, Marascuio or pairwise comparisons (post-hoc test for *chi-square* analysis) were completed wherever necessary to determine significant differences between analyzed groups.

Table 1

Male, Female and Mixed Sex Journalist Issue and Character Mentions

	Issue (%)	Character Trait (%)	Total
$\chi^2 [2, N = 1092] = .89, V = .028$			
Male	145 (39)	230 (61)	375
Female	123 (41)	176 (59)	299
Mixed	175 (42)	243 (58)	418
Total	443 (41)	649 (59)	1092
P < .05*, p < .001**, p < .001***			

Results

The first hypothesis was, “Female journalists will report more candidates’ policy issues than male journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.” This hypothesis was not supported. Table 1 shows that issue mentions accounted for 39% (145 mentions) and character traits accounted for 61% (230 mentions) of candidate media coverage by male journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries. Issue mentions accounted for 41% (123 mentions) and character traits accounted for 59% (176 mentions) of the candidate media coverage by female journalists during the 2008 primaries. In running a two-way chi square test between issue categories those differences are not significant $\chi^2 [1, N = 674] = .33, p = .56$.

The second hypothesis was, “Female journalists will report more policy issue topics than character trait topics in their coverage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.” This hypothesis was not supported. Table 1 shows that issues accounted for 41% (123 mentions) and character traits accounted for 59% (176 mentions) of the media coverage during the 2008 primary campaign. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 299) = 9.04, p = .0026$.

The third hypothesis was, “Male journalists will report more character trait topics than policy issue topics in their coverage of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.” This hypothesis was supported. Table 1 shows that issues accounted for 39% (145 mentions) and character traits accounted for 61% (230 mentions) of the media coverage during the 2008 primary campaign. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 375) = 18.82, p < .0001$.

Table 2

Frequency of Trait and Issue Coverage by Male Journalist, Female Journalist, and Mixed Sex Journalists by Media Type

Magazines (%)			Newspapers (%)			Television (%)		
$\chi^2 [2, N = 479] = 5.69, V = .109^*$			$\chi^2 [2, N = 421] = 10.09, V = .154^{**}$			$\chi^2 [1, N = 192] = .0, V = .007$		
Trait	Issue		Trait	Issue		Trait	Issue	
Male	82 (62)	50 (38)	73 (56)	58 (44)		75 (67)	37 (33)	
Female	81 (76)	26 (24)	42 (38)	70 (62)		53 (66)	27 (34)	
Mixed	171 (71)	69 (29)	72 (40)	106 (60)		—	—	
Total	334 (70)	145 (30)	187 (44)	234 (56)		128 (67)	64 (33)	
$P < .05^*, p < .001^{**}, p < .0001^{***}$			Coding unit: Articles and Transcripts					

The study's first research question was, "What is the distribution of candidate character traits and issue stands in newsmagazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?" Table 1 shows that character traits accounted for 59% (649 themes within mentions) and candidate issue accounted for 41% (443 themes within mentions) of the media coverage during the 2008 primaries. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, this difference was significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 1092) = 38.48, p < .0001$.

Character traits accounted for 59% (649 themes within mentions) and candidate issue accounted for 41% (443 themes within mentions) of the media coverage during the 2008 primaries.

Table 2 shows that 30% (145 themes within mentions) of issue reports in newsmagazines were policy issues and 70% (334 themes within mentions) were character traits. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 479) = 73.78, p = <.0001$. Newsmagazines reported more character traits than policy issues.

Table 2 shows that 56% (234 themes within mentions) of issue reports in newspapers were policy issues and 44% (187 themes within mentions) were character traits. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 421) = 5.02, p = .025$. Newspapers reported more policy issues than character traits.

Table 2 shows that 33% (64 themes within mentions) of issue reports in Sunday political talk shows were policy issues and 67% (128 themes within mentions) were character traits. In running a one-way chi square test between the categories, those differences were significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 192) = 20.68, p <.0001$. Sunday political talk shows reported more character traits than policy issues.

The second research question was, "What is the frequency of candidate issue and character trait references in articles featuring male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?" Table 1 shows that issue mentions accounted for 33% (145 mentions) of candidate media coverage by male journalists, 27% (123 mentions) of the candidate media coverage by female journalists, and 40% (175 mentions) of candidate media coverage featuring articles with male and female co-authors during the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue categories those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 443) = 9.23, p = .0099$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences for issues in two of three journalist pairs. There was no statistically significant difference in issue coverage between female (146 mentions) and mixed male and female co-authored article (176 mentions) pairs.

