5-2016

Media Representation of Gender: Startup Publications' Coverage of 2016 Presidential Campaigns

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Recommended Citation

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Presidential Campaigns

Chancellor's Honors Program Thesis Project

University of Tennessee

Spring 2016

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Introduction

In an era dominated by technology, people can access information frequently and efficiently. Though content is readily available, accuracy is not guaranteed. The mass media, responsible for distributing most of the population's news, are often accused of having one viewpoint. Because the images these major corporations produce become commonplace in society, it becomes important that the media produce a variety of content. As the mass media provide information to a diverse nation, the depictions of the population should correspond accordingly.

Traditionally, major media companies have published news that "has potential to cast doubt on a woman's suitability to be commander-in-chief or in the wings" (Carlin and Winfrey 326). Often, women are negatively stereotyped or reduced to less-than-human, especially in political news. As politics is dominated by men, female contenders disrupt the system. The 2008 presidential election was monumental in that two females became prominent candidates for the presidency and vice presidency. This period demonstrated a positive step toward equality of the genders; however, the media coverage of the campaigns did not signify the same improvement (326). The female candidates faced lose-lose situations regarding their personas. Not only did they receive criticism for exemplifying characteristics of their own gender, but they also faced backlash if they attempted to overstep their traditional roles. Mainly, regardless of their competency, the media scrutinized or overemphasized every quality of the two women.

The 2016 presidential campaign involves a similar situation. Two women, Hillary Clinton and Carly Fiorina, each from an opposing major political party, have become leading candidates in the race toward the White House. As a result, a significant amount of media coverage, both

positive and negative, has included these women. Similar to the 2008 election, the news involving these female contenders can be analyzed and dissected. The coverage of female presidential candidates is still fairly new; therefore, an analysis of the coverage can expose widespread views toward women in political office.

Though many people receive their news from major media networks, a large portion of the population has shifted to consuming news from independent news sources. A constantly growing media landscape allows audiences to select news that aligns with their own beliefs. Blogs and social media sites have replaced popular outlets among younger generations as such outlets are more interactive and user-friendly (Ingram). Particularly in the realm of smart phones and applications, news spreads in indirect ways. Because these blog-type sources are independent, they are not usually under the control of a large corporation, allowing them to publish content without answering to anyone potentially involved in the situation of the report. These sites produce news at their own discretion; therefore, one would assume their information would parallel the population's attitudes toward women as presidential candidates.

The general public relies on the media to provide information regarding each candidate to educate their decisions. If people are expected to determine the leader of their nation, they should be aware of the individual's capabilities and intentions, free from skewed representations. Further, presidential hopefuls depend on media coverage to gain supporters. The influence of the media can significantly impact a candidate's reputation and success in the polls. If the coverage depicting Clinton and Fiorina focuses on the fact that they are women in a field full of male candidates, the audience will likely cling to this fact as well. As women spend a portion of their campaigns defending sexist remarks and discriminatory reporting, they are automatically at a disadvantage compared to the male candidates. Reports involving physical traits or domestic

qualities prove irrelevant to the candidate's presidential qualifications. Equal representation would involve reporters treating men and women similarly as far as descriptions, questions and topics.

Literature Review

Gender

In a culture that emphasizes labels, identities can be defined, correctly or incorrectly, by singular words. At birth, babies are deemed male or female based solely on anatomical features. Though only two terms are used, extensive variations can occur within these categories, making a clear understanding of such words necessary. Sex is a biological term that refers to physical and hormonal differences within a species (Johnson and Repta 19). Gender, on the other hand, "builds on biological sex to give meaning to sex differences, categorizing individuals with labels such as woman, man, transsexual. . ." (21). Each of these terms was created and designated by humans, leading to constructed norms. As a result, they can be altered according to time and place; however, popularization of ideas leads to the persistence of such concepts.

Masculinity and femininity refer to attitudes and behaviors associated with a particular sex. According to accepted standards, individuals possessing particular anatomical parts would exhibit characteristics aligned with that sex. For example, females are expected to embrace qualities associated with their gender. These gender identities, though based on common physiological elements of the sexes, do not account for significant diversity within a group. "Gender identities develop within gendered societies, where the pressure to adopt the 'correct' and 'corresponding' gender according to presenting sex is strong" (24). While anyone can adopt masculine or feminine characteristics, it appears unusual to overstep the boundaries. By linking behavioral traits to physical features, people are limited in their developmental stages.

In Western cultures, people tend to value hegemonic masculinity, "a particularly dominant form of masculinity, and while not static in any way, in most cultures it emphasizes strength, aggression, courage, independence, and virility" (26). Developed in relation to physical capabilities, masculinity is viewed as more assertive while femininity is often defined as gentle. Because masculine identities are so commanding, femininity becomes defined by its relationship to masculinity, leaving femininity to be considered subordinate.

Constantly pitted against one another, the concept of gender equality becomes seemingly unattainable. While gender identities can develop and fluctuate within their respective groups, a specified gender becomes superior. As the culture places value on certain qualities, individuals who possess those traits become a normalcy. Such coupled relationships "always involve a hierarchy and, in the the case under discussion, men and masculine discourses occupy the dominant centre of rationality, displacing women and femininity to their seemingly emotional margins" (Knights and Kerfoot 431). By favoring one gender, the development of individual cognitive schemas is influenced.

People receive information, interpret it, and create a unique worldview. Whether they receive such information observationally or directly from another person, the circulation of widely held views can lead to the internalization of stereotypes. Traditionally, females are described as warm, tame and sympathetic, while males are viewed as competent and firm (Huddy and Terkildsen 121). As these stereotypes, or simplistic images, form, they are applied to all facets of life, making them difficult to challenge.

