

Electoral Candidates and the Media:
An exploratory study on framing of female
candidates

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Abstract

This study sets out to explore the differences in the framing of male and female candidates in the media. It intends to provide a deeper understanding of how candidates are represented in newspapers. The results are valuable for both indicating future directions of research and for candidates intending to run for office.

Three pairs of candidates from the 2010 General Election in the United Kingdom are looked at. The articles that were published on the candidates in the three selected races are analysed by employing framing analysis to identify the differences in representation between male and female candidates.

The study shows that certain differences, which were expected to be based on the existing literature did not play a role in reporting on these candidates, while others were still significant. A frame that has not previously been identified in research and that is employed by reporters in all three districts is also uncovered. It is found that female candidates are more commonly represented in terms of their party belonging and national politics while male candidates are more often reported on in connection with local issues and independent of party affiliation. These results, while not vastly generalizable, indicate that more research is needed to understand the differences in reporting due to candidates' gender when running for public office.

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1. Introduction

Despite the fact that the last century saw the number of women in elected office increase dramatically, in most countries, even today, they are vastly outnumbered by men, especially at the higher levels of public life. One might argue that there is no reason a specific group like women should be represented in the same ratio as its members are present in the population, given that any such wide group will hold individuals with varied concerns, ideologies, and experiences. Nevertheless, there are both outcome-oriented and symbolic reasons why increasing the number of women in democratically elected institutions is important.

First of all, it has been found that a more numerically fair representation of women (referred to as ‘descriptive representation’) improves the attention given to issues that primarily impact women, for example equal pay for equal work or affordable child care and education (Childs & Krook, 2006). Given that these substantive issues impact the majority of society, it is clearly worrying that they are not given reasonable consideration in day to day politics. Furthermore, the presence of female representatives could also improve policy making in general because women might bring different values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills to the political arena (Mackay, 2004). Additionally, the presence and visibility of women in elected office also carries symbolic value, signalling that women are considered equal, especially towards those who would identify as belonging to the same group as them (i.e.: other women) (Childs, 2008).

There are many theories of why there still are so few elected female politicians. A significant barrier has often been found to be gender stereotypes held by most actors in the political arena including the politicians themselves (Kahn, 1996). They affect many of the steps along the path of becoming an elected representative, influencing female politicians’ willingness to run,

their parties willingness to nominate them (Lawless & Pearson, 2008), and supporters' willingness to support them through donations and votes (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993b).

The results of past studies indicate that gender stereotypes also influence the media (Kahn, 1996). It is generally accepted that the media has an effect on how people think and what they believe (Graber, 2005) but what this effect exactly is and how it occurs is disputed. One theory about how media affects people's perception is framing theory. According to this theory the journalists' choice of which pieces of information to emphasise and which pieces to omit influences the reader in how they will understand and evaluate the events being reported upon, beyond just the objective facts that are presented (Entman, 1993). Past research has found that there is a tendency to frame male and female candidates differently in the media (Bystrom et al., 2004; Norris, 1997).

This paper builds on that research by exploring the differences of male and female electoral candidates in terms of framing in the media during the 2010 General Election in the UK. This is an intriguing election to study because it was hoped that it would bring significant improvements to women's representation but the results in this area were disappointing (Baines & Harris, 2011). Three closely contested districts were selected for analysis. In all three cases the coverage of the male and the female candidates were first compared within the district and then the districts were compared to each other.

The research had several goals. Firstly, it aimed to test if differences in media representation identified in the past could be found during this election. Secondly, it intended to explore possible future areas of research and thus enrich the understanding of both academics and practitioners on what challenges female candidates face when running for office.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First the relevant literature will be reviewed. This will be followed by the explanation of the methodology employed for the research. The results of

the study will be presented district by district, followed by the conclusions and suggestions for possible direction of further research.

2. Literature Review

First some of the literature on the reasons for women's underrepresentation will be reviewed. This will be followed by an analysis of what role media plays in connection to women's underrepresentation. Lastly framing theory will be explored in more depth.

2.1 Reasons for Women's Underrepresentation in Politics

One of the possible explanations for female candidates not being elected could obviously be that they are less qualified than their male rivals. The opposite seems to be true, however, with female candidates being of better "quality" than their male rivals. Fulton (2011) reached this conclusion by comparing the evaluations of informed observers of candidates who run for office in the United States. Her results showed that the women candidates systematically were of better "quality" than their male rivals. There is another more intuitive explanation for this observation as well. It would not be too outlandish to think that the women who, despite the deck being stacked against them, manage to get as far as being candidates would be more qualified than the male candidates for whom becoming nominated is less of a challenge (Lawless & Pearson, 2008).

Ever since the issue of equal representation has emerged several other reasons for why women do not reach higher office have been proposed. Most of these are practical reasons, for example the fact that women are less likely to be selected as candidates, that they are at a disadvantage when fundraising or that there are fewer women who are positioned for a career in politics due to their current occupation (as a large number of politicians emerge from certain fields like law or management) (Banwart, 2010). The fact that women (who are, due to the low number of women already in office, usually challengers) are mostly running against incumbents is also generally assumed to put them at a disadvantage (Kousser, 2005). While many of these barriers have fallen over the past decades with more women being nominated

for public office around the world and more women working in the aforementioned 'pipeline jobs' (Fox & Lawless, 2011), representation is still far from equal. This is unsurprising given that barriers still persist, including particularly notable ones like the gender stereotypes held by political actors (including politicians, the electorate, and the media).

2.1.1 Gender Stereotypes

Due to widely held gender stereotypes actors make assumptions about female politicians and political candidates independent of what the candidate or politician is like (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a). It is usually assumed that women are more competent in connection with issues that are perceived as feminine, like health care, family policy, housing, and social security, as well as the so-called women's issues, but less adept at handling "masculine" topics like security, economy, or defence (Carlson, 2007). They are also seen as possessing different personality traits such as honesty, integrity, caring, and passion, and lacking decisiveness and rationality (Carlson, 2007).

These stereotypes represent a disadvantage for women because political talent and competence is generally associated with traits and issues that are considered masculine, especially when running for higher office (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993b). In short, the candidate-image - the sum of the candidate's perceived issue priorities and personality traits (Newman, 2001) - that female candidates have, which is a crucial factor in elections, greatly disadvantages them (Juholin, 2001). Research also indicates that voters, party leaders, and the candidates themselves think that female candidates do worse at the polls even though there is no actual evidence for this (Sanbonmatsu, 2006).

It has to be noted, however, that despite this general trend there are certain elections and electoral climates when an issue traditionally associated with women takes centre stage (Kahn, 1996). In these cases female candidates could potentially benefit from gender

stereotypes as voters would feel they are better qualified to handle the issues that are important than their male rivals (Kahn, 1996). This is similar to the so-called ‘issue ownership effect’ when voters believe that certain parties are able to address issues that are associated with them more effectively (Herrnson et al., 2003). The problem with this is twofold. First of all, if it is only certain elections when stereotypes become an advantage, it is unclear if women are in a position to make good on this opportunity when it comes around. Secondly, this does not change the fact that women are constrained to focus on certain topics, independent of their interests or ideology, making them far less flexible to deal with electoral challenges.

There are some who claim that gender stereotypes are not widely held anymore by the voting population (at least in Western democracies) (see Banwart, 2010). However the results of these studies have been questioned for two reasons. Because in certain societies gender stereotypes or sexism are socially unacceptable, there is a strong chance that respondents’ answers were influenced by social desirability, in other words by the fact that respondents were aware which answers they were expected to give (Banwart, 2010). The other problem is that people are not always aware of the stereotypes they have. While people may be reluctant to admit that they prefer a candidate over another due to his/her gender, they will readily modify their evaluation criteria to be able to give a good reason for selecting someone from the preferred group.

This has been demonstrated in an experiment by Uhlman and Cohen (2005) where respondents were given the CVs of two candidates for a job - one with more practical experience and the other with better education. The experiment was performed repeatedly with different groups. The only change was that the researcher switched whether it was the female or the male candidate who had the more practical experience. Independent of how

much they admitted to have explicit stereotypes, respondents systematically considered the experience that the male candidate had as more valuable for the position.

A similar effect has been theorized to take place in politics. Researchers have suggested that while voters mostly do not think that either gender is more or less fit to hold public office, they still evaluate a candidate's policy stances through the filter of gender stereotypes. Consequently they rate a female candidate lower when comparing her to a similarly qualified male candidate (Friedkin & Kenny, 2009). Furthermore, even if explicit gender stereotypes were on the decline, voters seem to have a baseline gender preference when selecting candidates. They decide whom they want to vote for, at least in part, either consciously, but even more likely unconsciously, based on the candidate's gender (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). When female political actors attempt to address these disadvantageous views, they can run into problems. Since their actions and statements are evaluated through the lenses of these stereotypes, it is very difficult to change the widely held views about their assumed competences (Friedkin & Kenny, 2009).

2.1.2 Backlash Effect

Female political actors also face the so-called "backlash effect". This refers to the phenomenon that when women behave in a manner different than the stereotypical one, they would be seen as unnatural and accused of being unsympathetic and psychologically unhealthy (Rudman & Glick, 2001). The "backlash effect" is sometimes referred to as the "double bind effect" as women in leadership positions have to navigate between being too feminine (and consequently being seen as unsuited for politics) and too masculine (thusly being seen to be "too aggressive" and "un-feminine") (McGinley, 2009). The double bind effect can be observed when female candidates or politicians display traits that are considered masculine and are consequently regarded negatively (Myers, 2008).

