

BRINGING THE FRAME INTO FOCUS:
HOW CABLE NEWS PUNDITS PROTECT THE GLASS CEILING

A Thesis Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

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In many nations, the 21st century has been about women in politics. Not only are they running for prominent political offices, but they are winning them. The trend toward success for American female politicians has been slower to progress, however, as no women have been elected to the U.S. Presidency to date, and social science research suggests persistent gender biases exist in their news coverage. In order to explore the potential role that media play in continuing this gender disparity in U.S. politics, this comparative study investigates how cable pundit programs – a dramatic, partisan genre of “news” that has risen in popularity since the 2008 election – frame female candidates for the highest national office. A content analysis of pre-election coverage of three prominent U.S. politicians on the national scene, Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann, on *The O’Reilly Factor*, *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren*, *The Last Word with Lawrence O’Donnell*, *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* and *The Rachel Maddow Show* reveals a small incidence of gendered coverage across these shows overall. Among said coverage found, however, trends in the data suggest that conservative programs employ more gendered frames than liberal programs, and that those frames are particularly negative when referring to liberal candidates (Clinton), and

positive when referring to conservative (Palin and Bachmann) candidates. Further, the gender of the pundits, the gender of the cable network production staff members, and the political party affiliations of executive staff/owners correspond to the frames employed by these programs in unique ways.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the last forty years, gender has become central to the ways that media and society define the identities of political candidates, issues and parties (Norris, 1997). As feminists continue to challenge traditional gender roles and the number of women occupying local and national political office increases – albeit slowly – communication and political science scholars alike have turned their attention to exploring the ways that representations of females in the news media have (or have not) responded to these shifts (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Blankenship, Mendez-Mendez, Kang & Giordano, 1986; Cantrell & Bachmann, 2008; Carlin & Winfrey, 2008; Carroll & Schreiber, 1997; Devere & Davies, 2006; Devitt, 2002; Edwards & McDonald, 2010; Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Heldman, Carroll, & Olson, 2005; Jolliffe, 1987; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Piper-Aiken, 1999; Scharrer, 2002; Washburn & Washburn, 2008), as well as to the effects that such depictions may have on viewers (Davis, 1982; Kahn, 1994; 1996; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Rosenwasser & Seale, 1988; Sanbonmatsu, 2002). Specifically, research inquiry began to narrow toward the examination of coverage of women in high profile political leadership positions after Geraldine Ferraro’s historic Vice Presidential campaign in 1984 (Blankenship et al., 1986; Kim, 2008) – she was the first woman to appear on a major party ticket – and the subsequent “Year of the Woman” in 1992, where a noteworthy number of women were elected to congress (Burke & Mazarella, 2008; Norris, 1997).

The need for further analysis of the depiction of female leaders has become increasingly warranted as we move forward into the 21st century, with the historic

presidential candidacy of Hillary Clinton in 2008 and the recent presidential pursuits of Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann demonstrating significant strides toward breaking the proverbial glass ceiling for women in politics. This study examines the pre-election coverage of each of these prominent female presidential candidates, utilizing framing theory to determine if said coverage is particularly gendered in nature. Framing theory asserts that journalists package key concepts, phrases and images into frames that call upon and reinforce common ways of presenting stories or people (Gamson, 1992; Tuchman, 1978). Typically, this leads to the prioritization of certain facts or events over others, which promotes a particular interpretation of the topic in question (Entman, 1993). Gendered framing, then, works by making gender the central element relevant to the way a story is presented, often calling on familiar conceptions of masculinity and femininity to cue audiences to interpret an individual, issue or event with these ideas in mind (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008; Devere & Davies, 2006; Norris, 1997).

In addition to utilizing this well-established theory, the strength of this study also lies in its comparative nature. Only now can we make claims about how *contemporary* news media frame female candidates for president because we have *multiple* female candidates that have vied for the highest possible office, and as such, this study will be one of the first of its kind. Further, this study is both unique and timely by focusing specifically on cable news pundit programs, a dramatic, partisan news genre that increased in popularity with the American viewing and voting public during the 2008 presidential election and has since maintained that audience (Pew State of the Media, 2011). Specifically, conservative coverage provided by *The O'Reilly Factor* and *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* and liberal coverage provided by *The Last Word with*

Lawrence O'Donnell, *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* and *The Rachel Maddow Show* are examined, as these shows represent the top left-and right-leaning cable pundit programs during the campaign periods in question (according to Nielsen media ratings) that feature both male and female hosts.

It is also critical to note that as consumption of this programming soared in 2008, so too did questions regarding the nature and impact of reporting. Scholars cite a distinct departure from journalistic norms – most notably that of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972) – that characterized broadcast television news for many decades prior (Bae, 1999; Baum, 2003; Baym, 2005; Coe, Tewksbury, Bond, Drogos, Porter, Yahn, & Zhang, 2008; Davis & Owen, 1998). Instead, they find that cable news networks and their programs are increasingly defining themselves in terms of political party affiliation, which raises concern not only about the accuracy of the information that these outlets present to audiences, but also regarding the potentially polarizing effects that such programs could have on an already partisan American electorate and political discourse (Baum & Groeling, 2008; Bernhardt, Krasa, & Polborn, 2008; Morris, 2007; Zaller, 1992). Specifically, scholars note that the increased availability of cable news programming allows viewers to more easily choose the construction of news that is most agreeable with their existing political beliefs, rather than that which challenges their value systems (Baum & Groeling, 2008; Bernhardt et al., 2008; Morris, 2007). Further, Coe et al. (2008) argue that partisan cable news triggers viewers' in-group psychological processes, which can cause judgments of accuracy and bias to be made through a political lens. Put more simply, they assert that viewers develop a strong sense of loyalty to their party and program, and develop hostile perceptions of differing viewpoints. These findings

strengthen the prior political science research of Converse (1964) and Zaller (1992), both of whom also assert that people look to partisan elites, like media pundits or even specific media organizations like Fox News, to tell them what new issues and views are consistent with their claimed political ideologies.

Given this research, it is likely that cable news programs rely on simple, familiar stories or conceptualizations of ideas and people – i.e. stereotypes - in order to make learning about new issues even easier for viewers (Norris, 1997). Specifically, Norris (1997) contends that “stereotypes are widespread because we all have views about groups, whereas we often lack perfect information about individuals,” and as such, journalists capitalize on the use of stereotypical frames to provide audiences with information shortcuts (p. 7). In this sense, the partisan aims of cable news programming could be contributing to a discouragement of critical viewing, where viewers with strong party and program loyalty will accept stereotypes without much question and often be unable to discern fact from opinion (Baum & Groeling, 2008; Coe, et al., 2008; Feldman, 2009). This is troubling, as the consequences of stereotypical coverage have been empirically tested and proven – media portrayals of stereotypes can alter viewers’ impressions regarding the actions of and interactions among individuals of different races, genders, religions etc. in everyday life (Hansen & Hansen, 1988; Morris, 2007). Sex-role stereotypes, more specifically, can also affect expectations about female and male political leaders’ competence, character and skills in handling particular policy issues, which can in turn, affect voting decisions (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1994; Norris, 1997; Sanbonmatsu, 2002).

The characteristically conflict-driven, pundit-led interview format of these programs has also become the focus of scrutiny (Baum, 2003; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005), particularly as this entertaining approach to politics began to sway viewers away from primetime network news programs, at times drawing audiences in equal or greater numbers (Pew State of the Media, 2011; United Press International, 2005). In fact, the genre's speedy proliferation recently prompted Nielsen media ratings to begin tracking the 30 most popularly viewed cable news programs each quarter. And it is because these shows both continue to rival more traditional news sources and have also been shown to similarly affect political attention and knowledge (Baum, 2003b; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Coe et al., 2008; Kim & Vishak, 2006; Moy et al., 2005; Prior, 2003), that conceptualizing and studying them under the category of news is justified and will be discussed in further detail in the literature review to follow (Abrahamson, 2006; Coe et al., 2008).