In a culture that values masculinity, the worth of women and feminine qualities relate to their sexuality and ability to please a man. Frequently, women are reduced from a complete being to individual body parts, known as sexual objectification. During the 2008 election, a

company released a blow-up doll version of Palin that allowed consumers to treat her how they saw fit (Carlin and Winfrey 330). When people partake in this practice, they "reduce the sexual body parts to the status of mere instruments, or regard the sexual body parts as capable of representing the entire person" (Gervais et al. 743). Objects are not free-thinking beings; therefore, such action involves dehumanizing females to an item as opposed to an autonomous individual.

Gender and the workplace

"Gender roles structure the various 'parts' that individuals play throughout their lives, impacting aspects of daily life from choice of clothing to occupation" (Johnson and Repta 22). In an attempt to overcome conventional beliefs, many women choose to embody traditionally masculine qualities such as firmness and aggressiveness. This method involves rejecting any fundamental differences between men and women. However, when females choose to play the male game and take on too many masculine traits, they often face additional criticism. As a result, it becomes necessary to determine an appropriate balance of gender personality traits to be taken seriously (Knights and Kerfoot 433). Another option "is to seek to reverse the hierarchical evaluation, claiming that it is women that are superior because of a whole range of sensitivities and social skills that men lack" (432). On their own feminine merit, many women struggle to attain leadership positions or respect from colleagues, making these routes appealing (432).

Within various media forms, women face a double bind as they are not only criticized for behaving how they are expected to but also for attempting to transcend those boundaries. In the 2008 presidential campaigns, both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin faced negativity as a result of their personality traits in relation to their gender. According to Johnson and Repta, "in almost every society in the world, men are more highly regarded than women and given greater power,

access, money, opportunities, and presence in public life" (21). Clinton was viewed as not feminine enough as she sported pant suits and maintained a mature composure. As she refused to embrace her female qualities, people claimed she was trying too hard to deny her womanhood (Groch-Begley). Conversely, Palin opponents discounted her political abilities because she was attractive and emphasized her femininity. The sexualization of Palin within the media overshadowed her qualifications for the position. In this case, the situation became lose-lose, reflecting the double-bind women in high status positions often face. Regardless of political merit, these candidates were dismissed by many on account of physicality and personalities associated with gender stereotypes (Carlin and Winfrey 330-331).

Further, in the 2016 presidential campaign, the women contenders face similar obstacles. "Women who are considered feminine will be judged incompetent, and women who are competent, unfeminine. . .who succeed in politics and public life will be scrutinized under a different lens from that applied to successful men" (327). Bob Woodward, an editor for *The Washington Post*, referred to Clinton's speech during the Democratic debates as "shouting too much" (Edelman). Though her male opponents speak with a similar tone and volume, Clinton's actions receive backlash. As women are typically assumed to be tame and calm, Clinton defies traditional gender roles by keeping up with masculine opponents. When a female shouts, it is viewed as wild and irrational; however, the majority of the male presidential hopefuls shout aggressively, and it is considered enthusiastic or passionate (Edelman). Being assertive is a characteristic that many people find appealing in a presidential prospect, but it is generally appealing on a male candidate. When a female exhibits such behavior, it is recognized as unfamiliar and unnecessary.

The language surrounding gender further exemplifies the hierarchical relationship between men and women. In many cases, women are spoken of as subordinate beings. Popular slang terms such as 'arm-candy' or 'chick' reduce females to an accessory object rather than an autonomous being. Frequently, women are described using terms with a negative connotation, and "even though words could be classed as positive if they referred to a woman as attractive, the term itself might still be demeaning: filet ('cute girl'), freak ('attractive girl'), treat ('cute girl'), and goddess ('female achiever') are all compliments, yet they still define women in relation to men-as meat, as abnormal, as prizes, and as untouchable" (Sutton 283). As people partake in this type of verbal language, they perpetuate the concept that women exist solely to please men.

Gender and the media

When women obtain positions of power, the media address the situation as a foreign concept, struggling to provide equal descriptions of males and females. In terms of language, women receive less respect, "when strangers, acquaintances, subordinates, or media commentators call them by their first names but don't do the same for males" (Carlin and Winfrey 329).

In political contests, rhetoric surrounding a candidate becomes a primary concern. In order to maintain an intended image, a candidate must focus on the words surrounding his or her campaign. However, when the media interfere, damage to a reputation can be difficult to erase. "Language choice reinforces gender stereotypes and may go so far as to affect the outcome of the election with male candidates being seen as more viable" (329).

Gender framing

As the media select and emphasize certain traits, they participate in framing. Often based on cultural values, this concept involves portraying individuals in a manner which tends to evoke similar reactions from audiences. Whether conscious or unconscious, media members can alter public opinion of individuals with the use of positive or negative frames, "which are manifested by the presence or absence or certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotypical images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts of judgements" (Entman 52). Frames work together to assist audiences in the organization of concepts and meanings. Essentially, media framing refers to what aspects of a situation reporters emphasize and how they place it in the larger context of the culture.

"Frame-setting refers to the interaction between media frames and individuals' prior knowledge and predispositions. Frames in the news may affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events" (De Vreese 52). The process of framing begins with the media personnel who choose which aspects to highlight or neglect. From there, the news product is published and passed on to the receiver, or the audience. The receiver consumes and interprets the product based on the broad cultural context (Entman 52). At this point, the consequences of the frame become evident. Not only can a frame in the media impact an individual's views, but it can also influence the public. "On the societal level, frames may contribute to shaping social level processes such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions" (DeVreese 52).