To see this effect in action one only has to think of the terms that have been bandied about concerning high profile female politicians, from Hillary Clinton, through Angela Merkel, to Margaret Thatcher (the “Iron Lady”) (Carroll, 2009). This means that often for female candidates straying “too far” into the “territory” of male politicians will be seen as unattractive. In other words displaying stereotypically “masculine” traits could make it more difficult for female candidates to gain popularity than it would be for a male candidate who is characterised similarly.

2.1.3 The Political Arena as a Male Domain

It has also been noted that the political arena is often seen as a male domain. This is both supported by the fact that women are seen as a curiosity and an exception (Norris, 1997), as well as the big number of terms and phrases that are associated with both politics and with masculine activities, that form a terminology that is more suited to the experiences and way of thinking of male politicians (Ross, 2002b). This is not necessarily a result of blatant and open discrimination; rather it is more subtly expressed ‘unwelcomeness’.

An example which helps to illustrate this kind of less direct exclusion is the fact that dress codes in parliaments are often lacking a written form (Ross, 2002b). This is problematic for female representatives because while the dress code for men is rather obvious for women it is a much more complex area to navigate. Moreover women receive much more scrutiny in connection with this question. Ross (2002b) claims that these and other similar practices, while not very significant on their own, create an atmosphere that is hostile to women. The perspective that politics is a man’s world makes it less likely that women will want to enter into the realm of politics, that voters will be willing to elect them, and that they will succeed and stay in politics after being elected.

2.2 The Effect of Media

Another actor which makes it harder for women to get ahead in politics is the media. The power that media has in society and especially over the outcome of elections has been hotly debated in academic literature and, unsurprisingly, no clear conclusion has been reached. There is some evidence that the media has at least some effect (Graber, 2005), but what shape that effect takes is a more complicated question. There is some relatively clear evidence for the existence of the so-called “learning effects”, which refer to people gaining new information through the media (Patterson & McClure 1976). On the other hand, evidence for persuasion or people changing their opinion because of something they saw in the media is less frequent (Norris et al, 1999).

However, neither of these direct effects seems to be significant from the point of view of female political representation today. Blatant and clear discrimination has become relatively rare and consequently it is unlikely that the media (or at least the mainstream) would transmit information which would impact directly female candidates in a negative way (Norris, 1997). It is more likely that some kind of indirect (or at least less obvious) bias may still have an influence on the voters.

This leads back to the question of gender stereotypes discussed above. There is evidence that the media and those working in the media just like voters hold gender stereotypes (Kahn, 1996). These stereotypes in turn influence reporting (Kahn, 1996). This is very detrimental to the prospects of female politicians because the media is generally seen as having an important impact on elections' outcomes by amplifying candidates' messages and through agenda setting (Kahn, 1996).

The influence of stereotypes on reporting forces female candidates to follow the agenda set by their male counterparts and makes it more difficult for them to shed or change assumptions

that voters hold onto based on their gender (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008). Several studies have shown that certain stereotypes appear in media reporting again and again when it comes to female political candidates (Major & Coleman, 2008). In fact, when asked, female candidates in Britain, Australia, and South Africa named the media as one of the most important barriers for women to enter into politics (Ross, 2002a).

Several studies seem to confirm this theory. An experimental study by Bligh et al. (2012) showed that the nature of media coverage affects participants' evaluation of female candidates. In the experiment different groups of subjects were given newspaper articles about a female senator. Each group was given a version of the same article. The texts were modified in terms of the attitudes they displayed towards the senator (positive/negative) and the characteristic of the senator they focused on (competence/personality). Both dimensions were found to impact strongly on the senator's likability. Furthermore, even when the candidate was portrayed as competent, respondents felt that they could not trust her, leading to lower evaluations on the likability scale. According to the authors this relates to the previously mentioned "double bind" problem coupled with generally stereotypical coverage (Blight et al, 2012).

Research by Kahn (1996) and Bystrom et al. (2004) analysed the newspaper coverage of female candidates in various US elections. They studied elections for different offices (gubernatorial and senatorial) and at different times (from as early as 1994 to 2002). They primarily relied on quantitative content analysis to evaluate reporting. By coding various newspaper articles based on both how often candidates were mentioned and in connection to which issues, they found that women running for office face a clear disadvantage.

While there were variations in their findings, female candidates in general received less coverage and in particular less issue-focused coverage. This was especially true in connection

with "masculine" issues (Kahn, 1996). They also found that newspapers were more likely to report on female candidates' viability for being elected and their personal life (for example marital status) (Bystrom et al., 2004). Encouragingly, it was also found that female candidates were covered in a more similar way to male candidates during later elections, with no differences at least in the amount of coverage in certain elections in 2002 (Bystrom et al., 2004).

In fact, Atkeson and Krebs (2008) found that when analysing the press coverage of candidates in six mayoral elections, no differences could be found between the reporting on the male and the female candidates. While this seems like a positive sign for another barrier to female representation breaking down, it has to be pointed out that Atkeson and Kerbs only studied elections where the female candidate ended up winning (and thus arguably they were more likely to receive good coverage, given their public support) and that the influence of stereotypes is thought to be increasing when running for higher office (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993b). In elections for such offices, according to Bystrom et al. (2004), while coverage was more equitable, it certainly was not completely balanced.

Similarly, Kittilson & Friedkin (2008) found in their study of newspaper coverage during elections in the US, Australia, and Canada that while the amount of coverage of male and female candidates was similar, it differed in content, again placing female candidates at a disadvantage. Hillary Clinton's presidential bid in 2008 is also cited as an example when gender stereotyping in the media was evident and might have played a role in her eventual failure to become the Democratic nominee for president by covering her campaign differently than those of her rivals (Carroll, 2009). These differences, as mentioned above, were, most commonly, not the straightforward sexism of days gone past, but were rather more subtle. They did not only arise from what was said, but also from how things were said, and what was not said.

2.2.1 Framing Theory

A theory of media effects that addresses this less obvious impact of reporting is framing theory. Framing can be explained through several metaphors. One of the most obvious one is included within the term itself. One can think of framing as a window or a picture frame which denotes the border of what the reader of a news story sees (Scheufele, 1999). However, this is misleading as there is more to framing than just selecting the swath of reality that is to be displayed to the reader.

Not only does framing emerge from which issues journalists choose to omit, but also on which issues they focus on. In other words, the framing of news (or any other story in fact) comes from "selection and salience" (Entman, 1993). This means that the framing is created by selecting which pieces of information are chosen to be in the story at all and which pieces are provided the most attention. In addition, frames also emerge from how information is presented, through the language used, the structure of the stories, and the reference points included (Schaufele, 1999). One could see a frame as a dominant theme that runs through a story, or the peg that the whole story is hung onto (Norris, 1997).

Frames serve the purpose of making information easier to communicate and easier to consume (Barnett, 1999). Frames organize information into a coherent whole (Barnett, 2005). In essence, because they provide a shortcut or bundle information in a way that is understood by the consumer of the information, additional explanation is unnecessary. Frames also influence how information is understood and interpreted by providing a direction from which to approach the story and understand the presented facts (Entman, 1993).

Indeed, experiments have shown that by changing the framing of a situation people will make entirely different decisions (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984). This implies that frames not only make it easier to communicate, but also influence how we perceive and act on a piece of

information (Entman, 1993). In fact this makes their function in peoples thinking process very similar to that of stereotypes. Frames can also pose a danger. When a story or an interpretation of a story steps outside the commonly used frames, it might be dismissed or taken as a fringe opinion (McLeod & Detenber, 1999). This can make it difficult to challenge the dominant understanding of an event or issue, because all understandings will always be rooted in the frames in which the subject is usually presented, eliminating potential alternative explanations. These effects make it clear why it is so important to look at how a story is framed for public actors, including political candidates. Frames will provide the lens through which the public, in other words the voters, will be interpreting their actions and statements, and eventually decide whether to cast their vote for them or not.

It is important to note that frames are not created merely through texts. They represent just one step in the process of creating a shared social agreement that allow frames to work in the first place (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The shared meaning is created through the actions of the reporters who create the text, the text itself, and the consumers of the text who interpret it, who accept or reject the frame, and who internalize it (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Through these actions a social agreement, essentially an understanding of what a given shortcut refers to, is created (Pan & Kosicki, 1993).

Overall, while many barriers for a more equal representation of women in democracies have fallen, it is nevertheless difficult for women to enter and succeed in politics due to still prevalent gender stereotyping among all political actors and the difficulties they face in overcoming these stereotypes. The media plays a crucial role in influencing how people see the world, and consequently the unequal and unbeneficial coverage that women receive is one of the greatest hurdles that they need to overcome in order to be elected.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Objectives and Questions

The primary purpose of this research was to explore the differences in framing used in the media coverage of male and female political candidates. As described in the previous section frames play an important role in the media's impact on election outcomes. Exploring the differences in how the candidacy of male and female political hopefuls is framed can help to understand the challenges that female candidates face.

While there is a rich literature relating to the topic, as the interpretation and the role of gender in different areas of society is constantly changing, it is important to explore more recent elections. Enriching the understanding of what frames female and male political candidates are likely to encounter is not only useful for those interested in equal political representation, but also to the candidates themselves who need to be aware of what they could be expecting from the media when running for office. While the scope of the present research does not allow us to draw general conclusions on these issues, it intends both to test the findings of previous work, and to uncover directions that are likely to be fruitful for further study.

