

The Media's War on Women: Gendered Coverage of Female Candidates

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Media coverage has notoriously and historically treated women different than men. Despite major shifts in the way that society views a woman's role in the public sphere, the media continues to treat female politicians and candidates in a traditional gender role frames. The gendered coverage inevitably affects the outcome of the campaign because it is one of the most influential sources of information for the public. This study attempts to prove that as women continue to challenge traditional gender roles by running for higher offices, the media coverage of their campaigns becomes more gendered in nature. This is examined by coding the most prominent characteristics of gendered coverage in newspaper articles about Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Dole during their time in different levels of office to assess the level of sexism in their coverage. The study covers their time spent as the wife of a presidential candidate, as a cabinet member, as a Senator and as a presidential candidate.

In the past few decades female politicians have become more successful in their pursuit of higher offices and cabinet positions. Despite these advances, there remains major structural, societal and institutional barrier for women in their pursuit of all levels of office. As women continue to strive for political success, they also continue to face challenges that limit their opportunities for political success.

For female candidates, gendered media coverage remains a major factor in campaigns and elections. Scholars have long noted the existence of gendered coverage and its affect on the candidates' success. Gendered news coverage has been studied in an attempt to explain the outcomes of elections with female candidates. These studies, however, neglected the fact that women are beginning to gain more momentum through incumbency and a changing social atmosphere and running for higher and higher offices.

The media continues to cover female politicians in gendered terms, focus on their marital status or appearance and emphasizing stereotypically "female" issues like education and healthcare. By forcing female candidates in to these roles, the media may be undermining women's credibility in other important issues, like foreign policy and military affairs. There have been plenty of studies on the role of media in legislative campaigns. Media frames can most easily be defined as the stereotypes that society holds for a specific gender that is then applied to all members of that gender by the media. This confines these members to a specific role or type of coverage that is not necessarily appropriate or accurate. In recent years, scholars have focused their attention on the importance of frames the media applies to female candidates and officeholders. These studies have included, for example, the media frames used for female Congressional candidates compared to their male counterparts. In 2008, Hillary Clinton's run for President changed the field of media studies by creating a new and more visible case of gendered frames in the media. Scholars have begun to ask more questions in regards to the rising levels of female candidates: Do media frames change for women running for

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executive office? Do these frames prevent a successful run for executive office by female candidates? Does the media only apply these frames to legislative positions and not for executive positions?

This study examines whether media coverage changes as women move up the political ladder. In this paper, I consider three different possibilities: first, the media frames for female candidates could stay the same regardless of office. Second, the media could become less gendered in its coverage as female candidates move from legislative to executive office. Third, the media coverage could become more gendered as female candidates move from legislative to executive office. To assess whether gendered frames change depending on the office, I examine the media coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton in her capacity as the wife of a presidential candidate, a U.S. Senator, presidential candidate, and Secretary of State. Her strategic jumps in the political landscape have allowed for a possibility to view changes in gendered coverage of female politicians as they gain power and position. Comparisons to politicians like Elizabeth Dole will help to make a more generalized statement about female politicians as a group.

Given the previous studies, it seems likely that as women seek and serve in executive and administrative positions, they will receive more negative and increasingly gendered coverage. The higher they get in the US government, the more likely they will be subjected to gender stereotypes in the news media due to the gendered way that executive level offices are typically perceived by our society. The office of President of the United States, for example, "is arguably the most manly of all areas" of US politics as described by Georgia Duerst-Lahti (1997) making femininity a larger disadvantage. Thus, as women move in to higher offices, they will experience this effect more often. If my hypothesis is correct, there will be a clear difference in the nature of the media coverage of Clinton as well as Dole as they moved from one level to another in their political careers.

Literature Review

For as long as news media has been around, it has shaped the public's views on politicians and public figures. It gives the public selective information which nurtures one conclusion or another on the issue. Because of the influence the news media holds over potential voters it has gained significant attention from political scholars over the years. Initially the interest was whether or not there was a difference in coverage for men and women, and then if that coverage had an impact on the outcome of the elections, the frames the media uses and their effects on election outcome, and finally how the media changes its coverage as women move to higher offices.