As far as representation of gender in the political realm, the media frequently rely on stereotypical images and concepts to characterize candidates. For example, women are "described significantly more often than men in terms of their sex, marital status, and children" (Bystrom 2009). Because Western cultures value women based upon their relation to

males, discussion of such qualities places females in a recognizable situation. Additionally, "texts can make bits of information more salient by placement or repetition, or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols" (Entman 53). When the media depict a woman in a stereotypical feminine role such as a mother, wife, or pet, consumers can quickly associate her gender with her presumed character and qualities. As the perception might not be entirely accurate, opinions of the woman can harm or benefit her reputation. Politically, many women perceive media framing as a disadvantage as their physical and emotional traits are covered more frequently than their male counterparts. However, some view feminine stereotypes as beneficial to improving the electability of a female political candidate (Bystrom 2001). Regardless, the media frame individuals and events based on dominant gender ideology, which can have a substantial impact on the public's perception of the office and race, as well as the competency of the women themselves.

Gender, politics and the media

Women in the political sphere generally receive less airtime than males as far as issue coverage (Mundy). Though reporters comment frequently on women's familial lives and physical appearance, the coverage of genuine political topics is unbalanced. According to Carlin and Winfrey, "When the media does talk about women's issue positions, they tend to frame them as 'feminine' issues such as health care rather than as 'masculine' issues such as budget or employment" (329). Stemming from common gender views, women are popularly believed to be more capable of handling issues of education or poverty. Their stereotypical traits of nurture and tenderness contribute to this thought. On the other hand, as men are considered to be more assertive, they are assumed to be adept at negotiating with foreign leaders and dealing with military matters (Huddy and Terkildsen 122).

Though the public tends to possess common gender views regarding politics, it does not agree on the topic of the economy. These gender stereotypes likely play into this fact as, "Competency on economic policy presumably requires a politician to be fiscally responsible and possess the traits of frugality or thriftiness" (122). As far as the public, women tend to be more concerned with economic stability than their male counterparts, likely because they are more directly involved with health care and household budgeting (Baird). However, these personality traits are not necessarily associated with masculinity or femininity, and the candidates' views should stand on their own merit.

When women are covered in the media, they are usually framed as an archetypal image. In a brief newscast, it's easier to rely on a familiar image to do a portion of the storytelling for the reporter. Carlin and Winfrey expose sexism in the 2008 campaign coverage as they describe four ways in which Palin and Clinton were framed: sex object, mother, pets and children, and iron maiden (330-338). In each case, particular traits of a woman were emphasized to illustrate the differences between these females candidates and the average male candidates.

In 2007, as Clinton was speaking on the Senate floor, she wore a coral jacket, revealing a slight amount of cleavage. In the days following, articles and reports circulated focusing on the small amount of skin Clinton chose to show. Political commentators claimed she was "campaigning with cleavage." Spending valuable airtime to discuss the physicality of Clinton insults her candidacy. Rarely do newscasters behave in this manner when covering a male candidate (Wheaton). The vote should be based on a person's policies and ideas; therefore, the media should inform the public of those positions instead of focusing on outfit choices.

Palin serves as an example of how attention on her role as a mother affected her campaign both positively and negatively. Many female voters flocked to support her, not because

she was a fellow female, but because she exemplified their daily lives and struggles. "She validates motherhood by reviving the archetype of the impossible confident super mother, simultaneously managing teenagers, teething and the trials of a vice presidential campaign" (Baird). Conversely, opponents were quick to point out how it would be virtually impossible for Palin to manage her political duties while continuing to parent her children. In this situation, her motherhood served as an asset in some instances but a hinderance in others.

Further, when women are depicted as pets or children, they are reduced to lesser beings, only partially human. The idea that a pet or a child requires an adult to become responsible for it suggests that a female is incapable of managing her own affairs. Because some men view women as animalistic beings, "when men use animal metaphors to refer to women they reveal a set of assumptions, a kind of regard, and the relationships with women they prize and despise" (Sutton 281). Whether they become protective of the female or diminish her competence, these comparisons ultimately damage a female's media image. Similarly, "there is the case of the domesticated animal that has gone wrong that bites the hand that feeds it. A female dog in heat or protecting her young will growl, threaten, or even bite her owner; she has reverted to her wild state; she is a bitch, uncontrollable" (281). When the pet frame escalates to this level, it becomes difficult to alter a reputation. After receiving male support and then opposing him, the public will view the female as malicious, though males partake in this type of behavior often.

Lastly, Carlin and Winfrey outline the representation of women as an 'iron maiden.' This framing was particularly relevant in the case of Hillary Clinton. Acting overtly tough in an attempt to compete in a male-dominated game, Clinton's presence backfired. Constantly called out for not being feminine enough, she was viewed as "overly ambitious," "calculating," "cold," "scary," and "intimidating" (337). In order to successfully compete in the political sphere, a

female candidate cannot personify a single archetype too strongly. Rather, a balance between the four portrayal methods could prove more effective.

As politics has traditionally been a male-dominated forum, it seems natural that most people would have more faith in a masculine individual. However, with female candidates running for presidential office and comprising nearly 20% of the United States Congress, women have become an integral piece of the nation's political landscape. Still, though, "there is a residual belief among 25% of Americans in a recent survey that 'Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than are most women' and that among men and women with equal credentials 60% of the men and only 40% of the women think they are qualified to run for political office" (339). This discrepancy can be explained by the patterns of representation in coverage of women. Regardless of the gender spread in political roles, women feel that they lack the necessary qualities to succeed politically as a result of biased campaign coverage (Friedman). Fearful of what traits will be emphasized or oversimplified, the mere thought of criticism convinces many women to avoid running for office. As a result, a male-dominated political scene persists.

According to Johnson and Repta, "workplaces are often gendered, with certain departments and even entire occupations dominated by a particular gender" (21). A primarily male dominated media room contributes to such issues. While women make up less than half of all minority journalists employed at newspapers, the dominant voices tend to drive the conversation. In 2013, a *New York Times* study found that papers quoted male sources 3.4 times more than female sources (Mundy). As the public receives more exposure to male opinions and issues, they become accustomed to such voices and consider them a normality.