3.2 Case Selection

This study focuses on the General Election of 2010 in the United Kingdom. This election was chosen for several reasons. First of all, it was expected to bring big gains for the representation of women (Campbell & Childs, 2010). Not only did both major parties field more female candidates than ever before but commitments were made by both to get more women into the House of Commons (Burness, 2010). It was also an election which brought big shifts in the government of the United Kingdom both in terms of the governing parties and by creating the first coalition government in decades. This election is further interesting since in the end the actual number of female MPs only increased marginally (by only 2.5%). It was

said that despite the focus on women, the media coverage of the televised leader debates overshadowed everything else (Baines & Harris, 2011), possibly contributing to this modest gain.

In order to reduce complications from different party ideologies and popularity, only members of the two largest parties (Labour and the Conservatives) were included in the study. Cases were selected where both the media and the candidate's gender were more likely to have played a role in the election outcome: the candidates competing in districts which were considered marginal or ultra marginal have been included in the study. Among these districts the ones where both the Labour and the Conservative candidates were polling in either first or second place were considered. These districts were selected because there the competition was likely to have been the most intensive and thus the media potentially had played a more important role.

From districts that fulfilled these criteria those were chosen where the Labour and Conservative candidates had a different gender. The reason was that if both candidates were of the same gender it seems likely that gender did not impact the differences in how the media represented them. To ensure greater comparability, the research looked at the media coverage of both the Conservative and the Labour candidates who stood in the given district.

From the set of districts that emerged based on the above criteria three districts were selected randomly for the study. The cases were selected in a manner to control for the effects of incumbency, which is often thought to play a significant role in both media coverage and electoral prospects in general. The coverage of all six candidates was studied primarily in the local press, and when available in the national papers as well. Given that relative sparse coverage of individual candidates in the media overall and especially in the national press, it

did not seem necessary to exclude any commercial papers from the study. The three districts studied were Broxtowe, Lincolnshire and Hastings and Rye.

The study employed framing analysis to allow for a deeper reading of the media texts. This is important because as Pippa Norris pointed out 15 year ago (1997) if female politicians and by extension political candidates are treated differently in the media than their male counterparts, this will not be evident from just a shallow reading of the media texts. The reason for this is, as pointed out before, that over the last decades outspoken malice, ridicule, and sexism against female political candidates has become almost extinct and certainly socially unacceptable (Norris, 1997). Therefore, if there were differences in media treatment they will be less obvious and it is more likely to be found in how stories about male and female candidates are communicated. This is what framing analysis can help to understand.

It is important to note that this study only looked at one component of the process of creating shared meaning and shared frames, namely the media texts themselves. As pointed out previously, while media texts do not exist on their own, in a vacuum, they are the medium through which meaning is transmitted and which most clearly would display the presence of frames. Obviously, if there were no specific frames applied only to female politicians, then the media would not influence the male and female politicians' evaluation differently, at least in the terms studied here.

It would be still possible that the consumers of media texts interpret certain frames differently when applied to male and female political candidates or conversely that they reject the frames that apply to only one or the other. However, to gauge how the frames are consumed is quite a complex - not to mention expensive - exercise, so unfortunately it is outside the scope of this study. This obviously means that the effects of various frames that appeared can merely be hypothesised, as they depend on the interpretation of the readers. As was the case with gender

stereotypes, being presented through certain frames, could both be an advantage or a disadvantage for candidates depending on the electoral climate. This does not constitute a problem, as the focus of this study was the media's treatment of candidates of various gender, which is something that manifests in the media text itself and there was no intent to draw conclusions about the effects the coverage might or might not have had on the readers.

3.3 Dominant Frames in Connection with Women in Politics

Past research has identified several frames that are likely to be found in the coverage of female political candidates. First of all, female politicians have been found to be framed more often in terms of their personality traits instead of their issue positions (Meeks, 2012). Further, there are also certain personality traits and issues which are considered more feminine or more masculine and are consequently mostly associated with candidates of that sex (Meeks, 2012).

Therefore, a sub-frame of the trait or issue frames analysed was whether the personality traits or issue-competences associated with a candidate were the same as would be traditionally assigned based on their sex. Which traits and issues are traditionally "masculine" and which are traditionally "feminine" have been determined based on Carlsons (2007) classification of 5 trait (traditionally "masculine": strength, experience and activity while women are expected to be compassionate and caring) and 4 issue categories (production and system maintenance are considered "masculine" while reproduction and women's issue are considered "feminine"). Overall, the framing analysis uses the *trait frame* and the *issue frame* as the categorization for traits and issues respectively, with subcategories for the various "kinds" of traits and issues.

Related to personality traits of politicians is the question whether female politicians face the double bind effect; in other words, if the *backlash frame* is employed when they are framed

through “masculine” traits or issues. A third frame that was likely to appear was the representation of female candidates as outsiders or as novelty candidates (Norris, 1997) (the *novelty frame*). It has to be noted that this frame is not necessarily negative as it could refer to the trail blazing nature of female politicians in certain situations or focus on how they are clean from the corruption that could be found among the currently elected representatives.

Related to this frame there were two more frames to look for. The first one was whether the candidate was being described in terms of viability (Bystrom et al., 2004) (i.e., framed through the *viability frame*). It has been alleged that this happens to female candidates more often than to male candidates. A further question to be examined was how the political arena itself was described: as a place where both men and women could thrive or as a masculine domain propagating the image that women do not belong and are not welcome there (Ross, 2002b). In the analysis, this is referred to as the *politics as a male arena frame*.

A fourth major frame that also has often been mentioned in the literature was the *appearance frame* (Bystrom et. al, 2004). Female candidates were often found to be more likely to be described in terms of their looks (for example what they wear) rather than what they actually represent, which makes it less likely that they will be taken seriously as candidates. The coding scheme employed in the study to denote the various frames is presented in Table 1. bellow.

Frame	Code	Description
Issue frame	1	Candidates framed in terms of their issue competences
<i>Reproduction</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>Issue frame concerned with issues related to transport and communication, construction, industry, business, agriculture and forestry, finance and economic policy, taxation and fiscal regulation, and energy and regional policies</i>
<i>System Maintenance</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>Issue frame concerned with issues related family, health, drugs and alcohol, housing and social security, education, cultural policy, environmental and consumer policy</i>
<i>Production</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>Issue frame concerned with issues related criminal policy and law enforcement, foreign and defence policy, the political and administrative systems, the position of minority and interest groups and the general political, administrative and legal relations between individual citizens and the government</i>
<i>Women's issues</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>Issue frame concerned with issues related comprising questions touching upon female-dominated groups, institutions and professions, women's health, women's position in marriage and work life, gender roles, etc.</i>
Trait frame	2	Candidates framed in terms of their personality
<i>Warmth/Compassion</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>Trait frame related to traits like understanding, caring, sensitive</i>
<i>Toughness/Strength frame</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>Trait frame related to traits like strong, decisive, aggressive</i>
<i>Honesty/Integrity frame</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>Trait frame related to traits like trustworthy, honest</i>
<i>Competence/Experience</i>	<i>2.4</i>	<i>Trait frame related to traits like knowledge, rational, capable</i>
<i>Activity</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>Trait frame related to traits like energetic, effective, hard-working</i>
<i>Backlash frame</i>	<i>2.6</i>	<i>Frame negatively presenting candidates for their traits</i>
Viability frame	3	Frame discussing the chances of candidates
Novelty frame	4	Frame showing the candidates as something new/out of place
Appearance frame	5	Frame presenting candidates in terms of how they look/dress
Politics as male arena frame	6	Frame showing politics as an area that is suited to men
New frame	7	A previously unidentified frame

Table 1. Coding of various frames

(Issue and trait frames description adopted from Carlson, 2007)

3.4 Analysis Process

Articles from the official campaign period were retrieved from the Lexis Nexis data base.

Only the official campaign period was considered in order to ensure that incumbents would not have disproportionately more material dealing with them than the challengers. Therefore

articles which appeared between 2010 April 06 (the day Gordon Brown asked the Queen to dissolve Parliament) and 2010 May 07 (the day after the election results were announced) were included in the study. The sample which was drawn includes all news items which went beyond just listing the candidates, opinion pieces, letters, and editorials. While some studies exclude the latter three because of the bias inherent in them, they are worth studying because they can provide insight into which frames are used by the authors to convey their point of view.

Overall 66 articles were included in the study, out of which a full 60 appeared in local news papers and only a mere 6 in the national press. For a breakdown of the sample for each case study see Table 2. below.

Seat	Number of articles in local papers	Number of articles in national papers	Number of articles overall
Broxtowe	22	0	22
Lincolnshire	27	4	31
Hastings and Rye	11	2	13

Table 2. Sample size in each seat

The retrieved articles were coded, according to which candidates they dealt with, and which frames were associated with these candidates in the text. A code was also added to capture whether the frame employed was positive, negative, or neutral. Of course some texts employed several frames for one candidate, and that others did not use any identifiable frames, and these were coded accordingly. The codes enabled easy comparison between candidates from any given district and between all male and female candidates in the sample at the beginning of the analysis. Next, the texts were analysed in depth both based on the frames laid out above, and with an eye to identify new frames which might not have been mentioned in the original literature. The results from this analysis are described in the next section.