Finally, it is worthy to note that although it is not uncommon for news coverage on the whole to be both particularly frequent and critical during electoral campaigns, such coverage of Clinton's 2008 presidential candidacy within cable news programming reached unprecedented levels (Pew Research Center Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2007), and speculation regarding Palin and Bachmann's campaigns among these shows appears to have followed suit. As such, examining the ways in which these women are represented within these programs is particularly warranted. In thinking about election news broadly, the trend of abundant critical coverage may likely be due to the fact that women's participation in the political sphere (in the U.S., particularly) is still a relatively recent phenomenon, and therefore of interest to the public (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008).

Further, cable news programming may be particularly interested in the “unconventional” nature of women running for the presidency, as it provides a controversial topic to add drama and therefore, entertainment value to shows. This non-traditional aspect is significant, as it has often been shown to lead to the use of gendered framing in mainstream genres of news coverage, portraying women in a different light than their male counterparts (Aday & Devitt, 2004; Burke & Mazarrella, 2008; Devere & Davies, 2006; Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Scharrer, 2002). The possibility of gendered coverage on pundit-led cable news programming, however, remains empirically understudied. This is a significant misstep in communication and political science scholarship, given the aforementioned pervasiveness of such programming (Pew State of the Media, 2011).

The implications of this study are far-reaching. It is logical to expect that if Clinton, as one of the most popular, experienced female candidates for president to date (FactCheck.org), was the target of gendered framing in 2008, the likelihood that Palin, Bachmann – relative newcomers to the national stage - and future candidates will be able to escape such framing appears slim. As the contemporary news media environment is even further saturated by pundit-led cable news programs than it was in 2008 (Pew State of the Media, 2011), and another election season is underway, finding evidence of gendered framing could also mean that current viewers may be more likely to be exposed to and subsequently accept gendered evaluations of candidates. Recent research has demonstrated that framing effects are surprisingly persistent, particularly among moderately knowledgeable individuals (arguably the majority of the American electorate)

(Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011), and as such, the likelihood that viewers would use such gender stereotypical frames to evaluate future female candidates is also high.

In addition, little is known about how the party affiliation of these programs may affect coverage of female presidential candidates. Should results follow the gendered trends set forth by traditional print and broadcast news outlets (Norris, 1997), it may be particularly interesting to determine how the conservative or liberal lenses through which these programs operate influence the type of gendered coverage that is most frequently used. Such findings would likely serve as the basis for consciousness-raising among the viewers of the cable news programs that are shown to be particularly gendered, as well as an impetus for a broader media reform movement that rejects outlets that unjustly frame issues or individuals in the name of the political goals that they hold in higher esteem than their audiences. To similar ends, if results prove that both liberal *and* conservative programming disseminate gendered coverage, more fundamental questions regarding sexism and the ways in which both news media outlets and society on the whole may be continuing to perpetuate maleness as normative in the realm of politics are warranted. If cable news programs defy the trends found in prior coverage, however, this will mark a significant turning point toward equity in political news coverage, and special attention will need to be given to the new ways in which female candidates are being conceptualized so as to both promote such coverage across other news media and offer a more nuanced lens through which future communication scholars might approach this subject matter.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALIZING CABLE NEWS AND THE RISE OF PARTISANSHIP

As noted, one of the ways in which this study is unique from other contemporary communication scholarship is its examination of cable news punditry, a genre of news that has thus far been understudied in regards to how it depicts messages about gender in politics. As such, an exploration of the format of this programming, its rise in popularity and its relationship to partisanship is particularly critical, both to understanding its role in the current media landscape and to provide a more detailed justification for the salience of its study as an influential news genre.

Although critics may be quick to label pundit programs as providing “fake news,” the aforementioned statistics regarding the numbers in which audience members have been drawn to cable news for political information in comparison to mainstream formats make the case (in part) for arguing the opposite (Pew State of the Media, 2011; United Press International, 2005). A Pew “State of the Media 2011” report indicates that overall, network television viewership has continued its downward spiral, decreasing by hundreds of millions since its peak in the 1980s. In 2010 specifically, network news lost 752,000 primetime viewers, marking acceleration in the decline of nightly news viewership compared with the previous two years. Comparatively, for the past 12 years, cable news programs have either maintained or seen increases in both daytime and primetime viewership. Only in 2010 did cable news see an overall decline in audiences, joining the ranks of all other news platforms except for digital. Average primetime viewership - during which ideological, pundit-driven programs dominate - is still considerably high at 3.2 million, however, and cable news outlets have again posted the largest overall

increases in revenue among news platforms (Pew State of the Media, 2011). Further, a September 2011 study published by the Pew Research Center for The People and The Press (PTP) noted that “despite the growth of Internet news, it is clear that television news outlets, specifically cable news outlets, are central to people’s impressions of the news media.” When asked what first comes to mind when they think of news organizations, approximately 63.00% (633) of the survey’s 1005 respondents volunteered the name of a cable news outlet, while only approximately a third (361 or 36.00%) of respondents named a broadcast network. And when asked more specifically about their top sources for news, the Fox News Network was the most frequently cited by approximately 19.00% (189) of the survey’s 999 respondents, while the Cable News Network (CNN) followed closely behind with approximately 15.00% (149) (PTP, 2011).

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons cable news networks have seen such dramatic rises in viewership is their programming’s aforementioned divergence from traditional broadcast outlets (Abrahamson, 2006; Bae, 1999; Coe et al., 2008; Davis & Owen, 1998). The willingness of primetime pundit programming to blur “hard” and “soft” news makes for a more entertaining format than of that provided by network news sources operating under the conventional prescription of objectivity (Coe et al., 2008). Coe et al. (2008) further elucidate the blurring of these genres by comparing the format of *The O’Reilly Factor* to that of *The Daily Show*. The Fox News Network has not created, nor does it show programming that claims to be fictional. According to FoxNews.com, each program reflects the network’s overall goal to “give people what they want from today’s news: more information, presented in a fair and balanced format.” As such, *The O’Reilly Factor* is to be consumed as a serious political news program. Similarly, the placement

of *The Daily Show* on the Comedy Central Network serves as a self-proclamation that the program is indeed “fake news,” characterized by the comedic approach it takes to presenting political content.

Further, it is also helpful to highlight the fact that the hosts of comedic late-night political programs like *The Daily Show* have publicly professed to being “fake news,” while the Fox News Network’s pundits and representatives maintain the seriousness of their content (Baym, 2005). In addition, several scholars have pointed to the ways in which the “fake news” format differs from cable pundit programming that, while it capitalizes on providing entertainment value, claims to have the primary intent of informing its viewers (Baum, 2003b; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Baym, 2005). Baym (2005) asserts that conversely, “fake news” programs rely foremost on entertainment and humor to engage not only in political criticism, but perhaps more significantly, in serious media criticism. As a result, they have paradoxically gained legitimacy as a unique hybrid brand of news, and in fact, cable pundit programs often exist as a part of the more “traditional” news media environment that these “fake” programs aim to critique (Baym, 2005).

Coe et al. (2008) go on to note, however, that despite these seemingly large differences in intention, both genres of programs essentially operate in the same way - they thrive to varying degrees on the entertainment value provided by the clash of problems and personalities that they present on their respective programs. Given their telling example juxtaposing *The Daily Show* and *The O’Reilly Factor*, Coe et al. (2008) argue that it is better to envision both as news and to conceptualize news programming on the whole as existing along two continua in order to identify nuances among shows.

The first continuum gauges the style of presentation – how objective or openly opinionated are the programs? – while the second gauges the primary emphasis of the news – do the programs aim foremost to entertain or to inform (Abrahamson, 2006; Coe et al., 2008)?