When Palin joined McCain's ticket, there was a definite shift in female voters toward McCain, primarily in the middle-aged bracket. Though women are more likely to identify with a female candidate, they are not necessarily more likely to vote for her on account of her womanhood. For instance, "The voting record of women in the past few decades shows that they are more likely to vote for issues—particularly the economy and foreign policy—than gender" (Baird). Because female politicians are primarily portrayed focusing on traditional feminine issues such as health care and education, they lose a significant amount of these votes as the men tend to discuss foreign policy and concerns of war.

However, though femininity alone will not generally secure a woman's vote, the idea of females in politics does appeal to many voters. Many women who disagree with Clinton's views witness her struggle to compete with her male opponents, and they often share sympathy with her. Maureen Dowd from *The New York Times* explains that "When the usually invulnerable Hillary seems vulnerable, many women, even ones who don't want her to win, cringe at the idea of seeing her publicly humiliated — again." However, when Clinton appears less self-assured and dependent on men, women tend to react negatively. If they are going to watch a female participate politically, they want to feel empowered through her, not further alienated. Dowd condemned Hillary during the 2008 campaign, claiming, "instead of carving out a separate identity for herself, she has become more entwined with Bill. She is running bolstered by his record and muscle." Once again, the concept of the double bind exists in relation to how independently women portray themselves.

As people identify with their own gender, male voters are not an exception and are more likely to select a male candidate. According to a study by Huddy and Terkildsen, "typical masculine traits prove more beneficial to the hypothetical candidate than typical feminine

traits" (141). This finding not only indicates that male candidates are more appealing, but that assuming masculine traits can aid a female in her quest for office. Generally, men place significance on similar topics such as national security and foreign policy. "There is good reason to suspect that candidates perceived as liberal and Democratic, the stereotypic political outlook commonly ascribed to female politicians, are also seen as more competent to handle domestic and social welfare issues but less adept at dealing with economic and defense issues" (123). As a result, the oversimplified views of women lead males to believe that they are less capable of making decisions regarding issues they deem important. These stereotypical representations lead voters to form assumptions not founded in fact.

Method

The goal of this analysis came about as many people dissect the reporting patterns of major news networks and publications to further understand societal trends; however, significant research is not often focused on startup organizations and sites that have recently joined the media landscape. Such publications have gained popularity as they do not resemble traditional major news sources. Therefore, their treatment of women in politics might also differ from typical journalism. Often, startup news companies appeal to younger generations, and are, therefore, slightly more liberal in nature. As a result, one would expect these sites to favor a Democratic candidate over a Republican candidate. The intent of the analysis is to compare content produced by these fairly new publications to stereotypical images that have been developed over time. Examples will be included that both reflect and diverge from the common frames of women in politics and the media that previous research has identified.

Gawker, Vox, and Vice were selected as the sample publications to analyze as they have each gained a significant following since their origins. Though they are similar in nature, they

each began differently and continue to grow in alternate ways. They tend to report information in a blunt manner opposed to traditional journalism that completely removes the journalist from the situation. As they expand in the digital world, these sites are easily accessible from numerous devices, making them popular among various age groups.

Founded in December 2002, Gawker entered to the media landscape as a journalistic blog concentrating on New York events and coverage of other media sites. In 2015, publisher Nick Denton chose to shift the focus toward political coverage ("About Gawker"). During the race for the 2016 presidency, the organization has published countless articles involving both the male and female candidates.

Similar to Gawker, Vox entered the digital media world as a blogging platform in 2006 ("Vox"). However, several years later, the group transformed the site into a primarily news based outlet. Covering topics ranging from science and health to celebrity popular culture, Vox produces a significant amount of content. Not absent from this list of topics is politics, especially the 2016 presidential race. As they discuss the candidates involved, their reporting can be compared to other sites.

Vice began as a magazine covering a range of topics; however, the group expanded to form Vice Media which focuses on digital media such as documentaries, web series, and a record label. In 2013, Vice News was developed as the group's online news source ("About Vice"). The outlet produces international news and devotes a section of its content on the 2016 presidential election.

In order to select articles for analysis, I visited each site frequently. I used search terms such as, "Hillary Clinton," "Carly Fiorina," "2016 presidential race," and "men versus women 2016 election." The majority of the articles that appeared involved the current presidential

campaigns. However, because Fiorina is fairly new to the political scene, there was not as much content published involving her. As a result, articles involving her previous Senate bid were included as well. The stories that best represented the publication's tone and tendencies toward particular candidates were included in the analysis. If obvious contradiction occurred within a single news source, those reports were used as well. Mainly, the intent when selecting articles was to cover the gamut of reports produced by each individual source. Ultimately, five to six articles were selected from each news outlet, totaling sixteen articles for the analysis.

If further analysis were completed, it would be interesting to include research of a startup news organization with a more conservative nature. Because fairly liberal sides were included, Clinton tended to receive more favorable treatment than Fiorina overall. However, with a conservative source, the coverage of Clinton might not be as agreeable, or the coverage of women could differ entirely. Additionally, it would be beneficial to include a staple publication within the mass media as a comparison to startup news in general. Based on the initial research, many well-known publications have participated in stereotypical reporting; therefore, it would be worthwhile to determine whether they continue to report in that manner or if the startup news industry has influenced their journalism.

Analysis

Gender-biased reporting

Though these publications are often considered progressive, they each participate in gender-biased reporting on several occasions. Gawker's coverage of Fiorina tends to invoke stereotypical gender images and cite sources guilty of similar practices. In January 2016, Fiorina tweeted her support for Iowa during the Rose Bowl, an annual college football game, though her alma mater, Stanford, was the opponent. In response to her actions, Gawker published an article

entitled, "Carly Fiorina is Trying to Pretend She Didn't Humiliate Herself on Twitter." By rooting for an opposing team, Gawker reported, "she was telling them she thought college football was stupid, too. In an effort to suck up to the sports fans, she made a sham of the loyalty and passion that defines their fandom" (Sargent). Sports, especially football, are generally considered a masculine activity. The basic movements in football involve aggression and intense physicality, traits not often associated with women. As Fiorina stepped outside of the traditional feminine image in an attempt to compete in a political field dominated by men, she received criticism from devoted football fans.