Character trait coverage accounted for 35% (230 mentions) of the candidate media coverage by male journalists, 27% (176 mentions) of the candidate media coverage by female journalists and 38% (243 mentions) of candidate media coverage featuring articles with mixed male and female co-authors during the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries. In running a

one-way chi square test between the character trait categories those differences are significant, χ^2 (2, N = 649) = 11.67, $p = .0029$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences for character traits in two of three media pairs. There was no statistically significant difference in character trait coverage between female authored (224 mentions) and mixed male and female co-authored article (223 mentions) pairs.

The third research question was, “What is the frequency of candidate issue and character trait references in articles featuring male, female and mixed male and female journalist groups in news magazines, newspapers and Sunday morning political television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?”

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 38% (50 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 62% (82 mentions) of candidate media coverage in newsmagazines, by male journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, χ^2 (1, N = 132) = 7.28, $p = .007$. Male journalists covered more character traits than issues in news magazines during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 44% (58 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 56% (73 mentions) of candidate media coverage in newspapers, by male journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are not significant, χ^2 (1, N = 131) = 1.5, $p = .22$. Male journalists covered character traits and issues equally in newspapers during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 33% (37 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 67% (75 mentions) of candidate media coverage in Sunday morning political talk shows by male journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, χ^2 (1, N = 112) = 12.22, $p = .0005$. Male journalists covered more character traits than issues in television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 24% (26 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 76% (81 mentions) of candidate media coverage in news magazines, by female journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, χ^2 (1, N = 132) = 7.28, $p = .007$. Female journalists covered more character traits than issues in news magazines during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 62% (70 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 38% (42 mentions) of candidate media coverage in newspapers, by female journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, χ^2 (1, N = 112) = 6.5, $p = .013$. Female journalists

covered more issues than character traits in newspapers during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 34% (27 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 66% (53 mentions) of candidate media coverage in Sunday morning political talk shows by female journalists. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 80) = 7.82, p = .005$. Female journalists covered more character traits than issues in television shows during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 29% (69 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 71% (171 mentions) of candidate media coverage in news magazines, by mixed male and female journalist groups. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 240) = 42.5, p < .0001$. Mixed male and female journalist groups covered more character traits than issues in news magazines during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

Table 2 shows that issue mentions accounted for 60% (106 mentions) and character trait mentions accounted for 40% (72 mentions) of candidate media coverage in newspapers, by mixed male and female journalist groups. In running a one-way chi square test between the issue and character trait categories those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 178) = 6.12, p = .013$. Mixed male and female journalist groups covered more issues than character traits in newspapers during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season.

The fourth research question was, "What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton. Senator Barack Obama and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by mixed male and female co-authors during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?"

Table 3 shows that positive reports accounted for 14% (128 mentions), negative reports accounted for 32% (277 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 54% (469 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Hillary Clinton in articles featuring mixed male and female co-authors. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 874) = 173.01, p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 39% (281 mentions), negative reports accounted for 24% (175 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 37% (269 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Barack Obama in articles featuring mixed male and female co-authors. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 725) = 173.12, p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between two of three tone pairs. There was no significant difference between positive and neutral tone coverage.

Table 3

Journalist Tone Coverage by Candidate

	Clinton	Obama	Edwards
Male			
	χ^2 [4, N = 1815] = 77.25, V = .15 ***		
Pos	200 (23%)	270 (34%)	24 (16%)
Neg	271 (31%)	121 (15%)	33 (22%)
Neut	406 (46%)	397 (51%)	93 (62%)
Total	877	788	150
Female			
	χ^2 [4, N = 1723] = 54.5, V = .13 ***		
Pos	192 (22%)	272 (36%)	34 (35%)
Neg	270 (31%)	142 (19%)	19 (20%)
Neut	412 (47%)	338 (45%)	44 (45%)
Total	874	752	97
Mixed			
	χ^2 [4, N = 1789] = 132.17, V = .19 ***		
Pos	128 (18%)	281 (39%)	58 (31%)
Neg	277 (31%)	175 (24%)	31 (16%)
Neut	469 (51%)	269 (37%)	101 (53%)
Total	1055	725	190

$p < .05$ *, $p < .001$ **, $p < .0001$ ***

Positive reports accounted for 31% (58 mentions), negative reports accounted for 16% (31 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 53% (101 mentions) of the coverage for former Senator John Edwards in articles featuring mixed male and female co-authors. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, χ^2 (2, N = 190) = 27.49, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

The fifth research question was, “What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by male journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?”