While there is a distinct difference between news coverage of female politicians in the 1920's and that of the 1990's, there is clear evidence that the news media covers female candidates differently than their male counterparts. For example, Linda Fowler and Jennifer Lawless (2009) found that clear differences in the media coverage of female and male candidates. Looking at gubernatorial campaigns, Fowler and Lawless considered how candidates chose to portray themselves and how those images were conveyed by the media and concluded that "the media exert a powerful influence over the type of political information that reaches voters" (Fowler and Lawless 2009) which reflects gender stereotypes. The media reflects what the public has established as its norms and when a story breaks those norms, the subject will most likely receive negative or less coverage. When women run for office, they break the gender stereotypes we have both for women and for politicians. In turn, the media perpetuates this novelty frame in negative media attention or by giving female candidates less coverage than their male counterparts (Fowler and Lawless 2009).

There are two major types of frames: frames in communication and frames in thought. Frames in communication refer to the use of “words, images, phrases and presentation styles” by a speaker. Frames in thought refer to an individual’s understanding of a situation. Of course, frames in communication tend to shape frames in thought, known as framing effect (Druckman). As Borah (2011) explains, “Frames help people organize what they see in everyday life,” much like what viewers do when they have to fill in the gaps that the media leaves in the images of candidates. Framing is the process of selecting what information to include and what to exclude in communication of a topic, person or event.

The media is voters’ main source of information about a candidate’s personality, viability and their positions on the issues important to the office they seek. When there are gaps in the information provided by the media, readers revert to their own gender stereotypes in order to fill that void and try to complete the image of the candidate. Kim Fridkin Kahn (1992) finds that this tendency on the part of the voters and readers actually favors women because voters associate characteristics like honesty with women more so than men which reflects in the way that they fill in the gaps of their image of a candidate.

The visibility and viability of candidates plays a significant role in future female candidates as well. Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) conclude that the more visible women candidates are in national news, the more likely other women are to run for office. This means that the amount of coverage a female candidate receives is not only important to the success of their own campaign, but also in explaining the low numbers of women running for office. Atkeson (2003) concluded in their revision of the Role Model Theory¹ to include the viability of the candidate, it is not enough to just have “like” candidates in a race, but to have ones that are also viable. There can be a hundred women running for different offices and women will not be inspired to seek office themselves unless those candidates also have a shot at winning their races. The media bias continues to portray female candidates as less viable than their competitors. This, in turn, discourages women from seeking office themselves regardless of whether or not they would be viable candidates.

Up until this point, scholars generally found that the playing field at the statewide level was fairly even when comparing candidates in similar positions (i.e. male and female incumbents or male and female challengers), meaning that gendered media coverage was not considered a key factor in the underrepresentation of women in state legislatures. However, Fowler and Lawless (2009) found that media coverage was not necessarily gendered in quantity, but in quality. The media was far more likely to cover a female candidate’s appearance, marital status, and other superficial characteristics. The media is also more likely to portray female candidates as passive and to focus on their positions on issues rather than the actions they have taken as candidates. The study found that, after controlling for the effects of press coverage and context, women continue to perform worse than their male counterparts. On the other hand, Fowler and Lawless also found that newspaper coverage does not show a statistically significant difference in coverage quality between female and male candidates. Fowler and Lawless acknowledge that this could be because newspapers only account for a slight portion of news media that candidates are subjected to during a campaign, however.

¹ The Role Model Theory suggests that, “Although women appear to be less interested and less engaged in politics than men, some evidence suggests that the presence of women as candidates and office holders can help to stimulate political engagement among women” (Karp and Banducci 2008).

There are many hypotheses about why female politicians have become more successful over time and if that has anything to do with a change in societal views. These changes in media coverage over the years can be explained in a number of ways most popularly as a change in the way that the public thinks about female politicians, a change in the female politicians themselves, or a change in the way in which news outlets approach female politicians. Kevin Smith (2001) suggests that “professional media journals have periodically engaged in self-examination of gender bias in the press and urged corrective action” (Smith 2001). This implies that the change in media coverage comes from a change in how the media thinks and operates. His findings suggest that there has been a shift in the treatment of female candidates in the media and this is due to a heightened awareness of the bias the media had previously displayed.