Further, when radio host Steve Deace tweeted "Wow…Fiorina goes full vagina right away" following a Republican debate, she refused to say the full word in several interviews, referring to it as the "v-word." Gawker published an article poking fun at Fiorina's refusal stating, "Hmm. To what word is Fiorina referring? Vegetable? Vulcan? I have heard that you are not supposed to say "Voldemort," but the FCC doesn't have a specific rule against it" (Jones). Traditionally, women are viewed as meek and would not speak vulgar words as it contradicts their supposedly gentle natures. However, when Fiorina does not partake in this activity, she is considered weak. In this situation, she faces the double bind of the media.

Further, both Vox and Vice belittled Fiorina's leadership capabilities by indicating that her presidential bid was merely a plot to set herself up to obtain the vice presidency. In a Vox article discussing Fiorina's plans if she were to assume the presidency, Vox refers to her proposals as conceivable, but "hardly ambitious." Whereas men are stereotypically viewed as bold risk takers, women are often viewed as sensible and safe. Vox describes her ideas as a "small, conventional issue set," and reduces them to merely lackluster (Allen). This description resembles views of women in the political field. As they are often physically smaller in stature

and presence, their policies are received in a manner that parallels their physicality. Finally, the article proposes that perhaps Fiorina possesses no desire to obtain the traditionally male position of the presidency; rather, she is more suited for the assisting role of vice president. Vox claims, "she is running to serve an ulterior purpose, namely positioning herself to be the Republican vice presidential pick if Democrats nominate Hillary Clinton" (Allen). Similarly, Vice positions Fiorina as a pawn in the Republican field of candidates. An article entitled, "How Carly Fiorina's Candidacy Is Helping the Republican Party- Even If She Doesn't Win," suggests that Fiorina's participation in the race benefits the Republican party but her own bid is a long shot. The writer attributes her success within the party to her gender, "In the 2012 general election, Obama won over female voters with the largest gender gap ever recorded in a presidential election. In order to win in 2016, Republicans need to close that gap" (Becker). By indicating the Fiorina's presidential hopes are nothing more than an attempt to bring female voters back to the Republican party, Vice lessens her political aspirations and abilities. Journalists would likely not refer to a male candidate's gender at all in reports.

Another Vice article, discussing Fiorina's exit from the race after several unsuccessful showings, measures her against her male counterparts. She is described as being overshadowed by multiple male candidates, "Once hailed as a popular choice, especially Republican woman in an overcrowded field of male candidates, Fiorina's star power began to fade as the larger-than-life personalities of Donald Trump and Ted Cruz began to take over debates and major media coverage toward the end of last year" (Fields and Becker). This comparison not only refers to the size of her ideas, but it also includes her personality traits and physical stature compared to those men. As males, both Cruz and Trump are physically larger than Fiorina, presenting a air of visual dominance. Also, these men possess aggressive and intense personalities, whereas Fiorina

appears calm in comparison. Because people value traditionally masculine traits in a leader, they are more likely to demonstrate support for one of the male candidates over Fiorina. By comparing her in terms of physicality and personality, Vice does not place her on an equivalent level to the males in the field.

Not all gender-biased reporting involves Fiorina. Gawker was also guilty of employing stereotypical female imagery to depict Hillary Clinton. After the labor union publicly proclaimed support for the Democratic female, the organization released a story entitled, "The Labor Movement Fucked Up By Supporting Hillary Clinton." Not only does the title contain explicit language related to sexual activity, but the content of the article framed women in an unfavorable light. In the media, women are often portrayed as hesitant and, as a result, incapable of holding significant offices. Emphasizing her supposed indecisiveness, the article states, "she has repeatedly talked out of both sides of her mouth on free trade" (Nolan). In the political arena, candidates, both male and female, alter statements and shift positions in response to the attitudes of the public. However, this publication chose to frame her actions as those of a female rather than simply a politician. To conclude the article, Nolan directly addresses the labor union, "When Hillary Clinton inevitably sells out out again in the future, you'll have no one to blame but yourselves" (Nolan). By ending the article in this fashion, the writer demonstrates his belief that Clinton will continue to be a wishy-washy leader.

In March 2016, Vice published an article describing the public's distaste for virtually all of the presidential candidates, male and female. However, in pitting the front-runners against one another, Vice participated in biased gender reporting, but in a non-traditional sense. The writer states, "Part of the problem is that neither candidate is 'likable' in a traditional sense. Trump is a loud man with bad hair who says racist things and brags abut his money constantly; Clinton is

disliked by liberals for her Wall Street ties and by conservatives for whatever they think happened in Benghazi" (Cheadle). Rather than refer to the physical image of the woman, Hillary Clinton, the reporter discusses the negative physical traits of a male candidate, Donald Trump. When describing Clinton's flaws, he merely references her politics. In this situation, Clinton receives treatment that is usually given to male politicians while Trump is represented in a manner that females typically face.

Sex-object reporting

In 2010, years before her presidential bid, Fiorina ran against Democrat Barbara Boxer for her seat in the Senate. Rather than write an article highlighting the differing political policies between the women, Gawker published an article comparing the hairstyles of the competing women. The piece did not contain any information regarding the women's qualities related to holding political office. Had these candidates been men, the story would have likely focused on an entirely different topic. Emphasizing physicality over political merit demonstrates the writer's view, conscious or subconscious, that women are objects as opposed to legitimate politicians. Gawker's coverage of Fiorina does not appear to have changed from 2010 as they continue to produce content diminishing her political viability as a result of her gender.