Table 3 shows that positive reports accounted for 23% (200 mentions), negative reports accounted for 31% (271 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 46% (406 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Hillary Clinton in articles and television shows featuring male journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, χ^2 (2,

$N = 877$) = 421.6, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 34% (270 mentions), negative reports accounted for 15% (121 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 51% (397 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Barack Obama in articles and television shows featuring male journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 788) = 584.69$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 16% (24 mentions), negative reports accounted for 22% (113 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 62% (33 mentions) of the coverage for former Senator John Edwards in articles and television shows featuring male journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 150) = 165.71$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between two of the three tone pairs. There was no statistically significant difference between positive (24 mentions) and negative (33 mentions) tone references.

The sixth research question was, “What is the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral reports about Senator Hillary Clinton, Senator Barack Obama and former Senator John Edwards in articles written by female journalists during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary season?”

Table 3 shows that positive reports accounted for 22% (192 mentions), negative reports accounted for 31% (270 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 47% (412 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Hillary Clinton in articles and television shows featuring female journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 874) = 69.94$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 36% (272 mentions), negative reports accounted for 19% (142 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 45% (338 mentions) of the coverage for Senator Barack Obama in articles and television shows featuring female journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 752) = 295.3$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between tone pairs.

Positive reports accounted for 35% (34 mentions), negative reports accounted for 20% (19 mentions), and neutral reports accounted for 45% (44 mentions) of the coverage for former Senator John Edwards in articles and television shows featuring female journalists. In running a one-way chi square between the categories, those differences are significant, $\chi^2 (2, N = 97) = 25.66$, $p < .0001$. Pairwise comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between two of the three tone pairs. There was no statistically significant difference between positive (41 mentions) and negative (26 mentions) tone references.

Discussion

Media and Journalist Types and Issue and Character Traits

According to this study, overall the national media did not contribute to substantive political discourse during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign. Fifty-nine percent of the media coverage focused on character traits while forty-one percent focused on policy issues. Newsmagazines (70%) and Sunday morning political television shows (67%) focused on character traits while newspapers provided the most substantive coverage during the campaign by reporting issues (56%) more than character traits.

The importance of character trait topics (63%) in newsmagazines over issues (37%) may be a function of the frequent feature and editorial articles found in these news sources. Newsmagazines follow a narrative style of reporting (Kruse, 2001), permitted by the delayed news timeline of weekly magazines. These articles contain extensive amounts of background information which is used to tie events together and offer a more in depth understanding of topics for readers.

According to this study, overall the national media did not contribute to substantive political discourse during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign.

Furthermore, research has shown that although newsmagazines provide a large amount of hard news they have shifted their reporting to incorporate more soft news. For example, “*Time* and *Newsweek* have shifted their attention toward entertainment, health and lifestyle concerns, business and other sorts of soft news” (Fried, 2005, p. 126). The results of this study perhaps reflect the transition of newsmagazine reporting from a hard news to soft news format and narrative style of news coverage which includes more elaborate stories about a candidate’s personality. In addition, Sunday morning political television shows in this study reflect the results of previous research showing a high level of candidate image information in television coverage (Just, Crigler, & Buhr, 1999). Similarities in newsmagazines and Sunday morning political television shows may be a function of the delayed timeline in covering the campaign as compared to the daily timeline found in newspaper reporting. Both of these media types publish content or air programs once a week and have the luxury of probing and investigating the campaign in more depth by reporting more personal information, which includes character traits.

The results of this study support previous research showing newspapers focusing on issue topics (57%) over character traits (43%). Newspapers are believed to be more effective in providing information about candidates and their policy positions than television news (Gunter, 1987; Patterson, 1980; Just, Crigler & Buhr, 1999). The focus on issues in newspapers illustrates the non-narrative style of reporting found in this media type as compared to newsmagazines. Newsmagazines offer the more lengthy description of “why” and “how” of a story rather than the “who,” “what,” “when” and “where,” of a story found in newspapers (Buckman, 1993).