Unlike Fowler and Lawless, Smith argues that the playing field is essentially even for male and female candidates in all levels of office when it comes to competitiveness and there is an increasing equality in political resources like funding and incumbency. Smith hypothesizes that the main reason the coverage is different for women is because of leftover stereotypes from the novelty effect, which caused news organizations to focus on female candidates' gender because their candidacies went against the norm. The novelty effect is something that has been institutionalized and we are accustomed to it; as a result, the novelty effect—like other aspects of sexism—is difficult to completely wipe out (Mills 2011). Although Smith concludes that the media did not engage in gender bias in the gubernatorial campaigns examined in his study, he fails to take into consideration the quality of the coverage that the candidates receive. The quantity of coverage received is only one aspect of gendered coverage but the more important, and usually the larger source of sexism in the media, is the type of coverage that each candidate is given.

The idea Smith puts forward that the media is becoming less biased is partially supported by the theory that we are changing as a society. Our views on women in the workplace, particularly in politics, have changed and thus the dwindling gender bias in the media. The amount of coverage is a main source for observation of the changes in media coverage over time, regardless of sex or office. Erika Falk (2008, chapt. 5) examined the difference in coverage between female and male candidates in the same races and concluded that, “the difference in the amount of coverage did not diminish over time. Although the gap in the percentage of stories mentioning the man versus the woman candidate narrowed between 1884 and 1987... it widened again after 1987.” Not only is this gap applicable to the frequency of coverage, but also the average number of words written about candidates in a single article.

Another main challenge to the idea that sexism is diminishing in our society comes from Jennifer Lawless (2009) who says that,

We also often fail to acknowledge that, as a nation, we are not ready to discuss why sexism still exists, the extent to which cultural norms have evolved, or how we can eradicate it. Rather, we focus on how female candidates can and do succeed within its confines (73).

Lawless challenges the societal pressures that produce sexism by examining Hillary Clinton's run for presidency. She concludes that Clinton was successful because she was able to operate within gender frames that ordinarily deter women from running for even the smallest offices. In addition, it becomes clear that “operating in the political sphere even for female party leaders, officials, and elites is more complex than it is for men” (79).

Though scholars continue to debate whether the coverage that candidates receive is gendered, there is no question that the media plays an instrumental role in the success of a campaign. How the media portrays a candidate shapes voters' views of the candidate. For each political office there are certain character traits that we, as voters, see as appropriate for a candidate to hold. These qualities, in general, are traditionally seen as fairly "masculine" and include things like decisiveness, leadership and confidence. If the media does not portray a candidate as possessing these qualities, their success is much less likely.

Candidates are not completely helpless when it comes to their media coverage, however. How a candidate presents himself or herself is usually reflected at least to some extent in their coverage. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox (2005) find that, while women are able to have some effect on what the media discusses in relation to their candidacy, they are not as accurately conveyed as their male counterparts. The media still applies certain gender filters to the coverage of female candidates no matter how masculinized they portray themselves. This study also finds that, while we would expect the novelty effect to wither as female candidates become more commonplace, this is not the case. Female candidates are still primarily described as a "Woman Candidate" despite professional efforts to correct gender bias in the news industry. Lanier Frush Holt (2012) came to a similar conclusion in his assessment of the prominence of the novelty effect in a race that was void of the stereotypical white male candidate. While examining the news coverage of the race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama toward the end of the 2008 democratic primaries, Holt was able to view novelty candidates who could only be compared to other novelty candidates. While there was no one to compare these two minority candidates to, the novelty effect was still significantly higher for Clinton than for Obama. This shows that, despite the fact that more women are running for higher offices, their novelty remains in the forefront.

Scholars have also discovered that coverage focuses on the horserace aspect of a campaign when a female candidate is involved, especially for offices that women tend to have a lower success rate in such as Senator. Horserace coverage reports on a political race as if it were a horserace, talking about who is ahead, who is falling behind and using opinion polls to prove this. Focusing on the polling numbers will reinforce voters' beliefs about a woman's ability to hold a particular office. In addition, the media continues to focus on feminine issues like health care and education when discussing female candidates, which signals to voters their inability to deal with more male issues of military or the economy. This directly affects the success of female candidates running for offices in that highlight these "male issues" as eminent to the job (Khan 1994).