Media critical reporting

Though these outlets have published stories that paint females in a negative light, each publication has also produced reports that criticize biased behavior from individuals or other media organizations. In January 2016, Gawker addressed Republican presidential hopeful Ted Cruz's comments regarding the Hillary Clinton Benghazi scandal and "spanking" her for her controversial actions. The site published an article questioning why Cruz and his camp thought it was acceptable for him make such statements publicly. His words contain sexual undertones,

diminishing Clinton to an object rather than an independent being. After questioning Cruz's advisors, the article sends a message to his family, "And to Ted Cruz's daughters, as always: We are so very sorry" (Feinberg). Ironically, this same publication that denounces objectification and stereotypical images of women engages in comparable forms of behavior. Nearly a month later, Gawker published a similar piece condemning Republican presidential hopeful Chris Christie, "Hillary Clinton's Opponents Should Probably Stop Fantasizing About Spanking Her." Christie also made comments claiming he would "beat her rear end" (Scott). However, though the content of this story was identical to the Cruz story, this one differed in terms of length. The article contained merely Christie's quote and the line "Disgusting! Stop it!" (Sargent). With two sentences, the writer highlights his feelings toward the situation. In both articles, the writers expose their personal views toward the male candidates' treatment of Clinton.

As far as coverage of Hillary Clinton, Vox appears to be exceptionally aware of her media struggles as a result of her gender. Instead of producing content that aligns with the behavior or ignores this fact, this publication explains why media outlets and voters behave the way they do. By doing this, Vox indicates that they find treatment of Clinton in the media unfair, yet they are willing to allow readers to reach this conclusion on their own. Several of their articles involving Clinton discuss her personality traits compared to her competitors. In the article, "Is Hillary Clinton 'likable' enough? Science has an answer," the writer compares the criticism Clinton receives to the criticism Republican Ted Cruz receives. While Cruz exhibits harsh behavior that other politicians recognize as hostile, his personality flaws will likely not affect his campaign. However, Clinton's personality will play a significant role in her political path. "In psychological experiments, people are much more forgiving of male politicians who openly seek power, but they feel outraged at women who display a similar desire," (Hackman).

The article shares several studies that reveal the detriments of females acting in a manner inconsistent with their gender, but also receiving backlash for acting overly in line with their gender. As the article explains these studies in relation to the current presidential campaigns, the audience becomes aware of the struggles female candidates face. This representation is contradictory to typical gender biased reporting as it represents Clinton as an equally competent candidate who simply has to address different obstacles.

Further, the site published a similar article, "Does Hillary Clinton's gender hurt her among male voters? Political scientists weigh in." The article does not frame Clinton according to traditional standards. Rather, it exposes irrational voting behavior as a result of gender. The writer never discusses the ability of any candidate, but compares their potential for election compared to one another based on several polls. Describing the negative effect of gender roles on Clinton in the polls, the article also includes a study conducted in 2008 that "accidentally found that asking about Clinton before asking about demographic information even made men less likely to identify as Democrats," ("Does Hillary"). By citing these studies, Vox conveys the significant impact of gender roles without participating in gendered framing.

Additionally, Vox comments on other media outlets' portrayal of women in the mostly male political arena. Clinton appeared on the *Jimmy Kimmel Live* show, where Kimmel poked fun at sexism she faces. Immediately after, Vox published an article praising Kimmel's recognition of the gender situation, "Jimmy Kimmel brilliantly parodied this idea Thursday night on *Jimmy Kimmel Live,* where Hillary Clinton was a guest star, by 'mansplaining' to her how to do her stump speech better," ("Jimmy"). Without directly stating the message, Kimmel conveyed that critics will disapprove of Clinton's qualities regardless of their merit based solely on the fact that she is a woman playing a man's game. The article does not convey Clinton as a weak

individual; rather, it applauds Kimmel and Clinton for making the audience aware of these issues. Again, this article demonstrates Vox's knowledge of stereotypical media representation and its efforts to not engage in such reporting.

The Vice reports tend to recognize Clinton's competency and capabilities. In several articles the writers not only emphasize the struggles she faces as a female, but they also commend her for successfully completing typically masculine tasks. After Clinton announced her candidacy on Twitter, Vice published an article discussing the relationship between her gender and the women's vote, indicating that simply being a woman does not guarantee support from women. According to the article, females face more obstacles in terms of voter opinion with both male and female audiences. Clinton will receive skepticism, "not only her policies and political record, but also on her hairdo, sense of style, persona, whether she can cope with being a grandmother, her age (67), and other attributes that male electoral counterparts will never have to face to the same level," (Fields). By outwardly recognizing the difficulties associated with being a woman in a man's game, the publication exposes audiences to this thought instead of resorting to stereotypical representations. Additionally, the article depicts Clinton as a strong, capable female front-runner, an image that rarely appears in the media. It begins with the question, "What's the opposite of underdog, long shot, and dark horse? Perhaps Hillary Clinton, who on Sunday became the first woman and Democrat to declare a presidential bid for 2016. . ." (Fields). Whereas Vice portrayed Fiorina as a long shot for the presidential office, the news source blatantly claims that Clinton is the opposite.

Fair reporting

Vox and Vice published several articles that recognize the female candidates for their abilities, regardless of gender. In these examples, the media outlets present equal reporting of

these women in the race. While various publications denounce Fiorina's leadership capabilities based on her CEO record, Vox defends her in several instances. For example, the site released an article that contains nine facts voters should know about the Republican presidential hopeful, Carly Fiorina. Among the items listed were several accomplishments that are not regularly viewed as feminine. The article noted the financial results of Lucent, a company she oversaw, as "impressive" (Lee). Typically, females are not associated with positions of power or monetary success. By pointing out this fact, Vox defies stereotypical representations. Additionally, the article discusses Fiorina's advanced ability to negotiate internationally, stating, "her business career has given her significant experience in talking to foreigners," (Lee). The public tend to view men as more adept at dealing in matters of foreign affairs. However, this article emphasizes Fiorina's history and suggests that she would excel in this area of politics. Whereas the previous article contains stereotypical content that weakens her political persona, this piece highlights her strengths.