Media format may impact the type of coverage candidates receive but may not be the only factor to consider when assessing media influence in a campaign. Gender may impact a campaign through the writing styles of male and female journalists. Gender is believed to impact news content because of the alternative viewpoints and diversity that it promotes which, in turn, affects the way news is written (Kim & Yoon, 2009). Specific gender perspectives are believed to offer certain advantages and disadvantages to candidates during a campaign.

The results of this study support and contradict the previous research on the differences in candidate coverage between male and female news reporters and may also offer new insights into the campaign through the perspectives of teams of male and female journalists. In some instances gender may not be a significant contributing factor influencing candidate coverage. Even though female journalists are believed to offer more advantages to candidates than male journalists by covering more of their issues than their character traits, they did not provide candidates with these benefits overall during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign. Neither did male journalists nor teams of journalists made up of male and female reporters offer issue coverage advantages to candidates during the campaign. In addition, as has been previously stated, both newsmagazine and televised political talk show formats focus on character traits. All three journalist groups within these media types focused on character traits significantly more than issue topics suggesting media format guides candidate character trait coverage rather than reporting decisions based on the sex of the journalist.

However, the sex of the journalist may influence coverage in certain media types. The distribution of character traits and issues according to the sex of the reporter in this study revealed that female reporters (62%) and teams of male and female reporters (60%) offered more media coverage advantages over male reporters (44%) in newspapers by focusing on issues significantly more than character traits. Male newspaper journalists were found to cover character traits and issues equally during the campaign. When comparing issue coverage between journalist groups, male and female journalists covered issues similarly while mixed sex journalist groups covered issues significantly more than male or female journalists.

Female newspaper reporters offered candidates the same amount of issue coverage as their male counterparts and in some instances, even more. Some scholars suggest that these similarities are the consequence of biased organizational and professional norms in news organizations which cause female reporters to internalize patriarchal newsroom norms in order to succeed in a male-dominated environment (Elmore, 2007). This includes adopting a masculine gaze (Ross, 2002) such as focusing on issues rather than character traits during a campaign. Other external organizational factors may also contribute to similar reporting styles between men and women. Elmore (2007) suggests that men and women at large papers source and frame stories the same way.

So, is a male-dominated newsroom culture the reason why female newspaper journalists focus on issues? The notion of adopting a male-centered approach may only partially explain why female reporters focused on candidate issues more than character traits in newspapers while

their male counterparts focused on these topics equally during the campaign. Why did female newspaper journalists focus on issues in their coverage more than male reporters in their coverage? Did female journalists adopt a “hyper masculine gaze” during the presidential primary campaign by focusing on issues more than male journalists? If they did, did it impact the significant issue coverage made by mixed male and female sex journalist groups over male-only

and female-only reporters during the campaign? Elmore (2007) suggests that female journalists are “under strong pressure to implement the traditional norms and values to persevere and succeed” (p. 115). Perhaps this pressure is heightened when female journalists work with male journalists on an article together during a campaign.

It is also possible that the focus on issue coverage by female newspaper reporters may not be a reflection of a professional standard based on a male-centric perspective but rather a reflection of personal beliefs about one's professional role.

The potential influence of female reporters on candidate coverage in mixed sex reporter groups may also depend on the ratio of male to female journalists within these groups. Although the ratio of male to female reporters was not accounted for in mixed sex journalist groups, it is believed that 30% or 3 or more women on an executive board, for example, are needed for any meaningful or consistent change to be seen within an organization or profession (Elmore, 2007). Perhaps a significant number of female newspaper reporters within mixed sex journalist groups can account for the difference in issue coverage from male journalists covering the campaign.

It is also possible that the significant difference in issue over character trait coverage by female newspaper reporters may not be a reflection of a professional standard based on a male-centric perspective but rather a reflection of personal beliefs about one's professional role. For example, Cassidy (2008) found that although female and male reporters believed investigating official claims, analyzing complex problems and discussing national policy were significant aspects of their jobs, female journalists also saw themselves as disseminators of information who needed to get information to the public quickly and avoid unverifiable facts more than male journalists. Data about female newspaper reporters in this study seems to support the conception of this professional role.