4. Findings

In the following chapter the results of the analysis will be presented. After a few initial impressions about the amount and the kind of coverage the races have received in general, the three races will be discussed both in terms of the frames that have been identified based on the existing literature and in terms of frames which have emerged from studying this sample of articles. Following the discussions of the Broxtowe, the Lincolnshire, and the Hastings and Rye races, the results will be compared to see if there were any trends which hold true in all three.

4.1 Initial Impressions

The first striking thing about the coverage in all three districts is how meagre it was. In the surveyed period the local news appear to have carried only a few dozen articles mentioning the candidates in the districts. There was even less coverage in the national newspapers. In fact the Broxtowe election was not covered nationally at all, while only a couple of articles in national newspapers discussed the Lincolnshire and the Hastings and Rye race in any detail (going beyond just mentioning the candidates).

This is surprising for two reasons. Firstly, because the seats, especially the Lincolnshire one, were regarded as key battle ground (Lyons, 2010) that could crucially impact the outcome of the national election. One would think that their importance for the national results would make them more newsworthy. Secondly, all three races were too close to call with Lincolnshire even having a somewhat prominent politician in the race, therefore the low levels of coverage are even more surprising.

The coverage in the local newspapers (the *Nottingham Evening Post* for Broxtowe, the *Lincolnshire Echo* for Lincolnshire and the *Hastings & St Leonards Observer* and its sister paper the *Rye & Battle Observer* for Hastings and Rye) was usually brief and mostly issue

focused. Most articles, even in the national papers, focused on a single issue, and provided only the candidates' stances on it. While there were some differences in the styles between the papers, all heavily relied on statements by the candidates themselves, usually quoting them directly instead of paraphrasing. While at first glance this practice might seem to decrease the role of the journalists, in fact they still had a crucial task in selecting which quotes to present, in what order, and in connection with what other information.

4.2 Case 1: Broxtowe

Broxtowe is located in the East Midlands in Nottingham. The election was considered too close to call until the last moment and was decided by a few hundred votes after several recounts. The sitting Labour MP was Nick Palmer who had been representing the district since 1997 (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010b). He lost to the Conservative challenger Anna Soubry in the 2010 election. The local paper is the Nottingham Evening Post which has a circulation of around 35000 (Pugh, 2011).

4.2.1 Trait Frame

Overall the articles focused on issues and the candidates' opinions on them. There was only little indication of the candidates' traits. Nevertheless, traits obviously did appear and provided a frame through which the candidates and their statements were evaluated. '*Hardworking*' was a dominant theme that was associated with both candidates although it was represented differently in each case. While according to the schema laid out by Carlson (2007) this could be considered a trait of 'activeness' (traditionally associated with male candidates), the way 'hardworking' was framed here and which actions were cited as proof of being hardworking ascribed slightly different gendered traits to the two candidates.

Nick Palmer was usually shown as having worked hard for the area and being reliable, while Anna Soubry was presented as working hard only in connection with the campaign. In one

way this gave the impression that her focus was on being elected and only engaged with the issues for this purpose, while the Labour candidate was shown as more focused on doing a good job for the district. While this could have been an effect of incumbency, it was an interesting framing choice to only apply to Nick Palmer. Anna Soubry had been in the district for several years and consequently she had been active in local politics for quite a while as well. Furthermore, she had also worked in the area as a lawyer, and her achievements in that field seem to be pertinent to certain issues.

How the two candidates worked on their campaigns was also presented differently. For example, an article discussing the candidates' canvassing activities represented the two politicians very differently. *"She [Anna Soubry] admits it is a riskier area for the party, which is not a Tory stronghold. But this does not faze her as she strides over to people enthusiastically, keen to hear which way people will vote on May 6."* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a) Nick Palmer, on the other hand, *"walks down a residential street"* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a).

Anna Soubry is described in terms of what she is doing, instead of what voters think of her. She is not a passive participant in the events and even her actions are shown to be *"energetic"* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a), as she strides *"enthusiastically"* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a) in the city centre no less (an area where life is happening). The terms that are used to describe Nick Palmer's canvassing make him seem as more laidback, less dynamic, and less *"active"*. In other words, the traditionally *"masculine"* trait of activity is associated more strongly with the female candidate. However, this is not always presented positively.

"The Conservative candidate Anna Soubry, a lawyer, claims she and her party workers had already knocked on 10,000 doors in the constituency even before the campaign was officially under way." (Moncrieff, 2010). Here the fact that she has worked hard is presented in

uncertain terms, as if the figures should be put in doubt. This can be contrasted with the reporting of the same fact in another paper, where the number of knocked on doors is treated as a fact. "*Broxtowe Conservative candidate Anna Soubry and her team have knocked on 10,000 doors in the constituency this year.*" (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010f). However, in this case her actions are contrasted with those of Nick Palmer, who is quoted as saying: "*I am quite hopeful. I have 370 non-party volunteers, people who, over the years, I have worked with or done something for, or who think I have done a good job.*" (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010f). This way while no results of the hard work are cited directly for the female candidate, for the Labour MP clear success is presented.

These two ways of reporting on how candidates work-hard puts a question mark around the positive evaluation of the Conservative candidate's actions, while it couples it with another trait, experience, for the sitting MP. 'Experience' is also a trait that is traditionally considered "masculine" and here indeed it was mostly associated with the male MP, with his positive results often quoted with it. Yet, this might not be connected to the candidate's gender but rather incumbency.

Another interesting factor is that Anna Soubry was almost always described as a lawyer or former lawyer in addition to being the conservative candidate. This might have endowed her with some sense of being someone who was competent. The only time she was described as a former TV presenter was the article announcing that she won the election (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010b). Being connected to a well-respected profession for most of her statements conveys that those statements were coming from someone who should be considered competent. In other words, while Nick Palmer was more clearly shown as an experienced politician Anna Soubry's statements were also framed as coming from someone who also had significant and relevant knowledge, given that being a lawyer, as mentioned before, is considered a pipeline job for politics.

While aggressiveness was not typically associated with either candidate, there were some examples of quotes from candidate being framed by it. While most statements were presented in a neutral frame (usually “*as the candidate said*” or similar), there were exceptions. For example, when reporting on a debate on housing, the Conservative candidate’s opinion was framed as an attack (“*Ms Soubry attacked the current system*” (Walker, 2010)) while Nick Palmer was shown as having a far milder reaction as “*He suggested*” (Walker, 2010). While in this case Anna Soubry was obviously framed as more aggressive (a traditionally “masculine” trait), this was not a frame that was typically applied in the reporting on her.

Both candidates were also depicted as being caring and warm. The above discussed quotes from the article on canvassing (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a) shows how both candidates are caring and concerned with the opinions of others. While Anna Soubry is “*keen to hear*” (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a) and people treat Nick Palmer “*warmly as if he is an old friend who has stopped by out of the blue.*”(Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a).

Nick Palmer’s integrity and honesty were brought up quite a few times. For example, he was quoted as saying: “*For me, politics is about ideals; it is about making society better*” (Walker, 2010). There was no mention of Anna Soubry in connection with these traits, except for a voter questioning the trustworthiness of all parties’ candidates, except for that of the Labour candidate: “*he cares about the area. I’m not convinced that I’m going to get that from other candidates.*” (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a). It seems clear that this traditionally “feminine” trait was associated strongly with the Labour candidate.

Overall, the picture that was painted of the candidates was rather counter to gender stereotypes instead of conforming to them. While both candidates were described in terms that showed them as warm and caring and both were indicated to be competent (although Nick Palmer did seem more experienced), Anna Soubry was rather associated with the

traditionally “masculine” trait of being active while there was more focus on Nick Palmer's honesty (traditionally “feminine” trait).

The only observation that might give a slight pause is that while Nick Palmer's positive traits were hardly questioned, Anna Soubry's "activeness" was in some places presented in more critical terms, in fact as perhaps being too active, possibly in some way “pushy”. For example, the candidate's knocking on doors *"even before the campaign was officially under way."* (Moncrieff, 2010) makes her seem somewhat too keen. While this is not the case for all the reports, it might nevertheless be an example of the double bind, where being female but displaying a "masculine" trait, she might be, at least partly, penalized for it instead of rewarded. Nevertheless, but for this caveat, the coverage in terms of traits seems reasonably equitable. There did not seem to be a big difference in how often articles were framed by the candidates' personalities, and candidates' traits represented more of a secondary frame, within the more prominent issue frames.

4.2.2 Issue Frame

Given the issue-focused nature of the reporting there was a great variety of topics which were discussed. Issues were in a large number of the dominating frames in the articles. The candidates' stances were reported on in connection with housing, roads, policing, taxation, and health care. In one group of articles several candidates' opinions on these issues were described, but there was a second group where only the position of Nick Palmer was quoted.

In fact there was only one issue in connection with which only Anna Soubry's position was reported on but not the sitting Labour MPs, and this issue was policing. Even here, her position was contrasted to that of the other candidates, which made the Conservative candidate's opinion (as well as that of the other MP hopefuls), seem more controversial. Her statement appeared especially controversial because her rather negative appraisal of the

situation was followed the statements of police officers describing their achievements. Her statement was also the first one to mention not just the past, but also the current problems in the area, and she was the only candidate who actually criticized the officers themselves and not the police system ("*Too many police officers are demoralized*" (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010d) while the other candidates were shown as criticizing not the officers but the system ("*Police officers also move about too often. (...) then you're moved to another beat.*" (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010d).