Further, Vox published the piece, "Was Carly Fiorina an okay CEO or a terrible one? It doesn't really matter," containing information that indicates that a successful business career is not a requirement for the position of the presidency. Regardless of its relevancy, the media continue to publish stories surrounding Fiorina's stint as the CEO of HP. While her actions in this position are widely viewed as ineffective, Vox's article states that this detail is insignificant. Instead, it focuses on the positive aspects of her career, noting, "The best argument that Fiorina's time at HP is relevant to her presidential campaign is that it shows the amorphous set of skills known as 'leadership abilities': the capacity to inspire, to persuade, to manage, to negotiate," (Klein). Rather than judge the outcome of the company, Vox centers the article around the intelligence and skills an individual would obtain in such a position. Because of their

supposed nature, women and leadership positions do not usually coincide; however, in this case, the writer transcends typical gender images and represents Fiorina as a capable individual on a level equivalent to her male opponents.

Additionally, Vice published an article, "Hillary Clinton Sought Advice On Afghanistan From Former Bill Clinton Advisors," presenting a view that Clinton successfully handled foreign affairs. Generally, male politicians are viewed as more adept and handling international relations as they stereotypically possess personality traits such as aggression, toughness, and intimidation. However, the article outlines the lengths Clinton went to in order to fully educate herself on the situation. The release of her emails while serving as the Secretary of State provided information regarding her decision process involving Afghanistan. The records revealed that not only did Clinton consult several national security advisors, but she also requested copies of Congressional speeches to gain an understanding of how other officials viewed the issues. The article frames her as an influential individual describing her international visit, "When Clinton visited Pakistan on October 28, 2009, she accused Pakistan officials of giving safe haven to al Qaeda terrorists," (Leopold and Iftikhar). As Vice outlines her firm behavior and extensive research process, the publication exposes her credibility as a politician, regardless of gender.

Discussion

Overall, the portrayal of the female presidential candidates, Clinton and Fiorina, does not consistently align with traditional stereotypical representations. Though several publications rely on gendered reporting to characterize individuals, many of the articles examined did not contain sexist content. In fact, several of the articles analyzed openly denounced other media outlets for publishing content that included such behaviors. When women do not face obstacles within the media as a result of their gender, articles disclosing their struggles will not be necessary.

Political ideology of publication

The depiction of Clinton and Fiorina varied compared to one another; however, each publication's portrayal of the women as individuals was fairly similar. For example, both Gawker and Vice presented views that Fiorina was incapable of competing in this political arena. As the two women featured in many 2016 campaign articles come from differing political parties, Fiorina being a Republican while Clinton is a Democrat, the difference in portrayal could be a result of the political ideology associated with the individual publications. Additionally, statistics reveal that reporters often possess ideas that are considered slightly more to the left compared to general population (Byers).

Gawker is considered a left-wing publication, meaning that its views tend to shift toward the liberal ideology (Bokhari). As a result, they would be expected to favor Clinton over Fiorina and produce content that demonstrates such a thought. This becomes evident as Gawker's articles involving Fiorina portray her in a stereotypical manner, mainly lessening her intellectual value based on her gender. However, instead of blatantly praising the liberal candidate, Clinton, the news site criticizes typical gender-based reporting; yet, they participate in such behavior on occasion. The coverage of Fiorina falls into the stereotypical representation of women in the media. Not only is she presented as an ineffective leader, but she is also reduced to her hair. However, the stories involving Clinton contain both biased reporting and supportive articles. When other individuals make sexists remarks, Gawker is quick to condemn their actions. But, when given the opportunity to produce original content, the news organization employs similar concepts and frames. Overall, Gawker's treatment of women such as Carly Fiorina and Hillary Clinton tends to vary according to the candidate and the subject.

Similarly, Vox is known for its explanatory journalism as well as its liberal inclination. However, though it is considered liberal, both conservatives and liberals criticize the site for its actions ("Conservatives"). As far as its coverage of the female presidential candidates, Vox does not treat the two women in an equal fashion. When discussing the Republican candidate, Fiorina, Vox demonstrates contradictory reporting. In several instances, the site published content that diminished her abilities and ideas. Other articles, on the other hand, contained lists of accomplishments and praise as a leader. But, when covering Clinton, Vox mainly focused on exposing sexist behavior of other media outlets. By emphasizing the struggles Clinton faces as a female, Vox attempts to make the audience sympathize with her plight while also indicating her personal strengths. The site's liberal tendencies become clear in the coverage of Clinton.

Further, many view Vice News as a part of the "liberal media," left-leaning media outlets that only present one view (Bokhari). Regardless of the public's opinions, Vice News's journalism associated with the 2016 presidential race indicates a staff comprised of liberal thinkers. In the coverage of Fiorina, Vice portrays her as small woman who disappears on a stage filled with strong men. Her successes are minimized and her aspirations are characterized as nonexistent. However, the articles involving Clinton contain information that highlights her presidential abilities and situations in which she behaved similar to a male politician. Vice's representation of the female candidates aligns with its supposed political views.

Each of the three publications are considered fairly liberal by the public. Additionally, each news outlet indicated a general preference for Clinton, the Democratic candidate, over Fiorina, the Republican candidate. While several outlets reverted to stereotypical female images to describe Fiorina, many pointed out instances in which Clinton was treated unfairly by the

media based on her gender. It is likely that a publication's political tendencies influence its coverage of political affairs.