Yet framing a woman for a certain role is nothing new to the media. Diana B. Carlin and Kelly L. Winfrey (2009) applied the four major frames of professional women to Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin in their 2008 campaign coverage. These frames come from Rosabeth Moss Kanter's book *Men and Women of the Corporation* (1977) and include portrayal of women as a seductress or sex object, mother, pet, and iron maiden. All four frames undermine the ability of a candidate to portray themselves as viable for office. According to Carlin and Winfrey, all of these frames were applied by the media to both Palin and Clinton with varying, but consistently negative effects. Though Clinton and Palin presented themselves in opposite ways and came from opposite ends of the political spectrum, both were subjected to gender bias in the media. Both candidates were unsuccessful in their attempt to be the lead on a presidential ticket and the gendered media coverage they received played a major role in the candidates' lack of success.

Although the increased frequency of female candidates at the state and national levels of office should reduce the novelty effect for future candidates, the number of women running for executive office remains low. With few women in executive office, the novelty effect may actually increase as women begin to seek important executive positions. Lindsey Meeks (2012) suggests that media coverage changes as women move higher on the political ladder because of this increase in the unconventionality of their candidacy. Their coverage will also become increasingly negative as their femininity becomes more of a disadvantage to their campaign. The executive office forces female candidates to find the balance between remaining feminine but at the same giving off just enough masculinity for the voters to have confidence in their ability to perform the tasks of the office. Overall, her findings suggested that, "gendered news gaps were consistently greater when women sought higher, more executive offices" (Meeks 2012).

A cross-national study by Miki Caul Kittilson and Kim Fridkin (2007) similarly suggests that "gender differences in press treatment appear to be more dramatic for presidential candidates," implying that the higher the office the more gendered the media coverage. Unlike Meeks, however, Kittilson and Fridkin acknowledge the media is not the be-all-end-all to voters' opinions and that personal stereotypes play a major role until a voter is present with contradictory evidence. Their study was limited in the fact that they only dealt with Senate and House races and found that there is only a slight gender bias in coverage during election season for female candidates.

The use of framing and stereotypes is prominent in all levels of coverage and thus continue to affect the success rate of female candidates. In senatorial races, while the public is beginning to consider female politicians more capable and competent, women are still being portrayed as cold and masculinized. This frame is produced both by the media and by the candidates themselves in an attempt to look like a more viable candidate but have negative effects just the same. Being portrayed as cold plays in to Kanter's "Iron Maiden" stereotype of the professional female and continues to harm campaigns more than help them in the case of female candidates, even when running for a more masculine office like that of President of the United States. Here we see the beginnings of a double standard for female politicians who have to maintain their femininity while being just masculine enough for the public (Schlehofer, Casa, Bligh, and Grotto 2011).

Finally, we see hard evidence of coverage change while looking at women who have made jumps up the political ladder. These women, Elizabeth Dole and Hillary Clinton, both moved from one office to another and the media coverage changed each time they started a new campaign. Dole served Secretary of Transportation and Secretary of Labor, was the first female Senator of North Carolina and was a presidential candidate in the 2000 primaries. Clinton moved from First Lady to Senator of New York to presidential candidate in 2008 to Secretary of State. Both women have advanced their political positions and received negative media attention for their unorthodox career paths. Both women have changed our conceptions of a woman's capability to hold high offices, but only at their prompting with the presentation of a self that suggests qualifications for the office.

Dole's candidacy for president was short-lived but was not by any means free of negative attention. "Elizabeth Dole received a differential amount of media coverage than the male Republican presidential hopefuls. She received a different type of coverage along gender lines, and her in-depth coverage was decidedly gendered in ways that likely hindered her candidacy" (Heldman, Carroll and Olson 2005). She was subjected to media coverage that ultimately resulted in her defeat, despite the fact that

she was consistently polling second of all candidates prior to dropping out of the race. Her treatment by the news media is a distinct example of how media effects female politicians success rates more significantly than men (Heldman, Carroll and Olson 2005).