Anna Soubry's opinion on housing issues was presented similarly in a frame that made it seem more controversial. Again the quote attributed to her ("*There has never been a full study of the needs of our borough but an extra 3,000 would certainly meet many of the local requirements.*" (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010e) was preceded by Nick Palmer's opinion ("*The numbers are not made up by politicians; they are extrapolated by demographics experts*" (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010e)) which made her statement seem rather less convincing. Nick Palmer, on the other hand, often did not have to contend with his opponent's framing of a particular issue. Two articles, discussing road maintenance and a permit tax, only mentioned him, and had quotes only from him. Furthermore, the issues were clearly presented as problems that needed to be solved without question (this can be seen just from the titles of the articles: "*Plea for housing estate's 'dangerous' roads to be completed*" (Robinson, 2010) and "*Beeston campaigners oppose permit 'tax'*" (Henesey, 2010). This kind of framing makes his views appear far more obvious and consequently easier to accept. This kind of coverage could be a result of his incumbency and his bigger involvement in local affairs, but the fact that journalists still chose to report on it without seeking positions from rivals is still significant.

Overall, the issues that candidates were framed through were not related to which gender the given issue is stereotypically associated with. However, the way the candidates' positions

were reported upon differed. Anna Soubry's positions were presented as more controversial or questionable, by setting up the issue counter to her positions and in every case contrasting her views with that of other candidates or actors as well. Nick Palmer, on the other hand, was more likely to receive coverage that made him seem engaging with real problems and essentially providing the only solution.

4.2.3 Viability Frame

While being a marginal district meant that it was a very close race, it was in fact the male candidate's chances which were under more scrutiny. In an article discussing the candidates canvassing activities (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a), he was shown as getting far more uncertain or even dismissive replies from voters (given that the final difference in votes was only a few hundred or less than 1%, it is unlikely that this was due to the overwhelming support for the Conservatives in the district). In fact, the whole article conveyed the sense that while Nick Palmer was trying to hold onto supporters (*"Another couple in the street, aged 60 and 63, echo this sentiment and invite him in for a cup of tea. However, they admit they are not sure who they will be voting for."* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a)) Anna Soubry was gathering new supporters.

On the one hand, the Labour's candidate's plight was illustrated by quotes from voters who were not certain to vote for him (*"I'm voting for the fruitcake party. Ukip," she says"* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a)), those who rejected Anna Soubry were only mentioned in passing (*"But Anna also meets a couple of staunch Labour voters who dismiss her campaign leaflet."* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a)). Furthermore, given that they were described as *"staunch Labour voters"* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010a) it is clear that they were just from a group which could not be convinced while some of those who rejected Nick Palmer were indicated as having voted labour in the last election. The article made out a far bigger

difference between them than there likely was in an actual support, and Nick Palmer's chances were placed in a frame that clearly questioned his viability.

The same happened in several articles discussing the surge in the support for the Liberal Democrats: "*sitting MP Nick Palmer freely admits that if Lib Dem supporters do not vote for him, he will lose his seat.*" (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010h). These articles mostly did not focus on the Lib Dems' chances in the district but instead made out their surge in popularity as the final nail in the coffin of Nick Palmer's re-election hopes. Even articles that did not address election outcomes per se at least implied that he might not be the MP soon, by pointing out that he was at the moment less of an MP and more of an election candidate "*Labour's Nick Palmer, who is campaigning to retain the Broxtowe Parliamentary seat*" (Robinson, 2010).

Anna Soubry's chances were discussed far less. However, since Nick Palmer was made out to be the underdog in the election, her odds of winning seemed much better, particularly given that the remaining candidates' chances were only described in terms which made them appear extremely unlikely (for example: "*hopes his party can produce a surprise here*" (Firth & Walker, 2010). Generally speaking Nick Palmer was framed far more often in terms of his questionable viability while Anna Soubry was implied to be the clear front runner.

4.2.4 Further Frames

The appearance and novelty frames identified in the existing literature were not present in the articles under study. Neither of the candidates appearances were remarked on, nor was there any indication that either of them should be regarded as representing something particularly new in the political space. Similarly, the political space itself was not framed in any way like the "masculine arena" that Karen Ross (2002b) previously observed.

Two frames which were not identified in the surveyed literature, however, did emerge. There were significant differences in whether the candidates and the race itself was represented in terms of local politics rather independent of party, or if the party was a more important factor, and the outcomes of the election and pledges were shown through the national lens. The can be referred to as the *personal/local* and the *party/national frames* respectively. In Broxtowe Anna Soubry was more likely to be connected with Conservative party politics and national initiatives, while reports on Nick Palmer were more locally focused, and he was more likely to be mentioned by name not just as the candidate for Labour.

For example, in an article discussing the various candidates' election chances, the Conservatives were discussed only as a party, but Nick Palmer was mentioned by name. *"Mary Brown, 76, who lives in Beeston, says she will be casting her postal vote for Nick Palmer this year."* *"The Conservatives are a strong favourite with the bookies this year in Broxtowe."* *"William Tyler, from Beeston, a second-year animal studies student at Nottingham Trent University who previously voted Labour, said: "I will probably vote for the Conservatives."* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010c).

Similarly when asked about the possibility of a hung parliament Nick Palmer was shown with a local focus (*"That is what I have always done locally."* *"As a constituency MP I have always tried to be proactive."* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010g), while Anna Soubry arguments were more applicable to the national level: *"She said a vote for her in this key marginal will help ensure a change in Government."* (Nottingham Evening Post, 2010g). Looking at all the articles Anna Soubry was depicted far more often in terms of her party belonging and national politics, while Nick Palmer was given far more chances to appear as an independent, local person, instead of a Labour backbencher.

4.2.5 Overall

Not all frames that were identified based on the previous literature were found to play a significant role in the reporting in Broxtowe, and particularly not in the way that was expected. The appearance and novelty frames were not found at all. While candidates were often framed in terms of their personalities and issue position, these only partly were in line with gender stereotypes and at other times were exactly opposed to them. Nick Palmer was presented as more honest and experienced, while Anna Soubry was more active, and in one case even aggressive. Both candidates were framed as caring and compassionate. The reversal of stereotypic traits did not have much negative impact on how the candidates were presented although in one case Anna Soubry was portrayed somewhat negatively for being "too" active.

In terms of issues there did not seem to be any gender related difference in reporting. Both candidates were asked about their opinion on most issues. The only difference was that the female candidate's opinions were more often framed as being controversial, while the male candidate several times could present his opinion "unopposed". In terms of viability, it was clear that, counter to expectations based on the literature, the male candidate's chances were questioned far more widely.

Two new frames were also identified. The male candidate was more often reported on from the perspective of personality and locality, while her party and national politics were more significant when presenting Anna Soubry. Naturally, these differences can be result of many other factors, most obviously incumbency and party belonging instead of gender and perhaps dependent on which issues were deemed newsworthy by the rest of the national media. This is why it was important to look at another campaign where the incumbency, party belonging, and roles were reversed, and to compare these observations to the situation there. This way factors other than candidate gender which might impact reporting can be controlled for.

4.3 Case 2: Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire is also located in the East Midlands, and the local election was also seen as a very tight race which would be crucial in determining which party would form the next government. The elected Labour MP in 1997, Gillian Merron, who also served as a health minister since 2009, was challenged by Karl McCartney of the Conservatives, who managed to win the seat. The local paper is the *Lincolnshire Echo*, which has a circulation of around 17000 (Pugh, 2011).

4.3.1 Trait Frame

Framing through traits was not very common in the Lincolnshire race. The framing was often negative: showing the candidates in terms of lacking a crucial capacity. For example, both candidates were indicated as being dishonest or untrustworthy when describing their positions on various issues.

For Gillian Merron one paper writes: *"She promised to try to help the post offices in her constituency, yet voted with the Government to close them."* (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010b). However, similarly Karl McCartney's statements are questioned: *"However, I have to say his letter appears to be nothing more than a cynical ploy to win a few votes in what is likely to be a close contest."* (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010e)

The evaluation of the candidates' competences was negative as well, although here the picture is not as one sided as with honesty. While Gillian Merron is described as being able to only *"bluster about Labour's belated attempts at control"* (Woods, 2010) she is also described as *"The candidate also managed to field shouted abuse about Gordon Brown's recent gaff "* (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010i) and a voter was reported saying: *"I think Gillian gave the best answer, I think the other two candidates did not really grasp the issues as firmly as she did."* (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010i). These different frames in different papers give a wholly different

appearance to the candidate's statements and actions. In one she appears to be entirely unsuited to the position, while in the other she in fact comes out ahead of the other candidates.

Karl McCartney was also framed by incompetency in how he campaigned ("*But Public Health minister Ms Merron is in with a chance, thanks partly to blunders by her opponent.*" (Lyons, 2010)). On the other hand, when speaking on a particular issue he also got a more positive evaluation ("*McCartney was able to sound clear on this issue.*" (Woods, 2010)). It is interesting to note that in both cases he was contrasted with the Labour candidate, but this didn't mean that Gillian Merron was framed positively. In fact when McCartney was being framed positively, this was contrasted with Gillian Merron's implied incompetence, but when he was framed negatively the same was implied for Gillian Merron. Nevertheless, we can see that overall both candidates were framed ambiguously in terms of competence.