Cassidy's (2008) finding of an intensity of commitment among female newspaper journalists to at least one of the professional role conceptions over male reporters may provide some insight into the more focused attention on issue coverage by female reporters than male reporters found in this study. The greater commitment among female newspaper reporters to at least one of the professional role conceptions may offer some diversity in candidate coverage through an increased commitment to their profession. This intensity could represent a heightened desire to succeed in response to a male dominated news culture or it could reflect a different and valuable gender-based approach to media coverage perhaps explained by Melin-Higgins (2004) who found that female journalists believed their jobs to be a mission for them rather than just an occupation to be performed. Their commitment to the role of disseminating information to the

public may have contributed to the more focused attention to issue coverage by mixed male and female journalists over male journalists found in this study as well.

Female newspaper journalists seem to offer candidates some advantages over male newspaper journalists by covering as many or more issues than traits during a campaign. This advantage may not be the result of adopting a male-centric perspective alone but may also be enhanced by a personal commitment to the profession as a whole. In addition, the influence of female reporters' role concepts within mixed sex journalist groups may further enhance substantive candidate coverage during a campaign.

Journalist Type, Tone and Candidate

This study shows that the coverage of the candidates in the 2008 Democratic presidential primary was primarily neutral among all journalist groups with the exception of mixed male and female journalist groups for Barack Obama. As has been previously stated, past research suggests that female journalists are assets to female candidates by giving them more positive coverage than male journalists (Craft & Wanta, 2004). The results from this study contradict this research as Senator Clinton was covered more negatively than positively by female journalists (31% to 22%) as well as male journalists (31% to 23%) and mixed male and female journalist groups (32% to 14%) during the primary campaign.

Hillary Clinton's overwhelming negative coverage may have been a function of her extensive national political history as compared to Barack Obama's relatively short political history. Journalists "knew" Hillary Clinton quite well and could gather much more information and reference both positive and negative actions from her political past. Her "political present" represented by this study also included negative references made about her husband Bill Clinton who created controversy when he was accused of introducing race into the campaign in states such as South Carolina. This also contributed to the personal and public fodder from which journalists could draw to write their stories.

It is true that Senator Hillary Clinton represents an anomaly in gender research studies due to her well-known political past and family connections. Some scholars suggest that her inclusion in gender research in political campaigns does not provide conclusions that can be applied to studies that involve lesser known female candidates. However, media coverage of Senator Clinton still has value. At the very least, this study acknowledges the severe discrepancy in tone coverage between Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama and John Edwards and provides evidence that she was disadvantaged and covered differently during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign. The evidence suggests journalists need to approach their campaign coverage with caution and increased vigilance towards standards of objectivity. Also, until more formidable female contenders besides Senator Clinton run for president, it is unknown whether results from this study are indicative of the challenges female candidates will face or the advantages they will be afforded in future campaign coverage.

How were the male candidates covered by these journalist groups? The coverage of Senator Obama by female journalists (36% to 19%), male journalists (34% to 15%) and mixed male and female journalist groups (39% to 24%) was significantly more positive than negative. Most of the coverage for Senator Obama from female (45%), and male (51%) journalists was neutral while there was no significant difference between the neutral (37% and positive (39%) coverage of Barack Obama among mixed male and female journalist groups.

Why did all types of reporters cover Senator Obama so positively? He was seen by many voters and party officials as a face of hope and a leader who could revitalize the nation. U. S. Democratic senator Joseph Biden said that “Barack Obama is probably the most exciting candidate the Democratic or Republican Party had produced at least since I’ve been around. And he’s fresh. He’s new. He’s smart. He’s insightful” (Thai & Barrett, 2007). Although other African Americans have run for president, no other African American candidate possessed as much broad based appeal as Senator Obama did. Even though Barack Obama highlighted his African American heritage at times, he was seen as a multi-racial or biracial candidate rather than an African American one (Winborne, 2009; Daniel, 2009). The significant difference in positive and negative coverage from all journalist groups may be explained, in part, through stories that reflected the country’s common positive sentiment about the appealing new candidate.

Overall Senator Edwards (190 mentions) was not covered as much as Senators Clinton (1055 mentions) and Obama (725 mentions) during the campaign. The coverage of Edwards by female journalists (35% to 20%) and teams of male and female journalists (31% to 16%) was significantly more positive than negative while male journalists gave Edwards significantly more negative (22%) than positive (16%) coverage. John Edwards’ public support of his wife, Elizabeth Edwards, during her fight with breast cancer in 2007 may have resonated well with female-only and mixed male and female journalist groups and contributed to the positive coverage he received during the campaign. The significant negative coverage among male journalist may be due to the male-dominated commentary in Sunday morning political television shows. Although women participated in these discussions, they seemed to speak less often and for shorter periods of time than their male counterparts. Senator Edwards may have received most of his coverage from televised Sunday morning political talk shows as these shows contain weekly discussions about candidate campaigns. It is likely discussions about Senator Edwards’ would have focused on his failing campaign due to limited resources, his second place position in the Iowa Caucus and his third place positions in the New Hampshire and South Carolina primaries.