It is also critical to note that the conceptualization of the news as existing along continua does not exist simply to account for pundit-led cable programming and justify its study as a news medium. Coe et al. (2008) and Abrahamson (2006) note that throughout U.S. history, the news environment has always occupied different positions along these continua. The authors cite the overtly partisan angle of “yellow journalism” in the late 19th century that aimed to build audiences by publishing not only the sensational, but even the untrue, as well as the resurgence of professionalism and objectivity as guiding journalistic principles in the 1980s as examples of this phenomenon. Thus, Coe et al. (2008, p. 203) argue that “to fully understand the nature and effects of the 21st century news environment, scholars must study the news in all its forms—whether that be hard, soft, or “fake,” and this point is arguably further substantiated by the many scholars that have already begun to undertake such work (Baum, 2003; Morris, 2007; Moy et al., 2005; Prior, 2003). In fact, Prior (2003) has argued that the cable news environment in and of itself also features programs that exist on various ends of the continuum, and argues that no one scholar has been able to declare cable news as universally hard or soft. Further, through the use of survey data, he asserts that viewers are abandoning network channels to seek their political news on cable, and thus, they must be conceptualized with that understanding (Prior, 2003). Additional research has also shown that even the contemporary cable news programs that do reside

closer to the “soft” side of the political news environment (i.e. the *Daily Shows* and *Colbert Reports* of the world) have been found to increase political attention or engagement and knowledge (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Moy et al., 2005; Prior, 2003), leading to outcomes much like that of their mainstream network news counterparts. (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Moy et al., 2005; Prior, 2003). As such, this research only further justifies the inclusion of programs on either ends of the aforementioned continua in the study of news outlets.

In addition to the prominence of the aforementioned “soft news” programs that have multiplied and found their greatest success on cable, the most evident trend in U.S. cable television news in recent years has been the increasing tendency for networks and programs to identify themselves along partisan lines (ADT Research, 2002; Coe et al, 2008; Hollander, 2008). Typically, such partisanship in news is characterized by its open and intentional endorsement of particular political issues or candidates, and often includes the espousing of personal opinion i.e. editorializing (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Using Zaller’s (1992) discussion of information flows, Holbert and Benoit (2009) assert that such programs should also be noted for enhancing a one-sided information flow (over a two-sided flow), as cable news pundits agree on a given side of an issue (i.e. consensus has been achieved) and only communicate that side to the general public in lieu of more balanced coverage. Coe et al. (2008) argue that the trends toward presenting partisan programs that utilize a one-sided information flow began with Fox News, as the network attempted to respond to what its founders saw as a liberal U.S. media system (they openly embrace a “partisan branding” strategy that asserts they are the “fair and balanced” antidote to “liberal media”). Shortly thereafter, additional cable news

programs followed suit, either to echo that response or, conversely, to offer an explicitly liberal counterview (Coe et al., 2008). For Prior (2007), however, the partisan shift had less to do with the political goals of any one network and more to do with the technological shift from a low-to-high choice television environment that allows people to customize their “media diet” according to their political and entertainment preferences. He cites that in the late 1970s, over 90.00% of Americans watched the three major broadcast networks, while currently, cable television has increased the choices available to the average consumer to well over 100 channels. This has both driven viewers to partisan cable news programs that they find more engaging than their mainstream counterparts, and spurred the creation of new shows to satisfy the niche political interests of certain demographics (Hollander, 2008; Prior, 2007). While I agree that the high choice environment that Prior (2007) describes likely had a role in introducing additional news-related options more narrowly targeted toward certain audiences, I still find credible Coe et al.’s (2008) assertion that Fox News and the motives of its owners started the specific trend toward more overtly partisan news, perhaps particularly in response to the expansion of options that Prior describes (2007). Thus, in taking both his view and that of Coe et al. (2008) into consideration, it appears likely that the rise of partisan programming is due to a combination of these factors.

In addition to exploring the causes for the rise in partisan programming, examining the nature of the partisanship that characterizes cable networks is also critical, as it provides a foundation for better understanding the aims of the programs under examination for this study and offers insight into their viewership. Using national survey data gathered from 1998 to 2006, Hollander (2008) found that U.S. news audiences have

grown more partisan over time, noting a distinct migration to sources more likely to be friendly to individual political beliefs. Specifically, Hollander (2008) found that 62% of those surveyed were self-identified partisans, and that among those viewers, the Fox News Network and MSNBC – the two networks that air the programs to be examined in this study – were cited as the most frequently consulted sources of news. Further, he refers to the “most startling result” of his study as the trend among partisans to spend considerably less time with mainstream broadcast and print media, while independents and those who identified as only “leaning” toward a particular political perspective did not decrease their exposure to these sources (p. 38). More recent Pew research has demonstrated similar trends. Data revealed that in 2011, about a third of the 252 Republicans surveyed (85 or 34.00%) cited the Fox News Network as their main source for national and international news, compared with approximately 9.00% (27) of the 305 Democrats surveyed (PTP, 2011); while in 2009 (more recent data were unavailable), approximately 45.00% (585) of 1301 Democrats surveyed cited MSNBC as their main source for national and international news, as compared to 18.00% (162) of 903 Republicans surveyed (PTP, 2009).

Further, in Morris’ (2007) examination of television news-gathering habits and political attitudes collected from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center during the 2004 presidential election campaign, he discovered that the Fox News Channel utilized tactics that particularly appealed to individuals who have become disillusioned with a perceived liberal mainstream media (Morris 2007). Morris (2007) also found that regular Fox News viewers had a distinct set of political attitudes (particularly regarding former President George W. Bush and the liberal opposition at the time) and perceptions

of political reality (how the system works) that differed from audiences of mainstream news outlets. As such, his study demonstrated that the American television news audience is divided among partisan lines and that cable news may be both further contributing to political polarization, as well as promoting political beliefs that although difficult to categorize as wholly incorrect, can be understood as subjective based on their desire to appeal to partisan sensibilities. Further, Baum and Groeling's (2008) research on the websites of cable news outlets revealed similar results, namely that Fox News chose their most newsworthy stories based on appealing to partisan sensibilities, while online newswires relied on traditional criteria for newsworthiness, most obviously focusing on all perspectives on an issue regardless of the lack of novelty or conflict that may be involved in presenting stories in this manner.

In summary, this chapter should demonstrate that although partisanship in news is not an entirely new concept, as noted by changes in journalistic practice since the beginning of the 19th century, the way in which cable news programs are increasingly identifying themselves on the basis of party identification is both dramatic and unique. Empirical research demonstrates that the programming's entertainment-driven format has attracted and even swayed significant numbers of viewers since its inception (Abrahamson, 2006; Bae, 1999; Coe et al., 2008; Davis & Owen, 1998; Pew State of The Media, 2011; United Press International, 2005), and that those viewers are increasingly dividing themselves among different shows according to partisan guidelines (Coe et al., 2008; Hollander, 2008; Morris, 2007; PTP, 2011). The distinctive presentation of news content and the large, homogenous makeup of cable programs' audiences serve as an impetus to further study the ways in which these factors influence the framing of political

news, particularly as it is related to the understudied area of representations of female political leaders in the U.S.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF FRAMING

The purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the fundamental tenets of framing theory that will guide the proposed research as well as the possible effects of certain framing choices. Traditionally, communication studies directed by framing theory often utilize content analyses as their method and do not include the use of experiments to explicitly test the framing effects of the content found (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). This study follows this research precedent, though the literature review provided in this chapter also aims to present evidence as to why and how certain trends in coverage, if found, could have dramatic effects on the nature of campaigning and elections, the American electorate and political discourse in the U.S.

Although the traditional tenet of “good” journalism is the unbiased presentation of information, the reality is that personal and professional considerations can often influence what information is presented to audiences and how. McCombs and Shaw (1972) and Goffman (1974) were among the first to theorize these types of decisions as being part of the agenda setting and framing functions of the news media, respectively (See also Manning-White, 1950; Tuchman, 1978). Agenda setting theory states that the news media have the power to tell audiences what stories and issues are important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This is referred to as salience transfer - the ability of the news media to transfer issues from their agenda to the public agenda (McCombs, 2004). Goffman (1974), however, noted that the concept of framing moves beyond the simple establishment of an issue agenda to the realm of interpretation. In fact, in approaching the idea of framing from a social psychology perspective, he cited frames as “schemata of

interpretation” that allow individuals or groups “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” events and occurrences, thus rendering meaning, organizing experiences and guiding actions.