While there were no frames based on either aggression or activeness, there was some evidence of the caring frame in connection with Gillian Merron. In a story about a politically active 14 year old who wants to be PM one day, she appeared in a supportive role having fond memories of taking children to see the government offices. Her involvement was framed by the presentation of the person that she had helped as a remarkable young man. Through this her caring side was emphasised, perhaps instead of her being presented as influential enough to arrange the meeting in the first place (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010g).

Another article which has to be mentioned is one which analysed the candidates' chances through numerology. While this gave by far the most stereotypical representation of the candidates (Gillian Merron is described as "*seeks balance rather than conflict and in the hard battle ahead neither Brown or Merron may have the inspired ideas.*" (Hamilton-Parker, 2010) while "*Karl McCartney is shown as a determined person who will fight hard*"(Hamilton-Parker, 2010)), it is doubtful how much of the content was determined by the

author and how much dictated by the rules of numerology. Nevertheless, while this piece was only one example, here the candidates were shown in terms of traits that completely conformed to stereotypical expectations. This was also the only instance where the political arena was shown as being a place where aggression (attributed to the male candidate who was also the one who as the article implied "should" win) is indispensable.

Save for this one article, both candidates were framed similarly in terms of their traits, with their statements being framed negatively in terms of honesty, and ambiguously in terms of competence. The only difference was that the caring frame was only applied to the female candidate, but there was only one example for that.

4.3.2 Issue Frame

Looking at the issue competences that were used to describe the candidates, there were not many explicit differences to be found. In general, the Lincolnshire Echo described the candidates' positions in detail rather rarely, and when it did it compared and contrasted both candidates' (and their rivals') opinions. This could be seen in the discussion on education, health care, defence, and immigration.

How competent the candidates were allowed to appear on these various issues is of course a different question. The terms used to describe the candidates' statements around the issue of immigration have been described above (the Labour candidate response was described as "*bluster*" (Woods, 2010) while the Conservative rival sounded *clear on the issue*" (Woods, 2010)). Clearly Gillian Merron was portrayed as out of touch on the topic (Woods, 2010). Similarly, when discussing crime, while the article showed it as an important issue (as can be seen from the title "*Under-funded police in policy spotlight*" (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010h)) Gillian Merron was quoted as not really engaging with the local dimension of the problem ("*There are now record numbers of police officers across the country*" (Lincolnshire Echo,

2010h)) while the other candidates all offered various solutions (Karl McCartney was quoted as saying: *"I will fight for fair funding for Lincolnshire Police and to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy."* (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010h)).

Even when discussing an issue where Gillian Merron arguably should have had no difficulty proving her competence, namely health care, an area where she had served as a minister for several years, the presentation of her expertise was not entirely positive. For example, while the writer noted her supposed competence, the phrasing of the sentence immediately questions how relevant the job title actually was: *"Come to think of it, Health Minister and MP for Lincoln Gillian Merron should have something to say on this."* (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010a)

While issue competences did not seem gendered overall, there were some differences in issue framing between the candidates. Although both were given the opportunity to state their views on most topics, how these views were represented differed. Gillian Merrons' options were presented more often in a way that made them seem at least somewhat questionable. This tendency applied to both traditionally "masculine" and "feminine" issues, therefore might be more related to the general evaluation of her competence than to specific issue expertise. Interestingly, while here the most common frame was created by the issues themselves these were not always connected to any of the candidates at all but were more prominent in their importance to the district's electorate.

4.3.3 Viability Frame

Given that Lincolnshire was a crucial seat for the overall election outcome, there were quite a few articles which used the outcome of the race as their frame. Most of them did not directly question Labour's victory hopes yet pointed to the likelihood of the Conservatives' winning (for example: *"Tories, tipped as most likely to win Lincoln"* (Donnelly, 2010)). However, despite the general positive outlook, the Conservatives' chances were also repeatedly

questioned even when the likelihood of them being the winners was reported. For example, while an article starts very positively from Karl McCartney's perspective with: *"Now we face potentially the closest general election in years and the bookmakers have Conservatives' candidate Karl McCartney as the hot favourite. Certainly, recent form suggests the Tories are in with a good shout, having ousted Labour from control of the city council in 2007. They also polled strongly in last year's County Council elections."* (Iredale, 2010), it does amend the prediction with: *"However, the difference between Lincoln staying red or turning blue could be decided by less than two thousand voters."* (Iredale, 2010)

There were some articles which did not even mention the Conservatives' big election hopes; in fact there were some that pegged Gillian Merron as the winner. An example for this is the following: *"From an Echo straw poll of the public Labour's Gillian Merron seemed to come out on top."* (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010i). This can be seen as quite positive in terms of viability although the use of the term *"seemed"* makes the observation less confident than some of the articles which emphasise Karl McCartney's positive election chances.

Overall, it does not seem to be the case that Gillian Merron's viability was questioned far more strongly than that of her opponent. While the coverage of McCarthy was generally framed favourably in terms of viability, it also addressed his vulnerabilities more while the Labour candidate's chances were seldom discussed independently.

4.3.4 Further Frames

While the novelty frame was not apparent in any of the articles, there was an example for a candidate being framed in terms of appearance. However, this was not the female candidate as the literature would have led us to expect but in fact her male challenger who the Sunday Times described as having *"a hint of estate agency"* (Woods, 2010). While not explicitly referring to how he dressed this description did anchor to the candidate's appearance.

The issue frame which was not mentioned in the literature and was identified in the case of Broxtowe was found here as well. In Lincolnshire, like in Broxtowe, one candidate was more often framed in terms of party politics, while the other in terms of local politics, and somewhat independently of party belonging. In Lincolnshire it was the Labour candidate, Gillian Merron, who was more commonly described in party related terms and more often attributed statements which were relevant to or referred to national politics.

On immigration, for example, while she was quoted as saying that "*we know it needs to be tightly controlled*" (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010d) where she was referring to the government and party leaders as "we" rather than local district. This is an interesting contrast to the way the conservative candidate was cited describing the issue: "*Lincoln and the UK can benefit from immigration, but not from uncontrolled immigration. We must when necessary attract the brightest and the best people, but with control on the overall numbers.*" (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010d). Here the "we" is the people of the country with a specific eye towards the people living in the district.

Furthermore, in an article describing the politicians who were visiting to drum up support for the candidates, Karl McCartney was a central figure. The story focused on the prominent party politicians coming to help him win the race. The article also mentioned local issues. This is in contrast with how the visits from Labour leaders were described. Here Gillian Merron's involvement was more like a minor footnote and the leaders were being shown to talk about national issues instead of local ones, thereby framing the candidate herself as more connected to national-party politics. While describing the health minister's visit the minister was quoted in the article (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010f), during the Conservative chairman's visit on the other hand it was the candidate who was allowed to share his opinions (Lincolnshire Echo, 2010c). This framed him more independently from the party than if he would have deferred to the party leader to articulate opinions.

Again it seems that the female candidate was more likely to be framed as a Labour politician, preoccupied with national issues, while her male opponent was more locally focused and independent of his party. Although these frames were weaker in Lincolnshire than in Broxtowe it is very interesting that in both cases the party/national frame was applied to the female candidate even though they were in different positions and in different parties.

4.3.5 Overall

While there were again no major differences between how the two candidates were reported on, their framing in the media nevertheless diverged. The novelty frame did not play any role at all, and the appearance frame was insignificant. In terms of personality traits, while neither candidate was more likely to be framed by their personality, Gillian Merron was slightly more prone to be negatively framed and to a lesser degree to be framed by feminine traits.

Something similar was true in terms of the candidates' issue competences. While both of them got the chance to be heard on each issue, Gillian Merron's positions were more likely to be framed in a way that put them in doubt. In terms of which issues were used to frame the articles about the candidates there was no evidence of any gender bias, especially given that most articles framed by issues mentioned both candidates. The framing in terms of viability was also relatively equitable although McCarthy was somewhat more often discussed in terms of how likely his eventual victory was. Lastly, the personal/local and the party/national frame that were observed in Broxtowe were also found here: the female candidate was more likely to be viewed in terms of party politics than her male rival.

4.4 Case 3: Hastings and Rye

Hastings and Rye is an electoral district in East Sussex in the south of England. Here the sitting Labour MP Michael Foster, the first of his party to represent the district, was

challenged by Amber Rudd from the Conservative Party. The challenger managed to unseat the sitting MP and return the district to the Conservatives for the first time since 1997.

The local papers are the Hastings & St Leonards Observer and the Rye & Battle Observer. They had a circulation of 18000 and 6000 respectively (Luft, 2010). The coverage of the local candidates is even sparser than it was in the previously studied two districts, perhaps because the local papers are weekly rather than daily. While this made the analysis considerably harder, frames have nevertheless emerged.

4.4.1 Trait Frame

Given the brevity of the reporting fairly little could be observed about the traits that the candidates were framed by. Both candidates were framed as being competitive, with their statements being led up to with "*hit back at...*" (Alderson, 2010a; Alderson, 2010c). This phrasing did not only imply that they aggressively fought for their right, but also that they were "hit" in the first place. This way both candidates were framed as displaying strength. This was also enhanced by how the candidates were shown to interact with each other with aggressive statements which included phrases like "*Labour scaremongering*" (Alderson, 2010c).