In addition to examining differences in reporting among male and female reporters, this study adds to gender and journalist research by examining articles written by male and female co-authors to find out if journalists working together offered a balanced tone in coverage. Results showed that mixed sex journalist groups covered the candidates similarly to male-only and female-only reporters by covering the female candidate more negatively than positively and

covering the male candidates more positively than negatively during the campaign. It supports previous claims that Hillary Clinton received more negative media coverage than her male counterparts during the presidential primary season. It is encouraging, however, to find that a substantial amount of the coverage for each candidate was written in a neutral tone by all author types.

The results of this study seem to contradict past research about the benefits of having female journalists cover candidates during a campaign. Even though the data in this study shows that female journalists, as well as male journalists and mixed male and female journalist groups, do not offer significant media coverage advantages to candidates in a campaign by focusing on traits overall, female reporters, as well as mixed male and female journalist groups, seem to offer issue focused advantages in newspapers. Female newspaper journalists may be an influential force in maintaining substantive policy issue coverage during a campaign and newspapers strengthen this focus even more by incorporating male and female journalist groups to cover candidates.

Female newspaper journalists may be an influential force in maintaining substantive policy issue coverage during a campaign and newspapers strengthen this focus even more by incorporating male and female journalist groups to cover candidates.

The emphasis on traits in overall campaign coverage may be explained by including newsmagazines and Sunday morning political television shows, media genres that have been shown to highlight candidate character traits over issues because of their emphasis on soft news. The issue emphasis in candidate coverage by female and mixed male and female journalist groups may be influenced by a heightened response to a male-centric professional culture or a heightened sense of commitment to the profession.

Future Research

The media offer the public a window into the campaign and provide information that shapes voters' perceptions of candidates. However, candidates may not look like themselves all of the time depending on the angle of the voter's gaze or the sex of the reporter. This study provides information on how male and female journalists cover male and female candidates as well as the advantages and disadvantages that exist in their coverage of them. It investigates whether teams of male and female journalists support or detract from a journalist's professional goal to uphold the standard of objectivity or if they aid in eliminating some of the bias found in male-only or female-only written articles through character trait, policy issue and tone coverage.

Coverage of other campaign issues such as family, horserace, and race among these journalist groups could also provide a more complete understanding of how the sex of the journalist may have impacted the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign. Comparing male-only and female-only candidate races according to journalist group may also provide further insight into how mixed male and female journalist groups contribute to healthy political

discourse. Although candidates do not control much of their media coverage, teams of journalists may offer candidates important alternatives to male-only or female-only written articles as they strategize to disseminate messages during a campaign. The 2016 presidential campaign offers another opportunity to investigate how journalist groups cover male and female candidates as well as male-only and female-only candidates.

Discrepancies in past and present research in the way female and male journalists cover candidates, especially Senator Hillary Clinton, may also be linked to decisions made by others about news content within media organizations. The prevalence of male journalists in leadership positions within the media organization may have contributed to the significant amount of negative coverage over positive coverage for the female candidate by male, female, and a team of reporters. Craft and Wanta (2004) found that newspapers with male editors reported more negative news than newspapers with a high percentage of female editors. If the editorial staff in charge of the female reporters consisted primarily of males in leadership positions, the tendency of female reporters to offer more positive coverage to female candidates in the past may have been hampered by decisions made by male editors. Comparisons of articles that have male and female editors for male-only, female-only, and teams of male and female may contribute to the understanding of the type of media coverage Senator Hillary Clinton received as well as the type of media coverage female and male candidates receive in the future.

In addition, comparisons among male journalist groups, female journalist groups and mixed male and female journalist groups may offer additional insight into the professional and gender dynamics associated with candidate coverage during a campaign. Investigating the number of female reporters within male and female journalist groups covering candidates as well as more qualitative studies interviewing mixed sex journalist groups among media types may help researchers to better understand the role gender plays in the coverage of political candidates.



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