Media competition among publications

In today's media saturated world, it becomes increasingly difficult for news organizations to gain readership and develop loyal audiences. In an effort to maintain views, many news outlets produce a massive amount of content to keep the sites consistently updated. As a result of this practice, much of the reports published do not contain necessary or relevant information. They disregard traditional journalistic practices and standards in order to report news that other sources do not have. For example, when Gawker published an article comparing Fiorina's hair to another political candidate's hair, they demonstrated a desire to create articles regardless of whether the story exists or provides insight into the political situation. Dedicating an entire article to comments surrounding a candidate's hairstyle does not inform the readers of Fiorina's political policies or leadership qualities; rather, it gives more attention to a topic that would not be considered if the candidates were men. As the obvious difference between the male and female candidates is their genders, stories involving these unique identities are not difficult to produce, which could lead to some of the gender-based reporting that occurs. Essentially, as news sites compete to generate content and accumulate views, the quality of the reporting can be compromised and result in biased and stereotypical representations of public figures.

Women as a political minority

Traditionally, government activities are dominated by men. Throughout the years of the presidency, a female has never obtained an office of that level. As this long history contributes to stereotypical thoughts surrounding women in politics, it can be difficult to overcome. However, the number of women in political positions of power has increased since the government was

formed. In its beginnings, women were not involved in the political process at all, but they now comprise nearly 20% of the United States Congress, according to the Center for American Women and Politics. Though this number is not equal to the men serving in Congress, it is a significant improvement. It is likely that the number of women represented within the government affects the public's view of females in such positions. In previous decades, this concept was fairly foreign, resulting in an uneasy population. As more women have demonstrated abilities to effectively lead and make decisions, the public has become more comfortable with an image of female power. Some negative reporting does exist, but the majority of the articles analyzed outwardly recognized the capabilities of both Clinton and Fiorina.

Moreover, Hillary Clinton has been involved in large-scale politics for years. Not only did her husband serve as the president, but she also held the positions of state senator and Secretary of State. As a result, she has been in the public's view as a politician for a while. Perhaps people's familiarity with Clinton leads to more positive reports. Because many have associated her with the White House, the idea of her claiming the presidency does not seem so far-fetched. Fiorina, on the other hand, has not made a public impact within the political realm. She appeared on the national campaign trail as a relatively unknown individual. Though she was the leader of a major corporation, many wouldn't recognize her as a politician, or recognize her at all. This could have contributed to the many reports indicating that her potential in the presidency did not appear plausible. While men can join the political scene and receive respect immediately, many are still weary of women. As people are constantly exposed to individuals and ideas, they can become comfortable with the concept, regardless of its nature.

Ultimately, as these startup news organizations depict female presidential candidates in a particular manner, they reveal general attitudes toward the situation. Though progress has

occurred, it appears that many still question the ability of a woman to perform tasks that are usually associated with stereotypically masculine traits. It seems that people are quick to resort to negative female images to describe the opposing female candidate, though they respect the female candidate associated with their own party. Also, as many of the news organizations devoted entire articles to pointing out unjust representation of women in this field, they demonstrate their belief that such behavior does not add to the political process. Information regarding sexuality and physicality does not affect a person's policies or intelligence. Rather, it detracts from the audience's ability to form educated opinions about who they elect to lead them.

Conclusion

The media play a major role in educating the public regarding political players and issues. In order to form a public that fully understands processes that they participate in, media outlets need to produce information that is not only accurate but that is also free from assumptions and irrelevant details. In an attempt to quickly represent individuals, journalists often rely on stereotypical images, which can prove detrimental for political candidates who rely on reputations, especially females. As they are reduced to sexual beings or incapable politicians, the women in the race face extra battles. Journalists serve as gatekeepers for information, meaning what they choose to report becomes the news. Therefore, if these individuals dedicate entire articles to a female candidate's outfit, these details become important in the eyes of many. On the other hand, if the journalists focus on a candidate's policies, those policies make headlines. If the media do not depict the female candidates fairly, how can the public be trusted to select an individual to represent them on a global scale?

By examining numerous articles from various publications regarding presidential races, the struggles that women continue to face become evident. While these obstacles appear to have

become somewhat less severe than previous races, they still persist. Comments regarding stereotypically feminine traits consume a portion of the content involving the female candidates. Additionally, articles questioning the two female candidates' ability to lead and make competent decisions involving the entire nation occur in the media landscape. However, though these types of reports exist, many of the articles analyzed were solely devoted to criticizing gender-based reporting from other media organizations. By drawing attention to such practices, these startup sites indicate their beliefs that this type of media treatment is unjust and adds little to the political process. The next step will be to completely correct such behavior and attempt to represent all candidates, of every gender, in an equal method.

The majority of the United State's presidential elections have not involved female candidates; thus, the inclusion of women in the major race has not become a normalcy yet. However, as time progresses and more females enter and effectively participate in the political realm, it is possible that this thought process will shift. Further, if a woman is elected to serve as the president in 2016, the manner in which women are portrayed in the media could be impacted.

Though these startup news sources have entered the media world fairly recently and have engaged in gender-based reporting on occasion, several of them have already publicly recognized unfair reporting. By informing the public of the obstacles women face, they can become more sympathetic to their plight. If news sites inundate themselves with irrelevant articles focusing on unnecessary details, the audience will not gain further knowledge of the candidate's stance on issues or policies. Mainly, compared to previous media representations of female candidates, the 2016 race appears to be a slight improvement as far as gender equality. Though unjust treatment persists, more media organizations seem to be aware of the effect of these portrayals. Regardless of whether a female candidate claims the presidency, the fact that two women have contended at

a competitive level throughout the majority of the race signifies the capabilities of females to

challenge male politicians. Ultimately, stereotypical representations of female political

candidates continue to exist in the media landscape; however, several startup news sources such

as Gawker, Vox, and Vice have demonstrated progress toward equal reporting.

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