Amber Rudd was also shown as being somewhat caring in the sense that she provided support for projects that were important to the community. While expressing disappointment in the sitting MP, an article on the issue of the train system mentioned how "*encouraging*" the support of Amber Rudd was for the project (Morris, 2010b). In the same article the competence of Michael Forster was questioned: "*(At the meeting) Mr Foster chose to repeat previous statements*" (Morris, 2010b). Through the use of the term "chose" the article framed the Labour MP even more negatively by implying not only incompetence but also lack of integrity.

However, other articles framed the incumbent more positively in terms of these two traits. An article in the national magazine *The Spectator* described his performance in the debate in the district as follows: "*He was roundly booed about the deficit, but otherwise convinced people with his decency and humour.*" (Moore, 2010). While again putting his competence under question, by pointing out the bad reaction he got for his first answer his image is improved by pointing to his integrity and warmth.

Amber Rudd got a far less positive evaluation with her competence being put under question and without much to exonerate her ("*Amber Rudd was uncomfortable with the issues about faith and marriage which the rather godly audience raised. She was better on debt, government interference in teaching, voluntary work, and business, and the 'tax on jobs'.*" (Moore, 2010). Other articles also celebrated the Labour MPs' popularity without question, saying for example: "*They praised Rye MP Michael Foster for supporting their efforts*" (Hemsley, 2010), emphasising how important his actions were for the districts efforts to be successful. Similarly, visiting party leaders also praised his competence in representing the area: "*He is an outstanding MP who is a brilliant advocate for Hastings in parliament.*" (Alderson, 2010c).

Overall, the sitting MP was shown as caring as well as mostly honest and competent. Amber Rudd was framed less positively and in fact she was described in terms of traits less often. When she was, her competence was quite often questioned. Both candidates were shown as somewhat combative and aggressive.

4.4.2 Issue Frame

The articles rarely engaged in depth with any particular issue beyond just mentioning it. Yet, there were a few exceptions. Transportation was the central issue in the district, in particular the number of trains connecting the area to more urbanized parts of the country. Both

candidates received some negative press in connection with the issue of transportation. Michael Foster was criticised for not helping enough to ensure rail projects succeed (Morris, 2010b) and a Labour minister threatening that if the Conservatives win the election funding would be cut (Alderson, 2010c). On the other hand, many articles praised Michael Foster's involvement in getting the projects rolling along (Hemsley, 2010 and Morris, 2010a) while only one mentioned Amber Rudd as being helpful (Morris, 2010b).

The other two issues which gained prominence in the press were in connection to visits by leading members of the two parties. The first one was education, and two Conservative leaders were reported upon making statements. While notionally they were reported on as having come to Hastings to support Amber Rudd, she only got limited opportunity to appear in the articles with a rather general statement: "*Our young people deserve a future.*" (Morris, 2010c). While Michael Forester was not directly mentioned in these articles they did refer to what Labour had done in the area, and even pointed out that the scheme the Conservative were cited as pledging to support was a "*flagship Labour government policy*" (Alderson, 2010b). Nevertheless, the Conservatives were framed as being at least more involved in education than their opponents.

The issue of tourism was also discussed in connection with the Labour MP. What is interesting is that this happened in an article that was in fact about the visit of a conservative politician to the area. While Amber Rudd was not even mentioned, Michael Foster got a chance to add his 2 cents with a strongly worded statement undercutting the Conservative position (Alderson, 2010a). He came out very positively from the exchange and his expertise in the area was confirmed.

Overall, issue framing was slightly more gendered than in the other cases that were studied, as while both candidates were connected to a production issue (transportation), only Amber

Rudd was framed through education (a traditionally "feminine" issue), and only Michael Foster was cited in connection with tourism (again a traditionally "masculine" production issue). However, given the low number of issues discussed, it is questionable to draw conclusions whether issue framing was truly gendered.

4.4.3 Viability Frame

Both candidates were framed in terms of viability. While the future of Michael Forester was more often questioned, many articles also described him as "*optimistic*" and pointed to his popularity (Morris, 2010e). Rather more surprising is that while Amber Rudd was cited as being "*the favourite with the bookies*" (Morris, 2010d), in another piece her party was shown to be behind in the polls, according to a poll conducted by the Hastings and St Leonards Observer (Morris, 2010d). This is surprising since the election held the very next day saw the results exactly reversed.

While both candidates were questioned, there was far less exonerating circumstances cited in her case than in that of her opponent. Overall, therefore, while neither candidate escaped the questioning of their viability, despite the eventual results it seems that Michael Foster's negative evaluation was better counterbalanced by mentioning reasons for why he still stood a chance.

4.4.4 Further Frames

The appearance and the novelty frame again did not seem to have played a role. Furthermore, given that both candidates seemed to fit into the aggressiveness of the political arena depicted in the papers, there was no implication that it would not be a suitable place for women to compete in.

The personal/local and the party/national frames on the other hand were present again although somewhat weaker than in the two previous cases. The articles discussing the

Conservative candidate were more nationally focused and more interested in party politics while the Labour MP was mentioned more often in connection with local events and issues. For example, when describing a Labour Minister's visit the minister praised Michael Foster in connection with the area: "*The town would be poorer without him in every sense of the word.*" (Alderson, 2010c).

It is also telling that while on the local issues of both transportation and tourism Michael Foster was given more attention, on the issue of education (which has local implications yet is more of a national topic) the Conservatives got more attention. The visiting Conservative big wig did talk about the local educational institutions yet he emphasised the party's commitment to education with the example of David Cameron ("*When Cameron was first offered a job in the shadow cabinet he chose education*" Alderson, 2010 b). When talking about tourism the Conservatives were mentioned in connection with a national plan while Michael Foster talked about the local implications (Alderson, 2010a).

Overall, while in Hastings both candidates were more party oriented and more locally focused than in other cases, there was still a difference with the female candidate more often framed as a national political player and the male candidate as a local one. Amber Rudd was also more closely tied to the Conservative party and their policy in the reporting while the Labour party's candidate was allowed more distance.

4.4.5 Overall

The differences in the media's representation of the male and female political candidates mirrored what was expected based on the existing literature most closely in Hastings and Rye. While obviously the results do not line up completely to the literature, especially given that three frames (appearance, novelty, and politics as a male arena) were again completely missing, there were some striking similarities.

The male candidate was more often framed through the traditionally "masculine" trait of competence and in connection with the traditionally "masculine" issue of production (in this case tourism and transport). It cannot be said, however, that Amber Rudd's media presence was completely a void of "masculine" frames as she was also shown as both aggressive and successful in the area of production (transportation). Conversely, the traditionally feminine trait of compassion was applied to Michael Rudd. Nevertheless, the overall picture was still quite gendered. In the area of viability it was here that the chances of the eventually victorious candidate's, Amber Rudd's chances questioned most often.

It is interesting to note that in this district the question of misogyny and consequently gender came up. Amber Rudd was reported as being "irked" by her opponent referring to her as "that Tory lady from London" (Walker, 2010). While the reporting on her complaints was questionable given that she was compared to the women who Gordon Brown called bigoted, it is quite telling that one of the things that she was accused of was not being local. This relates to the new frames identified in the previous two electoral districts, which were present again, although less clearly. While Amber Rudd was more often framed through national politics and her party belonging, in Hastings and Rye the male candidate also was more often framed through his party than in the other districts.

4.5 Comparing Broxtowe, Lincolnshire, and Hastings and Rye

When comparing the three areas we can see that there were fewer differences both in the amount of coverage and the kind of coverage in Lincolnshire than in Broxtowe and especially in Hastings and Rye. It is interesting that Gillian Merron (the Labour candidate in Lincolnshire) did not enjoy the advantage in the amount of coverage that Labour incumbent in Broxtowe and in Hastings and Rye got. Her opinions, similarly to Anna Soubry (who ran for the Conservatives in Broxtowe), were presented in a far more competitive frame than that of her opponent.

This was not entirely true in Hastings and Rye where while Michael Foster got to speak more on certain issues, Amber Rudd also got the chance to be the only one to give an opinion on others. It has to be noted, however, that some of her positions were not reported on in much detail, particularly compared to the Labour candidate's speaking on tourism. Other than this imbalance, no trend has emerged in terms of issue and trait framing that applied to the first two electoral districts. Both candidates were framed rather similarly and both were more likely to be reported upon in terms of issue priorities than personality traits. In Lincolnshire and in Broxtowe none of the candidates were dominantly framed by personality traits and the issues they were framed by were not systematically gendered. The female candidates were just as likely to be framed through the issue of policing as male candidates through health care. In Hastings and Rye, on the other hand, while issues were still the more common framing device, both the trait frame and the issue frame used were slightly more gendered. While there was no all-powerful trend, there were some signs of the candidates' representations more closely conforming to the expectations formed based on the literature.

In none of the districts was the office the candidates were fighting for endowed with any traits or competences that were stereotypical, or in the media itself, associated with masculinity (save for the one exception in the article about numerology). This was even true for Hastings and Rye, where while the political race was portrayed as more aggressive, there was no indication that this would not be suitable for either of the candidates.

There was barely any and only very weak evidence for the double bind being in effect. Only in a few cases in Broxtowe did Anna Soubry seem to be negatively framed for representing too "masculine" traits, while such negative framing was not present in Lincolnshire and in Hastings and Rye at all. Of course, this might be because Gillian Merron and Amber Rudd were less prone to being framed in terms of "masculine" traits than Anna Soubry, so they did not have to face the challenge of acting strongly counter to stereotypes.

