

Introduction

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The idea for this themed issue began as a research conference held at Arizona State University (ASU) in April 2014. The conference, organized by our Women and Politics Working Group in the School of Politics and Global Studies (SPGS) at ASU, highlighted SPGS's unique comparative specialization in women and politics. The title of the conference was "Women, Media, and Politics in a Comparative Perspective," and all the articles in this themed issue focus on some aspect of this general theme.

One group of articles focuses on how women in government are treated by the news media. To begin, the article by Maarja Luhiste and Susan Banducci, entitled "Invisible Women? Comparing Candidates' News Coverage in Europe," examines news coverage of men and women candidates running for election to the European Parliament. In their analysis Luhiste and Banducci rely on the 2009 European Election Study (EES) Media Content Data covering both television news broadcasts and newspapers in the 27 European Union member states.

The authors hypothesize that women's news media coverage during electoral campaigns would be affected by a number of factors, including the actions of the parties, the electoral rules, and the gender of the candidates. For example, Luhiste and Banducci hypothesize that gender differences in candidate coverage may depend on specific electoral rules, such as the type of voting systems, and on party gatekeepers' decisions when ranking candidates in electoral lists. However, once controlling for these factors, the authors continue to find a persistent, albeit small, gender gap in the amount of coverage. Even after controlling for viability, for instance, the gender gap in coverage does not disappear.

Maria Escobar-Lemmon, Valerie Hoekstra, Alice Kang, and Miki Caul Kittilson, in "Just the Facts? Media Coverage of Male and Female High Court Appointees in Five Democracies," look at how female nominations to high court appointments are covered in the news media

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in Argentina, Canada, South Africa, and the United States. The authors compare coverage of women nominees to coverage of the most temporally proximate male nominee. In addition, the authors conducted a qualitative analysis where they looked at patterns of news coverage over time within each of the countries.

This comparative analysis of media coverage of judicial nominees shows that across all five countries, female justices are covered in terms of their gender and the novelty of having the first woman on the high court. In addition, the results of the qualitative analysis suggest that news coverage of female nominees often reinforces gender stereotypes. For instance, if female judicial nominees do not conform to gender stereotypes (e.g., a woman judge who questions aggressively from the bench), these traits are often highlighted in news coverage in a negative way. The authors conclude that gender stereotypes pervade news media coverage of high court nominations, mirroring patterns found in the electoral arena.

The article by Melinda Adams, "Context and Gendered Media Frames: The Case of Liberia," utilizes content analysis to examine news coverage of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in her 2011 and 2004 campaigns for president of Liberia. When comparing coverage of Johnson Sirleaf with her male opponent, Adams examines five Liberian-based newspapers.

Adams finds that many of the gender stereotypes that pervade news coverage in other countries, like the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Australia, are not present in Liberia. For example, the press paid no attention to Johnson Sirleaf's appearance and featured few mentions of her family roles. Nevertheless a few gender differences were uncovered. For instance, Adams explains that six years after being elected to office, Johnson Sirleaf was still far more likely than her rival to be referred to by her first name.

Linda Trimble, in her article, "Julia Gillard and the Gender Wars," relies on a critical discourse analysis to examine the use of the metaphor of gender wars to describe Julia Gillard's political strategies and speech in the Australian news media. In October 2012, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard delivered a powerful 15-minute speech in the House of Representatives, criticizing her primary opponent for sexist and misogynist statements and behaviors.

Trimble analyzes the meanings revealed by the use of the metaphor of gender wars to describe the actions of Gillard and her party. Trimble finds that configuring gender as a weapon of war worked to emphasize certain aspects of gender and political power while excluding others. For instance, the metaphor characterized Gillard's political strategy as

conflicting with widely held cultural norms about appropriate behavior on the political “battlefield.” Trimble concludes that the news media, by disciplining Gillard for challenging political and cultural norms, led to the exclusion of discussion about gender bias and discrimination against women.

Orlanda Ward, in her article, “Seeing Double: Race, Gender and Coverage of Minority Women’s Campaigns for the U.S. House of Representatives,” provides an important addition to our understanding of media coverage of women officeholders by focusing on issues of intersectionality in media coverage of political campaigns. Analyzing local newspaper coverage for the frequency and overall tone of coverage, as well as explicit foregrounding of female candidates’ gender, Ward utilizes a sample of paired campaigns varying the matched pairs on the basis of race and gender. She finds that minority women receive less positive and more negative coverage than all other racial gendered groups, leading to compounding disadvantages for minority women based on their racial and gendered identities.

The remaining three articles move the focus away from examining news coverage as a dependent variable to looking at how the media (controlled and uncontrolled media) influence citizens. To begin, Stuart Soroka, Elisabeth Gidengil, Patrick Fournier, and Lilach Nir, in their article, “Do Women and Men Respond Differently to Negative News?” rely on an innovative approach to study sex differences in responses to negative news. They utilize real-time physiological responses, such as measurements of skin conductance and heart rate to examine whether there are differences in the extent to which women and men are aroused by and attentive to negative news stories.

Soroka and his colleagues find, using these physiological measurements, that women pay more attention to negative news content than men. The evidence they present suggests women are more greatly affected by and are more likely to dislike negative information. Therefore, given the dominance of negative news content in today’s news, women may be less likely to pay attention to news because they are more affected by the negativity of the news.

In the article by Kim Fridkin, Jillian Courey, Samantha Hernandez, and Joshua Spears, “Gender Differences in Reactions to Fact Checking of Negative Commercials,” the authors use an experimental design to examine how men and women respond to a fact check message of a negative campaign commercial. Consistent with the findings of Soroka

and colleagues, the authors find that men and women respondents differ in their receptivity to fact checking of negative messages.

More specifically, the results of the experiment show that women, who are significantly less tolerant of negative campaigning than men, are more responsive to fact check messages questioning the validity of the charges made in a negative commercial. In particular, women are less likely to view negative commercials as useful or accurate when they are exposed to a fact check challenging the facts presented in an attack advertisement. The authors also find that women are less likely to believe the claims in negative commercials when they view a fact check challenging the advertisement's claims. Men, in contrast, are less likely to be influenced by fact checks refuting the assertions made in a negative commercial.

The final article, authored by Stephen C. Craig and Paulina S. Rippere, "He Said She Said: The Impact of Candidate Gender in Negative Campaigns," also utilizes an experimental design. In particular, the authors employ data from a survey experiment to examine gender differences in the effectiveness of a personal attack made by a challenger against an incumbent of the opposite sex in a hypothetical race for the U.S. House of Representatives. The authors are interested in examining whether gender stereotypes lead people to react differently to attacks launched by a female candidate, compared to the same criticism offered by a male candidate.

Craig and Rippere find that the candidate's party is more powerful than gender in shaping voters' reactions to attacks as well as responses from candidates. Furthermore, the authors find that negative ads are only slightly less effective for women candidates, compared to men candidates, but the differences fail to reach statistical significance.

Taken together, these articles advance our understanding of the relationship between gender and the media around the world. We find that gender differences in news coverage persist in coverage of women political candidates, women prime ministers, and women nominees to the high court. However, these gender differences in news treatment are not invariant and respond to structural and political factors. In addition, we learn that women and men often respond differently to negative news as well as fact checking of negative advertising. In contrast, men and women are less likely to react differently when men and women candidates launch attacks during campaigns.