As such, focus shifted from the study of agenda setting - looking at the salience of objects or issues – to a second, more nuanced level of agenda setting that examined not only major issues, but also the attributes of those issues. McCombs (1997) also called this level of analysis “framing,” asserting that it is “the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed” (p. 37). Not all scholars agree, however, that second-level agenda setting is entirely equivalent to framing. Gamson (1992), for example, argues that framing relies on a “signature matrix” that involves the condensing of symbols (metaphors, catchphrases, images etc.) and reasoning devices (cause and effect, moral appeals etc.), while second-level agenda setting seemingly only refers to the first part of said matrix – it is easier to think of condensing symbols as attributes of a given object, but more difficult to think of reasoning devices as attributes (Weaver, McCombs, & Shaw, 2004). Further, according to Price and Tewksbury (1997), both first and second-level agenda setting are built on a different theoretical premise than framing: the former on accessibility (i.e. the ease with which messages or associations can be brought to mind), and the latter on applicability (i.e., the relevance between message features and an individual’s stored ideas or knowledge).

For the purposes of this research study, understanding framing as a separate concept from second-level agenda setting proved most useful, as this work is concerned not only with the importance that news media give certain frames, but also how those

frames direct viewers toward particular interpretations of candidates, issues and the field of politics on the whole. Thus, Entman (1993) provides a more specific definition of framing (that echoes Gamson's (1992) "signature matrix" concept in a less-abstract manner) that will work best to guide the proposed research. Entman (1993) asserts that framing is essentially the way that media "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating a text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p. 52). Entman's (1993) definition is also particularly useful, as it is grounded in the seminal work of Goffman (1974), who as noted, largely referred to subtle issues of representation that change the way that people perceive reality. To broadly understand framing in the context of this research then, one must accept that a single issue can be presented from an array of perspectives.

In assessing political news coverage, both agenda setting and framing theory prove critical to understanding the formation of public opinion that influences voting behavior. For example, agenda setting experiments have demonstrated a causal relationship between the order in which issues are covered in a campaign and the order in which the public will perceive the importance of those issues (Shaw & McCombs, 1972; Wojdyski, 2008), while content analyses of both print and broadcast media have shown that "horserace" coverage of who's ahead in the polls dominates election coverage, potentially impacting individuals evaluations of candidates' viability and swaying vote choice (Iyengar, 1991, Lichter, 1988; Robinson & Sheehan 1980). Broadly, the tenuous nature of mass public opinion (as noted by Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992) also makes the agenda setting and framing functions of the news media particularly influential, as even

the smallest changes in the presentation of a particular issue can have marked results (Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Iyengar, 1991). Both political science and communication literature demonstrates that the elite, particularly established media organizations and their representatives, often have the most powerful influence on citizens' political attitudes because they exercise control over media content that purposefully presents issues or candidates in particular ways (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Converse, 2006; Kuklinski & Quirk, 2000). Further, it is because research has shown that the American electorate is not sufficiently politically aware and often holds inconsistent or even conflicting attitudes about political subjects at any one time (Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992) that a majority of the public is even more likely to be influenced by the messages disseminated during presidential election coverage, as it is often characterized by its increased intensity - both in terms of frequency and strength of messaging (Entman, 1993; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009).

This is also particularly critical when thinking about cable news programming, as its arguably self-professed partisanship is likely to result in stronger messaging - both in terms of tone and content (Bernhardt et al, 2008; Coe et al., 2008; Iyengar & Hahn, 2007) - that is viewed more frequently than that of mainstream cable and network counterparts among loyal viewers (Coe et al. 2008; United Press International, 2005). An example of such strong messaging (and an equally strong response by viewers) is the aforementioned reference to partisan content that purposefully cues in-group psychological processes to guide viewers' perceptions of candidates or issues (Coe et al., 2008). Similarly, research has noted that journalists invoke particular frames in political communication to highlight features of a candidate or policy as they are related to the values of their viewers (Chong

& Druckman, 2007; Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). For particularly partisan shows then, the effectiveness of their communication strategy will depend on gauging the characteristics of their target audience – viewers are more likely to share their political perspective and as such, will accept and utilize cues that highlight their party identification and the fundamental values associated with it to judge various issues (Chong, 2000; Coe et al., 2008; Druckman, 2001). Thus, the current cable news environment is one in which audience members’ partisan perspectives and the increasingly obvious partisan framing strategies utilized by pundit-led programs powerfully interact to shape perceptions of news content.

In addition, Entman (1993) argues that certain news media frames become dominant over time, and thus, they enjoy an “exclusion of interpretation” (i.e. they are understood by the audience as natural or reflective of common sense). As such, the news media may be capable of influencing their viewers with fairly little effort, as the public is largely unaware of the frames that are consistently used to cover certain issues, events or candidates. As previously noted, Tewksbury and Scheufele (2009) offer a more in-depth examination of how such framing functions, distinguishing between accessibility and applicability effects. They assert that the more accessible a construct is, the more likely it will be used to interpret an issue, while the more applicable a construct is to an issue, the more likely it is to be used when thinking about that or related issues. Price and Tewksbury (1997) also note that if “the media distribute messages of highly consistent design...” then the “...chronic accessibility of constructs relating to those attributes and features might be expected” (1997, p. 199). Put simply, this means that if the media

continually frame issues in certain ways, viewers will be able to more easily activate those concepts or schemas from memory.

Chronic accessibility essentially biases information processing for viewers then, as they are more likely to attach greater weight to the considerations that are recurrently made prominent by news sources. And in conceptualizing pundit programs, it appears that both chronic accessibility and applicability effects could play a role because individuals continually seek the same genre of program (conservative or liberal), and as such, are likely to recall and apply the information they receive more readily as a result of the repeated exposure. They may also be likely to apply frames more consistently to various issues, as programs that share the same political affiliations reinforce the same types of frames. In fact, in their study on whether entertainment news media produce different patterns of political information acquisition and information processing, Kim and Vishak (2006) found that such programs facilitate online-based political information processing, where viewers come to an overall evaluation of an issue by accessing their online tally, or a mental summary of their most recent evaluations related to that issue at the time of exposure to information. When individuals need to make political judgments, Kim and Vishak (2006) argue that the online tally is what helps them form a conclusion rather than pieces of information stored in long-term memory. In making political judgments then, individuals seem only to need to use the chronically accessible online tally, and as such, cable news contribution to this tally becomes quite critical to consider.

And although Chong and Druckman (2007) assert that individuals can consciously evaluate the applicability and strength of a particular frame if they encounter opposing frames from which to judge it, this active criticism is likely rare with

contemporary cable news programming, both because of the likelihood that overtly partisan shows rely on particularly strong frames (Coe et al., 2008; Iyengar & Hahn, 2007) - which Chong and Druckman (2007) assert are often built around “exaggerations and outright lies playing on the fears and prejudices of their viewing audience” (p. 111) – and the said tendency to avoid programs that challenge existing political beliefs. In fact, Zaller (1992) found that although the most politically aware individuals who are self-professed liberals or conservatives are more selective with the information they accept, they too tend to look to partisan elites, like media pundits, to tell them what views are consistent with their claimed ideologies. And as Entman (2007) argues, elites presumably care about helping individuals form some semblance of an ideology similar to their own because they wish for them to behave in very specific ways, particularly when it comes to vote choice. Given the other limitations of time and attention that citizens face, getting people to think and behave in certain ways requires that they are efficiently cued on how certain perspectives or issues mesh with their existing schema systems (Entman, 2007).