In term of viability, in the first two cases it was actually the male candidates who were slightly more likely to be described in terms of their viability independent of which party they belonged to. In Hastings and Rye, on the other hand, both candidates viability was questioned, but the female candidate's was arguably more harshly evaluated. Given how close the results of all three elections were it does not seem likely that this imbalance was just a reflection of public sentiment. There frequency of framing in terms of viability also did not seem to be related to which party the candidates belonged to.

Lastly, one of the new frames identified in the analysis, the party/national frame, was in all three cases only applied to the female candidate although with different intensity. In all three cases they were more likely to be described in terms of their party belonging and framed by national politics. The tree male candidates, on the other hand, were usually shown to be much more locally focused and less dependent on their party. They were framed far more as individuals and far less as just members of their given party.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Overview

It is a well known fact that women are still greatly underrepresented in elected office. The proposed reasons for this vary from the lower fundraising ability (Banwart, 2010) to an unfair selection process (Lawless & Pearson, 2008). One of the primary reasons that exerts influence on some of those explanations are the widely held gender stereotypes (Carlson, 2007; Friedkin & Kenny, 2009; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993b). These ascribe specific roles, traits, and expertise to men and women and punish those who do not conform to them (McGinley, 2009). They are thought to be widely held in society, from politicians onto the public and the people who work in the media (Lawless, 2009).

The fact that the media shows the world through the lens of stereotypes is particularly significant as media affect how people see the world. One of the ways in which media is theorized to influence its audience is framing (Scheufele, 1999). Framing is the way in which a news story is focused, and what information is chosen to be included and omitted (Entman, 1993). News items are not neutral; they influence the readers' understanding by their structure, word choice, and other elements. These influence how the readers interpret events and what ideas they recall to make sense of a new piece of information (Entman, 1993).

This research set out to explore the differences in the frames used when reporting on male and female candidates during the 2010 UK general election campaign. Based on the existing literature several frames were expected to be used. These were the trait frame and the issue frame (see Carlson, 2007; Meeks, 2012), the viability frame (see Bystrom et al., 2004), the politics as a masculine arena frame (see Ross, 2002b), the appearance frame (see Bystrom et al., 2004) and the novelty frame (see Norris, 1997). The study also explored whether the backlash effect played any role in the reporting. A group of cases were identified in which it

was likely that the media played at least some role in the outcome of the election and gender could have been an important factor as well. Out of these, three were selected in a way to ensure that there was variability in the candidates' party affiliation, incumbency, and eventual success or failure. After retrieving the articles dealing with the candidates a framing analysis was performed.

The analysis found that not all the frames expected to be used based on the literature were employed. There was essentially no use of the novelty frame, the appearance frame, and the politics as a masculine arena frame. There was also only very limited evidence of the backlash effect. Other frames which were found were not used as expected. While the viability frame was employed it mostly was in connection with the male candidates. The trait frame and the issue frame were also widely used, but there was only limited evidence of candidates' gender influencing the frame choice.

While in certain cases female candidates were less likely to be associated with traditional "masculine" traits and issues, in other cases precisely the opposite was true. The frames where the most significant gender differences were found were the two newly identified frames - the personal/local and the party/national frame. In all three districts the female candidates were more often framed in terms of their party belonging and national politics, while the male candidates were framed with a more local focus, with their party belongings being of a somewhat secondary concern.

Overall, the study accomplished its goals. It showed that there is still a difference in how the media treats male and female candidates, although not exactly along the expected dimensions. It also managed to identify two new frames which were extensively employed during the reporting on the 2010 UK elections and where there seemed to be a definite gender divide.

Both of these findings highlight a need for further study and also carry significance for candidates running for public office.

5.2 Female Candidates and the Media

What does this mean for female politicians who are running for office or indeed hold office? That is difficult to say with the available data. The current research only endeavoured to do an exploratory research on what the media has reported and it only gives an opportunity to guess the reasons and the outcomes. However it seems that reporters are still influenced by gender stereotypes when choosing a frame for their story and consequently how candidates are represented is impacted by the fact whether they are male or female.

The fact that this was in several cases more subtle and less obvious than with some of the frames drawn from the literature conforms to Pippa Norris' (1997) observation, that the difference in the treatment of female and male candidates do not disappear just become harder to spot. There were certain frames which were applied only to female and only to male candidates in all three districts, despite their differences in party belonging, incumbency, and eventual election outcomes. This was especially true for the personal/local and party/national frames identified in all three districts.

Why these frames were only applied to male or female candidates can only be hypothesised, similarly as their effect. It is possible that journalists feel that they need to show how female candidates have a powerful organization backing them, while they do not feel that male candidates need this extra support. It is also possible that conversely journalists feel that women are out of place in politics, so while writing about local issues they remove them from the local context.

In fact it is possible that some of the frames that were identified based on the literature but have not been found to play a significant role are "hiding" within other frames. The masculine

arena frame for example could be represented by the fact that the female candidates were presented in connection with a male politician (or group of politicians) not to seem out of space (or to demonstrate how out of place they were). Similarly, the backlash effect could play a role in why they were presented more often not as individuals but as members of a larger group, and this way they were further removed from the people they were supposedly interacting with. Essentially, when they appeared in the “masculine” role of politician their individuality was questioned.

It is also interesting to note that while female candidates were somewhat less likely to be presented based on “masculine” traits in two of the cases, the male candidates were more often framed in terms of “feminine” traits in these districts. A similar trend has been observed in the case of issue framing: while female candidates were somewhat less likely to be connected to “masculine” issues, their male rivals were reported on in relation to issues traditionally associated with both genders. This could indicate that for male politicians it is still easier to be flexible in terms of which traits and issues they associate themselves with than for their female counterparts.

Nevertheless, an alternative explanation for these observations is also possible. It is not beyond reason to think that journalists played little role in deciding the frames they use, and rather it was the candidates’ campaign teams who consciously influenced them to apply certain frames as part of an image building strategy. While the truth probably lies between these two extremes, even if the frames used are completely under the influence of candidates, the question why the female candidates systematically chose to employ a certain kind of frame and why the male candidates chose another still had most probably something to do with how they at least perceived their gender as an asset or a difficulty in an election.

These questions are impossible to answer without further research, fulfilling one of the goals for this study which was precisely to chart direction for such future research. The study also has implications for women running for public office. Since differences still exist in coverage, female candidates have to consider how they can capitalize on or counter the images that the media built of them. The detailed knowledge of what coverage to expect, and tracking the changes in this coverage is likely to be invaluable as more and more women run for public office.

5.3 Limitations

The study has several limitations stemming from the nature and the size of the sample used. While they do not directly impact on the study's goals, they do affect the possibility of drawing general conclusions from the results. First of all, the size of the sample in terms of the number of electoral contests surveyed was relatively small. While this did not present a problem for an exploratory study like this one, this means that no claims can be made of the results' generalizability. More races would have to be surveyed and other media explored in order to be able to make more general claims. This would also allow to introduce stronger controls for other factors that might have influenced the candidates' coverage like incumbency or party affiliation.

Furthermore, the study was only concerned with the candidates of the two largest parties and did not take into account the candidates of smaller ones who could have exerted considerable influence on the dynamics of reporting. This is especially true in the case of the Liberal Democrats who received considerable attention during the 2010 election. They were excluded from this study because this attention did not translate into electoral success, but it might still be interesting to look at how their presence will impact the races in the future.

The scope of the study could also be further extended to include other countries beyond the UK, although how comparable such a cross-national study would be is questionable. In addition, the study considered only one time period. Although a more longitudinal approach could theoretically yield new information this cannot be considered a major limitation, given that there was very little or indeed in some cases nothing reported on the challengers in the surveyed districts. Lastly, the fact that only the first step in the shared meaning creation was studied means that the reasons and the effects of the employment of different frames is hard to uncover.

By addressing some of these limitations there is plenty of scope for future studies to even further expand the understanding of the dynamics and effects of the differences in reporting on male and female candidates.

5.5 Implications for Further Research

The study highlights plenty of areas for future research. Firstly, and most obviously expanding the sample should lead to more generalizable results on whether male and female candidates are reported on differently. In future studies the sample should be expanded not only in terms of number of districts surveyed, but in terms of the parties included and the media channels used.

Secondly, given that differences have been found in all three districts studied, exploring the reasons and the results of the differences in framing, in other words gaining a more holistic understanding of the framing process, would be invaluable. It would be necessary to look at how and why journalists choose the frames to use in connection with any given candidate and therefore shed more light on whether gender stereotypes are effecting reporting or if there is another reason for the differences in coverage.

Thirdly, how candidates influence reporting, what image they communicate, and for what reason that is the case could also highlight an important aspect of the framing dynamic. Further, how the voters interpret and evaluate the frames and through them the candidates is crucial for understanding what the significance of the different frames is for the candidates themselves. It is more than likely that just as in the case of gender stereotypes certain frames in certain situations are beneficial, while others create a disadvantage.

Lastly, the fact that some frames seem to have entirely or almost entirely disappeared from reporting while new ones have appeared gives rise to the question of how frames develop over time. Whether one frame or the other plays a role in coverage could be a result of the dynamics of a particular election or it could be due to a change of shared meanings in society. Not only are these questions interesting academically, but could also be relevant for candidates who are preparing media management strategies, as it could help them anticipate the kind of coverage they will encounter.

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