Clinton's coverage is even more significant in that she was in the view of the public longer than Dole. As First Lady, Clinton began receiving negative media attention for not fitting the housewife stereotypes the country held her to as First Lady and this coverage never really ended. She was discounted in her run for Senate with claims of taking advantage of her husband's recognition. "[T]he more that Clinton is framed as politically active in newspaper reports, the more likely the tone of the story is to be negative" (Scharrer 2002) meaning that the further up she moves, the more negative her media coverage becomes. Scharrer's study, however, only looks at Clinton's jump from First Lady to Senator, leaving out even larger jumps in office. The level of political activity involved in running for the offices Clinton held is significantly higher than what our society's current stereotypes allow, thus she becomes the subject of scrutiny regardless of her actions (Scharrer 2002).

The literature suggests that the media is improving by leaps and bounds in regards to the gendered, sexist nature of coverage for female candidates but there is still room for improvement. The media continues to use sexist frames as a lens to portray female candidates and, as a result, these women continue to suffer at the polls. Women like Elizabeth Dole and Hillary Clinton, who have advanced on the political ladder have proven that the glass ceiling still exists. The heightened masculinity of offices on the national level do not allow much room for interpretation of feminine qualities, consequently forcing female politicians to be subjected to a double standard of maintaining their femininity while giving off just enough masculinity to seem viable for the office.

Research Question

It would seem plausible that the type of coverage that a female candidate receives will change as they move from one level of office to another resulting in more gendered and negative coverage of female candidates. This is supported by the research proving the impact coverage has on a campaign, the difference in media coverage for female and male candidates, and the gendered nature of higher political offices. In this paper, I assess how Hillary Clinton was portrayed by the news media as she moved from office to office. In addition, during the course of my comparison I draw on the media coverage of female elected officials like Elizabeth Dole. I hypothesize that coverage of Hillary Clinton and other female politicians became more negative and more gendered as these prominent female politicians moved up (or attempted to move up) the political career ladder to higher-level positions. There is a barrier to executive office that women running for legislative positions do not face anymore; the media and society continue to view executive office as "male" despite the gains women have made in lower offices.

One of the challenges of this study is that Hillary Clinton could be placed in a category all her own when it comes to female politicians. Her career has developed an image almost free of gender and so it is clear that this is a semi-incomplete study. As discussed, Clinton has never fit the gender stereotypes the media uses and therefore has been subject to negative coverage since her husband took office. I bring in Dole because of this fact as a means of situating my arguments in a way that will demonstrate that they are broadly applicable to female politicians as a group.

Design

For this study, I will look at newspaper articles from papers that have the largest circulation in the US. I will be using the Lexis Nexis database to find these articles as it has a significant amount of data and will allow me to view the top 10 largest circulating newspapers in the country.

I will be looking at The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, Daily News of New York, New York Post, Washington Post, Chicago Sun-Times, the Denver Post, and the Dallas Morning News. This list is based on the average number of issues in circulation each weekday over a six month period ending on September 30, 2012. I have substituted the Dallas Morning News for the San Jose Mercury News in an effort to represent the major areas of the country: the far west (Los Angeles Times, the Denver Post), the Midwest (Chicago Sun-Times), the East Coast (The New York Times, the Daily News of New York, the New York Post, the Washington Post), and the South (Dallas Morning News).

While there seems to be a disproportionate amount of papers from the East coast, most of these papers are circulated across the country and are read by people both within and outside of the East Coast region. The largest circulating papers were chosen because they have influence over the largest number of people. The more people reading their papers, the higher the number of issues are in circulation meaning the more readers and potential voters they are reaching with whatever frames or messages they may be using.

With limited time for the analysis, I coded 50 stories from the time periods of each of the major offices that Dole and Clinton have held. This will be as a Senator, a cabinet member, the wife of a presidential candidate, and as a presidential candidate themselves adding up to 400 articles. While this may not be the best sample, ideally the sample would be much larger so as to gain a better understanding of the media's portrayal of the women at each of these periods, but for the sake of time, my study will be limited to these 400 articles.

The articles are automatically brought up in order of relevance as determined by the server, adding a layer of randomness as the papers will not be separated but mixed together in the results. In order to add a second layer of randomness, I will be using a random number generator in order to determine which 50 articles will be coded. I will first tell the generator how many total articles I have for that time period, and then continue generating random numbers, selecting the articles that fall at that number within the results, until I reach 50 articles.