To date, scholars have utilized content analyses guided by framing theory to examine an array of issues in politics, though those most frequently addressed include election and campaign coverage, political advertising, debate and speech coverage and policy news (Benoit, Stein & Hensen, 2005; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; D’Angelo, Calderone, & Terrtola, 2005; Farnsworth & Lichter, 2003; Freedman & Fico, 2004; Kerbell, Apee & Ross, 2000; Hoffman & Slater, 2007; Parmelee, Perkins & Sayre, 2006; Soo, 2005). The results of such studies have demonstrated that across varying types of political content in media, a focus on strategy/games or elections as “horseraces” rather

than on election issues predominates (Benoit, Stein & Hensen, 2005; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; D'Angelo, Calderone, & Terrtola, 2005; Devitt, 2002; Farnsworth & Lichter, 2003; Freedman & Fico, 2004; Kerbell, Apee & Ross, 2000). Further, in political advertising and speeches specifically, appeals to values, emotions and demographic-specific issues also proved prominent (Hoffman & Slater, 2007; Parmelee, Perkins & Sayre, 2006; Soo, 2005). Methodologically, these studies largely utilize a deductive approach to analysis in an effort to produce accurate and replicable results (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Soo, 2005). This “involves predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 94). In other words, it is particularly necessary to have a clear idea of the kinds of frames likely to be used in the type of news being examined, because any frames that are not defined a priori may likely be overlooked. As a result, this refined approach often allows for the handling of large samples and more easily allows future scholars to replicate such methods for the examination of different news coverage and political issues (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Soo, 2005).

Overall, recognizing the use of framing, both in news media broadly and cable programming specifically, is integral to understanding how politics is typically represented to the voting public. This chapter demonstrates that political coverage can rely on framing to tell audiences (and voters) what attributes are particularly salient when forming political judgments on candidates or issues (Iyengar, 1991; Shaw & McCombs, 1972; Wojdyski, 2008). Further, it provides empirical research to demonstrate how easily public opinion can be swayed through subtle (yet purposeful) changes in the representation of content (Converse 1964; Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Iyengar, 1991;

Zaller 1992), so much so that the dominant frames used by news media are often interpreted as reflective of common sense (Entman, 1993). As such, the examination of the ways in which cable pundit programs frame female presidential candidates is particularly important, as those framing decisions may have and continue to influence if the American public perceives females candidates for high profile political positions as “normal,” effective and worthy of election.

CHAPTER 4

REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER IN MEDIA AND POLITICS

As the women's movement has progressed over time, so too have women's representations in media and the field of politics. In many ways – particularly in terms of political presence - equality has yet to be achieved, and as such, studies of the ways in which women are depicted often reflect this state of affairs. This chapter aims to identify particular trends in how the news media have covered female candidates for varying political offices over time. This provides meaningful data from which to compare coverage of contemporary female candidates, so as to gauge how content has changed with the increased visibility of women vying for high-profile political offices like that of the presidency. Further, the noted trends in coverage also provide a rationale for the variables used to denote gendered coverage in the methodology section to follow.

While research examining the portrayal of females in popular press outlets and television programs may have largely moved forward from Tuchman's (1978b) notion of "symbolic annihilation" – women are indeed represented in larger numbers across the media spectrum today, though still not in numbers equal to that of their male counterparts – scholars find that various means to promote the supremacy of a male ideology in politics and society continue to exist nonetheless (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Jamieson, 1995; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991).

Gidengil and Everitt (1999) assert that studies have largely demonstrated three phases in the coverage of women in news media, beginning with the issues of visibility as noted by Tuchman (1978b), followed by particularly narrow coverage of female politicians (focusing specifically on "women's issues," for instance), and thus far,

culminating into what they refer to as “gendered mediation,” which “shifts the focus...to the more subtle, but arguably more insidious, form of bias that arises when conventional political frames are applied to female politicians” (p. 49). Broadly, this means that news media focus disproportionately on candidate behavior that is counter to traditional conceptions of how women should behave, as they employ frames that reflect men’s traditional dominance in political life. In examining televised coverage of leaders’ debates in Canada, Gidengil and Everitt (1999) found that this was indeed the case – news programs disproportionately focused on the female candidates’ counterstereotypical behavior (interrupting an opponent characterized as aggression, for instance) making them appear more masculine than the male candidates. Typically, “tough talk” has been noted to have a positive impact on participants’ perceptions of female candidates in experimental settings and is likely a strategy used by the candidates themselves to avoid coverage that focuses on what Devitt (2002) calls “negative gender distinctions” – i.e. references to one’s gender that are described as a hindrance. Gidengil and Everitt (1999), however, contend that framing the debates this way in the “real world” had an opposite effect. This was in light of negative media feedback where the female candidates in question were noted as underperforming in comparison to male candidates, notably because of their tendency to respond “too aggressively,” and to generally “come on too strong” (p. 62).

Gendered mediation is also characterized by abandoning overt, traditional gender role stereotyping for more nuanced frames that focus on the unconventional breakthroughs of women leaders or on women leaders as outsiders in the field of politics more generally (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Gallagher,

2001; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Norris, 1997). These messages are embedded in larger political frames that liken campaigning and the election process to warfare and sports, which have historically been understood as areas of male expertise (Fountain and McGregor, 2002; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Experimental studies have demonstrated that when campaigns are framed in terms of strategy rather than issues, audiences are more likely to view politics from a competitive standpoint, placing an emphasis on the importance of polling and electability (Devitt, 2002). In their study on press coverage of U.S. senate candidates, Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) found that such framing had a particularly negative impact on female candidates during the pre-election period. Women received more horserace (i.e. “who is ahead and who is behind in the public opinion polls”) coverage than their male counterparts, and this coverage was more negative, even when controlling for their statuses as challengers in incumbent races versus open races. As such, their research demonstrates the ability of the conventional masculine frame of politics to prompt voters to question the electability of female candidates who are conceptualized as traditionally less competitive, and thus less able to “keep up” in the field (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Such coverage may also be understood as indirectly contributing to many female candidates’ decisions to bow out of races.

It should also be noted that the media have attempted to feminize the strategy or game frame that is often employed in popular political coverage, though only superficially. News outlets liken female candidates to “Xena warriors” and note their embracing motherhood as a strategy to convince voters of leadership skills, for example (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Fountain & McGregor, 2002). Whether these subtle trends

will emerge in place of more overt stereotyping within cable news programming becomes a particularly intriguing question, then, as such programming largely operates under the assumption that there is blatant partisanship in the “reporting,” and as such, pundits may be less concerned with hiding viewpoints regarding women that would otherwise be interpreted as poor journalistic practice on the basis of remaining objective. Further, the implications of doing so may be quite dire, considering the other ways in which news coverage has already been shown to inequitably frame female candidates.

One particularly prominent way of employing such gendered framing in political news is the tendency to give different issue coverage to males versus females. Kahn and Goldenberg (1991), Kahn (1994) and Devitt (2002) found that in senate and gubernatorial races, respectively, men received more policy issue coverage in newspapers than women, while women received more personal coverage about their appearance, personality, parental status, marriage, attire and so on. Similar trends have also been found in print and broadcast coverage regarding female vice presidential and presidential candidates (Aday & Devitt 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Washburn & Washburn, 2011), including within my own research regarding gendered coverage of Hillary Clinton on cable news programming during the 2008 election period that was recently presented at the annual conference of the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) (Cassidy, 2011). These findings are puzzling, given that in many instances, the women under examination were more likely than their male counterparts to make issues the “cornerstones of their campaign” (Devitt, 2002, p. 447).

It is critical to note that the lack of information on female candidates’ issue positions across news media likely affected impressions of electability, as issues are

arguably the most salient factors to consider when determining who to vote for. Scharrer (2002) cites such a possibility, noting the prevalence of media attacks on Hillary Clinton's character and senate campaign, as opposed to more substantive issues of policy. Further, coverage for male candidates that does not explicitly address policy issues has still been found to often be more positive and substantive than that of female candidates. In examining major newspaper coverage, Davis (1982), Jolliffe (1988) and Turk (1987) all found that news often addressed men's occupations, political experience and professional accomplishments, painting them as more experienced and capable candidates than their female counterparts. Even once elected, Carroll and Schreiber (1997) found that coverage typically does not become more equitable for female political figures. Specifically, their analysis showed that the press rarely covered women congress members as individuals, and instead focused on their collective contributions as female legislators.

Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) also found that when female senate candidates did receive substantive issue coverage, those issues were those understood to be traditionally feminine, such as education or social programming. This was opposed to male candidates who were associated with issues understood to be traditionally masculine, including defense and foreign policy. Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) suggest that these stereotypical associations may have affected voter evaluations of women's viability as candidates, particularly because they found that male issue coverage and the discussion of stereotypical male traits (men are typically described as independent, competitive and unemotional, while women are described as the inverse) was more prevalent in senate election coverage overall. An overabundance of coverage related to female issues and

traits for female candidates, then, could reflect a lack of competence in areas deemed necessary for effective political leadership and subsequently contribute to failure to secure office. In this sense, employing gender stereotypes in the substance of coverage or as a basis to promote more types of coverage over others may in fact be a strategy more often utilized in pre-election time periods where media outlets still have the ability to affect audience perceptions and potentially, electoral outcomes.

In fact, Cantrell and Bachmann (2008) found trends that, though slight, may support the notion of post-election coverage as being less critical. In examining both national and international newspaper coverage of female government heads during their first 200 days in office in Germany, Liberia and Chile respectively, they found that coverage was not always hostile, offering positive reinforcement for female government heads' skills as mediators and/or as empowering role models for other females, for example. Arguably, this still may be viewed as playing into more nuanced gendered frames, however, it is worthy to note that only a quarter of sampled articles actually mentioned the government head's gender, and leadership was most often cited in a neutral or positive tone by reporters. Aside from these hopeful developments, however, Cantrell and Bachmann (2008) found politics as usual in other aspects of the coverage examined. There was not much difference between national and international press, and in both instances, women still received coverage that differed in tone and content from what would be expected from a recently inaugurated male government head. This included framing of female politicians that reflected common gender stereotypes, such as women having "soft" skills, or references to motherhood. Further, slightly more than half (56%) of the articles included in the sample were coded as gender-biased based on their

use of traditional female traits as a means of candidate evaluation, while 60% gave “some” attention to physical appearance and only 14% noted political experience.

In examining the aforementioned studies which utilize an array of print and broadcast sources of news coverage, it is interesting to note that there has been little work to date on the specific study of editorials and gendered framing, as newspaper editorials may be conceived as the pre-cursors to pundit-led cable programming, in the sense that the presence of slant in the content is expected. For example, while Kahn and Goldenberg (1991), Major and Coleman (2008) and Wojdyski (2008) all purport to utilize a combination of news articles and editorials in their samples, they do not examine differences between the two. Nevertheless, each study did reveal gendered dissimilarities in coverage for female candidates, and this may suggest that editorials rely on much of the same stereotypes as “straight” news articles (though their format arguably allows them to do so in more explicit ways.) Only one earlier study on coverage of Geraldine Ferraro explicitly examined newspaper editorials, finding that much like the tactics used to frame female candidates in the years to come, editorials largely neglected to indicate her specific stance on issues, focusing more so on coverage of personality and electability (Blankenship et al., 1986). And while this certainly provides insight into how editorials may often mimic gendered framing techniques used in more straightforward news articles, Kim (2008) also notes that more broadly, Ferraro provided scholars and media critics with one of the first opportunities to more fully examine how the news media cover male and female leaders differently, specifically noting the overt masculine frame used to report on her performance in debates and her political campaign on the whole.

It is critical to note, however, that Edwards and McDonald (2010) offer some complicating evidence in their examination of editorial cartoons depicting Clinton and Palin, specifically, noting that although some included formulaic and stereotyped representations, there was no overriding pattern that encompassed the two. As such, they argue that the differences in cartoon representation are indicative of differences between these two candidates that are entwined with, but also transcend gender issues. They also note that it was difficult to compare cartoons of Clinton and Palin due to the large differences in experience between the two candidates. Clinton had been on the national political stage for the preceding 16 years and as such, cartoonists had pre-existing conceptions of her image to work with, while coverage of Palin was described as beginning with more of an empty slate. As such, cartoon representations echoed “differences in their personas as symbolic women” (Edwards & McDonald, 2010, p. 326). It is important to note, however, that the greatest similarity between cartoons about Palin and Clinton occurred when they were “neutralized,” that is, when they were pictured along with a male running mate or other male candidate without any particular reference to gender. When the women were independent of men, they were more likely to be subject to gendered framing (Edwards & McDonald, 2010). Edwards and McDonald (2010) largely give this finding short shrift, however, and conclude by noting that the lack of sizable and/or consistent gendered trends in editorial cartoons pointed toward the need for a more nuanced and complex view of gender as a political dynamic.

Largely, however, the findings from previous research on gendered framing in political coverage do not reflect an equal playing ground for male and female candidates. Regardless of political office and news medium, women are often framed in ways that are

not simply different from their male counterparts, but that also put them at a disadvantage when trying to secure public approval or votes. Typically, women are painted as outsiders in the realm of politics, and as such, much attention is paid to aspects of personality and personal life that have little relevancy to their political performance (Aday & Devitt 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Devitt, 2002; Kahn, 1994; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Washburn & Washburn, 2011). The next section of this chapter extrapolates on how these trends in coverage have been applied in specific ways to the three contemporary female candidates for president under examination in this study.

Intersection of Gender Stereotyping and Political Party Affiliation

Largely beginning in the 1980s, scholars have noted that political parties are often associated with particular ideas regarding femininity and masculinity (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). To better understand the ways in which partisan programming chooses to frame the news, this section aims to explore the different issues and traits associated with having either a Republican or Democratic party affiliation, and in turn, being a male or female. Specifically, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) explore both a trait and belief approach to help explain why voters have differing expectations about the types of issues handled well by male and female politicians. While the trait perspective argues that voters' assumptions about a candidate's gender-linked personality traits create expectations that men and women have different areas of issue expertise (previously explored by Kahn and Goldenberg, 1991), the belief perspective claims that candidates are stereotyped to deal better with certain issues because of their political outlook. Female candidates specifically, then, are stereotyped as more competent to deal with

compassion issues - issues traditionally seen as best handled by liberals and Democrats - because of their more liberal political outlook (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

This belief approach is grounded in previous research. Alexander and Andersen (1991) found that New York voters perceived female candidates as much more liberal and somewhat less conservative than male candidates. Further, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) examined National Election Studies (NES) from the late 1970s to early 1990s to demonstrate that the Republican party and its candidates have been viewed as more competent on certain issues ascribed to be particularly masculine, including the economy and national defense, while the Democratic party and its candidates have been viewed as better at handling more feminine issues, including unemployment and eradicating poverty. Pomper et al.'s (1989) study of Bush and Dukakis voters also noted these differences. In light of these findings, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) argue that ascribing stronger liberal and Democratic leanings to female politicians could explain why they are seen as better at compassion-based issues and vice versa.

In conducting their own experiment where individuals responded to news articles regarding hypothetical candidates for local and national office, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) were eventually able to assert that, in fact, both the gender-trait and belief approach have merit. Respondents rated female candidates and candidates with feminine traits as more Democratic than male and more masculine candidates. Thus, they argue that in the absence of specific information about a candidate's political beliefs, gender serves as the primary means to determine the candidate's political outlook (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). It should also be noted that respondents perceived typical masculine traits as more beneficial to the candidate than feminine traits. Stereotypically feminine

women lacked the assertiveness, rationality and decisiveness that respondents deemed as qualities needed to further policy goals in nearly all policy domains (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). These findings are particularly intriguing for cable news programming then, as both conservative and liberal outlets may choose to focus particularly on the gender of the candidate for whom they do not advocate voting, as emphasizing traditional conceptions of femininity will allow them to frame the candidate as political “Other,” ill-equipped to handle the issues central the realm of politics overall, regardless of party agenda.