Each article will be coded according to six major aspects of gendered news coverage: mention of dress or appearance, discussion of male versus female personality traits, mention of husband or marital status, discussion of female versus male issues, talk of "running as a woman" or use of novelty labels, and mention of political background (see appendix). These areas have been identified by Heldman (2005), Meeks (2012) and Lawless (2009) as recurring elements in gendered news coverage.

Ideally, multiple coders would do the coding but as I have little resources to recruit coders, I will be coding the articles myself. The coding keys have been constructed so as to eliminate as much personal bias as possible in an attempt to make up for the lack of diversity in the coding process.

Results

The articles coded for this study seem to suggest that gendered coverage increased as the candidates moved to higher offices but only slightly. Two of the categories coded, mentions of their novelty and mentions of female and male issues, increased. Mentions of female and male traits and discussion of the candidates politically relevant backgrounds maintained a steady level through all four of the time periods, and mention of appearance and marital status or family actually decreased as the women moved to more executive positions.

Many of the newspaper articles discussed the fact that the candidates were women holding the position or mentioned the fact that they were women running for executive office. The most frequent use of novelty labels was during Dole's time as Secretary of Transportation because she was the only female cabinet member under the Reagan administration. Dole became the token woman for the administration for their defense of diversity and on a variety of issues. For both women significant numbers of novelty labels were applied during their run for executive office, supporting the hypothesis that this time period would result in the most media gender bias.

Interestingly, both female and male issues were mentioned at increasing levels as the candidates moved up the political ladder. This is both because of the types of issues that are important to the different levels of office and the nature of the specific offices each woman held. Both women were in a position that required them to discuss or be mentioned in relation to male issues like the economy or foreign policy and military affairs. This would explain for the increase in mentions of male issues more so than an increase in gender bias in the coverage. The increasing levels of coverage for female issues, however, could be connected to an increase in bias.

Throughout the time spans examined, the newspaper articles maintained a generally steady level of mentions for female and male traits for both candidates. The significance in this finding, however, is that the number of mentions of male traits was significantly higher than female traits for both women across the board. Both women were described primarily in terms of male traits like being career-driven or as a leader. Further, the majority of the female traits applied to the women were negative like being emotional or their failure to fulfill female stereotypes of hosting tea parties or baking cookies.

Discussion of the women's politically relevant experience also maintained a quite steady and considerably low level when taking in to account the increasing amounts of experience each woman was getting over the course of the time period. It would have been natural for the mentions of political background to increase as time went on because the amount each woman was gaining in relevant background. The fact that the mentions stayed at the same level from the time their husbands were running for office to when they ran themselves is significant because these mentions effect how viable readers and potential voters consider the candidate.

There was, however, a decrease in the amount of discussion about both women's appearance and their family or marital status. This is more significant for Clinton than for Dole as her numbers were incredibly high in the earlier positions than Dole's were. Clinton experienced the most coverage about her appearance during her time in the Senate, which also happened to be almost purely negative coverage. A significant portion of the total articles mentioned the women's husbands and in Clinton's case, her daughter Chelsea, as well. The fact that these numbers decreased over time, however, could mean that the

media began to consider these two for their own merit, not only in relation to their husbands. The shift of focus away from their appearance could be that they were taken more seriously as politicians and therefore the media did not objectify them as much as women. Both of these category results would suggest that media bias fades as the women moved to higher offices.

Discussion & Conclusions

Overall, the data does suggest that media bias may increase as women move up to more executive offices, but a second study is needed to confirm the results. The fact that both Clinton and Dole have extensive resumes even before their husbands ran for president is important to consider. Some of the most significant conclusions that can be made from these results include the fact that mentions of politically relevant background did not increase as the women gained experience, and that the amount of coverage regarding the women's appearance and personal life decreased as they gained experience.

As Clinton and Dole gained experience in previous offices they became more qualified for their current and future positions. It would, therefore, make sense that coverage would discuss their background more frequently. The media seemed either to ignore the fact that their experience qualified them or that their qualifications were not as important as their gender. The lack of coverage relating to their experience and qualifications across time is not necessarily a signal of gender bias on its own but does suggest that bias is a possibility.

One of the most obvious characteristics of gendered media coverage is mention of the candidate's appearance or their family life. As the women moved in to more serious positions the amount of coverage regarding what they were wearing or defining them according to their husbands decreased significantly. This suggests that the media began to view the women as more serious individual politicians rather than simply the wives of powerful men whom they could sexually objectify. This is not to say that all writers were really changing their opinions on Clinton and Dole, but they were not expressing blatant gender bias in their writing. It also certainly does not mean that gender bias completely disappeared from coverage of Clinton and Dole, it just means that the bias was possibly more subtle than it had been or that writers found other ways to convey these same sexist opinions.

Male versus female issues is another important indicator to note in the coded articles because, while they are often a very good indicator of gender bias, for these two women it is not necessarily the best way to prove gendering in coverage. Clinton served as Secretary of State, a position where she would have been discussed in relation to many male issues like foreign policy and military affairs simply because of the nature of the position. Dole sat on the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, the Armed Services Committee and the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee during her time in the Senate. All three of these committees deal with what are considered traditionally 'male' issues like the economy and military affairs so it only makes sense that coverage of Dole would have also discussed male issues. In the case of Clinton and Dole, their positions easily explain the increase in coverage of male issues.

While this study suggests that there is media bias that increases as female candidates move up the political ladder, it is still a fairly gray area for political communications and gender and politics studies. This study gives a good starting point for further research by raising new questions about gendered coverage such as whether there would be a difference in male versus female issues for women who did not serve in positions that leaned one way or the other, if the reduction in appearance coverage was isolated to

these women or if it applies to the wider group of women candidates, and what effects these changes in coverage have on potential voters.

Each of the indicators that were examined on their own do not prove gender bias, it is through a combination of each of these among other factors that can show gendering in coverage. The sample size in this study is too small to make any definite generalized conclusions, however, and a second study is necessary to prove whether or not this was because of the particular articles or candidates selected or if this theory can be applied to in a larger context.

Appendix

Coding Key

DRESS/APPEARANCE: Anything related to their clothing or physical appearance

FEMALE ISSUES: health care, childcare, the environment, domestic abuse, marriage equality, education

MALE ISSUES: military affairs, economy, foreign policy, national security, immigration

MARITAL STATUS/FAMILY: Use of the words husband, wife, son, daughter, mother, father, or child; any mentions of the specific names of family members i.e. Bill Clinton, Bob Dole, Chelsea Clinton, etc.

FEMALE TRAITS: caring, emotional, homemaker, dependent, weak, passive

MALE TRAITS: independent, strong, leader, dominant, assertive, competitive, insensitive, strong, brave

NOVELTY LABELS: Any specification of the fact that they are women running for office or that it is a woman holding their specific position.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND: Any mention of past positions held but not necessarily political positions. Much of the background is not necessarily politically drive, therefore positions like Clinton being a partner at a law firm or Dole's time as president of the American Red Cross were included in this section. These positions are politically relevant but not directly political in nature.

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Are the media at least partly to blame for women's underrepresentation in politics? The question has generated much debate.¹ Early studies found that male candidates received more total coverage and better coverage than female candidates. Newer studies find that coverage for women has improved with time. But gendered coverage continues to be a challenge for women's candidacies. And while the rise of new forms of media offers women candidates new opportunities to connect with voters, it has also created new opportunities for sexism to impact women's candidacies. Media coverage of women candid... Gender and the Media's Coverage of the 2008 Vice Presidential Candidates. *Politics & Policy* 40 (2): 221-257. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2012.00350.x/abstract> Jalalzai, Farida. 2006. "Women Candidates and the Media: 1992-2000 Elections." The data on share of female political candidates come from the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The results show that there is, even when controlling for the number of women in parliament, electoral system, gender quotas, level of human development, level of women's rights, freedom from corruption, and media access, a significant relationship between media sexism—measured as (i) the share of all news subjects that are women and (ii) the share of all news subjects portrayed. War on women is a slogan in United States politics used to describe certain Republican Party policies and legislation as a wide-scale effort to restrict women's rights, especially reproductive rights. Prominent Democrats such as Nancy Pelosi and Barbara Boxer, as well as feminists, have used the phrase to criticize proponents of these laws as trying to force their social views on women through legislation. The slogan has been used to describe Republican policies in areas such as access to reproductive