Characterizations of Clinton, Palin and Bachmann

While exploring general trends in coverage of female political candidates provides a foundation from which to base this research, examining the ways that Clinton, Palin and Bachmann have individually been covered in the news media helps add more depth to that foundation as well as provides insight into how to refine the methodology of this study to reflect more contemporary trends that may have emerged in the coverage of these women. This section also provides justification for the comparison of Palin and Clinton specifically, as despite their widely different campaigns for the presidency, they have both been the focus of scrutiny for members of both the media and scholarly communities.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) describes the challenges that women, particularly female political figures, face as a double bind: “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” (p. 16). Coverage of Hillary Clinton during her prospective candidacy for the U.S. Senate and her 2008 U.S. presidential campaign is a particularly fitting exemplification of this concept, as both her association with and denial of typical gender roles as perpetuated by the press led to her especially critical news coverage (Carlin & Winfrey, 2008; Scharrer, 2002). Aside from being disproportionately negative, studies have shown that the framing unique to female candidates (running for an array of offices) to which Jamieson refers often includes but is not limited to objectification (i.e. references to attractiveness and appearance) and varying references to motherhood, marriage and emotionality (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Carlin & Winfrey, 2008; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Overall, these references comprise what Devitt (2002) calls the “personal frame,” which is often applied to female political figures more frequently than men, who are instead likely subject to “issue framing” that covers more substantive questions of political policy.

In examining research regarding the coverage of the specific candidates under investigation in this study, there is understandably a must larger breadth of material on Hillary Clinton, both due to her array of legal and political experience since becoming the first lady of Arkansas, and of course, to her high profile campaign for the 2008 presidency. Scharrer’s (2002) quantitative research of newspaper coverage of Clinton’s transition from the U.S. first lady to U.S. Senator suggests that Clinton may have received unfavorable coverage due in large part to her failure to comply with media’s “narrow definitions of gender roles,” which includes her seeming denunciation of the traditional duties as first lady and wife in favor of an assertion of power and strength that is more in line with feminist ideals (p. 403). In the coverage examined, Clinton was

framed positively when she performed “traditionally supportive and ‘soft news’-oriented roles” – especially within the first lady role – and negatively when she performed political activity that arguably highlighted her non-traditional gender identity (Scharrer, 2002, p. 403). Scharrer (2002) also noted that the content of these statements was “clearly” gendered in nature, insofar as certain personality traits that are typically favorably received for male candidates were seen as “unappealing and inappropriate” for Clinton (p. 400). In juxtaposing her coverage to that of her male opponent, Rudolph Giuliani, it is also critical to note that the majority of his coverage focused solely on his political activity and rarely concerned his gender or other issues, suggesting that news coverage is typically gendered in nature when Clinton is the subject (Scharrer, 2002). Further, Wojdyski’s (2009) additional quantitative research demonstrated a continuation of this trend for online coverage (on affiliate websites of mainstream news networks) of Clinton’s 2008 presidential campaign. More than half of the stories coded referenced her gender and/or her ability to handle feminine issues and appeal to female voters, while comparatively, only a third of stories focusing on Obama referenced his race. Wojdyski (2008) argues that this discrepancy in coverage suggests that gender may have played a bigger role in devaluing Clinton’s candidacy than race did for Obama, though the positive correlations between mention of Clinton’s and Obama’s minority status and their electability showed a generally “lingering skepticism” that America can elect a female or African American president (Wojdyski, 2008, p. 20).

In examining representations of Palin, Washburn and Washburn (2011) found similar trends in gendered coverage. A mixed-methods content analysis of news magazine stories specifically regarding Palin’s vice presidential campaign found that

although Palin received considerably more media attention than did her democratic opponent, Joe Biden, most of that coverage focused on what Washburn and Washburn (2011) cited as “trivial” topics. *Newsweek* devoted more than half (58.2%) of its Palin coverage to discussions of her childhood, family, physical appearance and personality, while dedicating only 11.9% to her qualifications for office, including legislative experience and understanding of the two major political issues of the campaign - the war in Iraq and the state of the nation’s economy. The corresponding figures for *Time* coverage were similar, at 52.3% and 14.3%, respectively.

Carlin and Winfrey’s (2008) exploratory qualitative media analysis also pointed toward gender stereotypical portrayals of both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin.¹ Various media outlets pegged Clinton as the “antiseductress,” while Palin was noted for her youth and former beauty queen experience. And in an evident demonstration of the double-bind, Clinton’s clothing choices were also often criticized for not being feminine or fashionable enough, while at the same time being noted as out of place in the male-dominated halls of Congress. Outside of physical appearance, however, both Clinton and Palin remained the targets of gendered framing, as Carlin and Winfrey (2008) also cited how the candidates were often subject to a mother frame; Clinton’s campaign speeches and performance in debates were likened to that of a “scolding mother” talking down to the opposing party and its candidates, while Palin’s role as “supermom” was repeatedly covered by an array of news outlets. Tellingly, as the 2008 campaign progressed, Carlin and Winfrey (2008) found that coverage of Palin soon turned from praise to concern, questioning whether it was possible to juggle motherhood of five and the vice presidency.

¹ It should be noted that although there seems to be a scholarly consensus that Palin’s

When mother frames were not invoked, the contradictory nature of coverage continued, as the authors argue that media turned to portrayals of Clinton and Palin as “children.” Such representations were characterized by Clinton’s dependence on her husband as a spokesperson as well as her “meltdown”- like display of emotions during debates, while Palin was often cited as needing McCain to protect her from harsh press coverage.

Of particular interest, however, is Carlin and Winfrey’s (2008) description of “vulgar” gendered framing of Clinton, pointing to characterizations of her as a “nut cracker” or “ball buster” (p. 337). These descriptions were in addition to other negative associations with traditionally masculine behavior, such as being “cold,” “ruthless,” and a “hyper-careerist perfectionist” (Carlin & Winfrey, 2008, p. 337; Scharrer, 2002, p. 401). Because cable news programming is likely to use stronger frames and may be less concerned with unbiased news coverage, they may be more likely to utilize and perpetuate these stronger gender stereotypes. In fact, Cassidy (2011) found that pre-election coverage of Clinton’s presidential campaign on cable pundit programs employed the use of female specific derogatory words more so than post-election coverage. Further, coverage was overwhelmingly negative (particularly within conservative cable programming) when discussing Clinton’s attempts to conform to traditionally masculine traits and focused predominantly on personality and appearance as a means of evaluation. Cassidy (2011) concluded that these factors contributed to more blatant gendered coverage than that of mainstream news counterparts (as found in previous studies), contradicting the work of political framing theory scholars who suggested that contemporary news outlets may likely utilize more nuanced gender biases (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Gallagher, 2001; Norris, 1997).

Ultimately, it will be interesting to note how cable news programs frame Michele Bachmann both in light of all the aforementioned findings and the fact that hardly any research has focused on her treatment in the press as of yet. Upon conducting this literature review, one short column noted that Palin and Bachmann are more often compared to one another than to their male opponents, contributing to the notion of a political “catfight” that presupposes that women will run harder against each other than men (GenderWatch, 2011). Other aspects of her coverage were not discussed. If her coverage is as gendered as that of her predecessors, however, the future of her campaign may be affected.

CHAPTER 5

INFLUNCES OF ORGANIZATION AND GENDER ON NEWS CONTENT

In determining whether and how Clinton, Palin and Bachmann may be framed differently than their male counterparts, it is also salient to explore who is responsible for such framing and why they may come to value partisan and/or gender stereotypical representations over more objective constructions of news that have largely been celebrated within the journalistic community throughout history (Tuchman, 1972). In fact, Scharrer (2002) noted a particular need for further examination of reporters' influences on the sources, tones and topics for news, as her research demonstrated that the newspaper journalists themselves were Clinton's most frequent critics during her senate campaign. And although Carlin and Winfrey (2008) do not offer statistical evidence to support this finding, their qualitative work appears to reveal that a similar trend occurred during Clinton's presidential campaign, among both print and broadcast journalists. This chapter aims to further explore the possibility of, and rationale behind such journalistic influences on news media content, as well as broader organizational values that might also affect political coverage.

Typically, media researchers explore questions of news quality, quantity and emphasis on the local community to determine the existence of organizational influence (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). If otherwise similar media with different owners vary in their content, it is presumed that an organizational influence displaces whatever journalistic routines may have been held in common. Many content analyses of political news coverage, specifically, however, have also questioned the extent of political bias that exists among news organizations, with television having received the most criticism

and research attention in this regard (Altschull, 1990; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Findings indicate that the existence of slant is usually attributed to decisions at the top levels of the organization, which again supersede the routines of objectivity and subsequently affect content, as owners and top executives have the final say in what the organization does. As Shoemaker and Reese (1996) bluntly point out, “If the employees don't like it, they can quit. Others will be found to take their place, and routines can always be changed” (p. 155).

Historically, much of the debate regarding the influence of ownership on organizational values has been within the newspaper industry (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), as Nixon and Jones (1956) concluded that differences in news quality appear to hinge on the social responsibility and competence of the owners and operators of a newspaper. Prime examples that have elicited scholarly inquiry include how media-mogul Rupert Murdoch used the *Sun* and the *Times* of London to help elect Margaret Thatcher and to lend similar support to Ronald Reagan (Bagdikian, 1989); how *Los Angeles Times* publisher Norman Chandler, a strong Republican, helped Richard Nixon throughout his career (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996); how William Randolph Hearst put his *New York Journal-American* to work in the name of anti-communism (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996); and how *Time* publisher Henry Luce also promoted Nixon throughout his campaign (Halberstam, 1979).

The increasing vertical and horizontal integration of media companies in the late 20th century to the present still raises the question of how today's owners have lived up to the responsibilities outlined by Nixon and Jones (1956), particularly given that media owners now exercise purview over content across media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In

fact, one study has shown substantial partisan differences by ownership (St. Dizier, 1986). A survey of editorial editors at newspapers with circulation of 50,000 or greater found that 55% of editors at independently-owned papers said they had a Republican publisher versus 93% percent of editors at chain-owned papers. Subsequently, 65% of chain papers endorsed Reagan in 1984 versus 44% of independents, while 25% of chain papers endorsed Mondale versus 44% of independents (St. Dizier, 1986).²

Although possible political (which is also often personal) bias has and continues to raise concern over the state of journalism, the effects of a much more fundamental corporate economic bias on news coverage has also been called into question by both media scholars and the public. As, the primary goal sought by most media organizations is economic profit (Bagdikian, 1992; McChesney & Nichols, 2002; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), they often face economic pressures that dictate journalistic decisions and subsequently influence content. Specifically, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) call into question the degree of independence media organizations have from their larger corporate owners, as content can be controlled indirectly through hiring and promotion practices and through the self-censorship of journalists and editors who have learned and internalized organizational norms in order to achieve professional success. Treating news as a business has also arguably had a more direct influence on content, as media critic Peter Boyer (1989) cited a connection between television news organizations' goals of boosting both profits and ratings and the trend of "more sensational, docudrama-style news" (p. 23), that arguably characterizes the popular cable pundit programs under

² A review of the relevant literature revealed that more recent studies that systematically review partisan differences by ownership in a manner similar to St. Dizier (1986), have yet to be conducted and/or published.

examination in this study. Underwood (1988) also noted that economic incentives affect content because they are essentially pitting journalists' values against organizational values. Where newspaper organizations have begun to put a premium on short stories to increase audience appeal and revenue, writers continue to desire longer pieces that leave more room for both more creativity and legitimacy (Underwood, 1998). These trends only further call into question the extent of control journalists and other lower-level media workers exercise over the content they produce.

The gender of media personnel in leadership positions has also been shown to influence news content. In comparing issue agendas and story focus at newspapers with relatively high percentages of women in editorial and managerial positions versus those at newspapers with higher percentages of male editors and managers, Craft and Wanta (2004) found that male and female reporters for the female-led papers were assigned to cover a similar agenda of issues. At male-led newspapers, however, editors assigned male reporters to cover politics more often than women, "rewarding them with what has traditionally been considered a prestigious beat (p. 135)." Further, women at male-led papers also covered issues understood to be traditionally feminine, such as education, more so than men. In regards to story focus, female-led papers tended to be more positive, while the opposite was true for male-dominated news organizations. This research demonstrates that the overall differences in issue agendas of male and female reporters may be due less to a conscious effort on the part of a reporter, and more so to the assignments they receive. Singleton and Cook (1982), Liebler and Smith (1997), and Smith and Wright (1998) cite similar trends in television news, specifically, noting that

that male producers and editors typically assign female network news correspondents to stories based on conventional conceptions of women's issues and interests.

It seems that whether motives are political, economic or gendered in nature, by establishing policy for entire organizations, media owners along with their executive, production and editorial staffs have a significant impact on news content. Partisan leanings have been shown to override journalistic norms of objectivity, resulting in the special treatment of certain political candidates over others (Bagdikian, 1989; Halberstam, 1979; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; St. Dizier, 1986). Both political and economic goals have also been tied to the production of more sensationalized news stories and television news formats (Boyer, 1989; Pasadeos & Renfro, 1988; Shoemaker, Chang & Brendlinger, 1987; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In addition, because studies demonstrate that male-dominated organizations often disseminate coverage that disadvantages women both generally and in the realm of politics, it is critical to note that men continue to control the contemporary news media environment as owners, directors and editors (Nicholson, 2007; Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes & Wilhoit, 2007) – as of 2011, only 28.00% of television news directors were women, and they owned a total of only 80 television stations out of a total of 1,729 (Radio Television Digital News Association, 2011). Both due to these trends and Scheufele's (1999) call to make analysis of the process by which media organizations choose to employ certain frames a more critical piece of framing research, an examination of the ownership and executive/production staff of the cable news programming in question is warranted.

Influence of Individual Journalists on News Content

Just as the demographic characteristics of those in leadership roles can affect news content, so too can the characteristics of individual journalists. In examining gender, particularly, various research studies have demonstrated that content produced by male and female journalists utilizes different sources, tones and framing strategies (Gabe, Samson, Yegiyan & Zelenkauskaitė, 2009; Hirsch, 1977; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Zoch & Turk, 1998). These factors may be mitigated by the nature and size of the organization for which reporters work (Gabe et al., 2009; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), though are still important to consider when trying to conceptualize the role and influence of cable news program hosts, who arguably occupy both a journalistic and editorial role in their work. As such, the following section details these intriguing gender differences.

Zoch and Turk (1998) and Rodgers and Thorson (2003) conducted content analyses of daily U.S. newspapers, finding that female reporters do indeed source differently than their male counterparts. Specifically, they found that females contribute less to stereotypes by relying on a wider variety of female and ethnic sources, using those parties more often than males. Both sets of authors found, however, that males and females relied on more male sources for business and political stories (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Zoch & Turk, 1998). And in examining political coverage more specifically, Devitt (2002) also found that male newspaper reporters were more likely to frame female gubernatorial candidates in terms of appearance or personality and frame male candidates in terms of issues and stances on policy. Gabe et al. (2009) also found similar gender differences among the reporting practices of network news

correspondents. Men were more gendered in their approach to covering elections than women, employing both masculine and horserace frames that emphasized power struggles and competitiveness more frequently than women. Further, Gabe et al. (2009) argue that women “were less overtly gendered in their approach” by employing both more human-interest and gender-neutral frames (issue and record coverage) than men (p. 21).

Rodgers and Thorson (2003) also found some intriguing trends among female reporters that were dependent upon the size of the organization for which they worked. Female reporters at small newspapers used almost twice as many female sources than their counterparts at medium and large newspapers and at times, also contributed to a “reverse stereotyping phenomenon, where females used more male sources for stories that have been historically dominated by females and vice versa (p. 669). (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003). In concert with other media scholars (Liebler & Smith, 1997; Piper-Aiken, 1999), Rodgers and Thorson (2003) also found that female reporters working at larger newspapers produced stories that were, overall, closer to that of their male counterparts in terms of story tone, story topic and sourcing. In this instance, the authors suggest that these women may have been conforming to the reigning reportage, political and organizational norms (as discussed in the former section of this chapter) for their respective papers (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003).

In conceptualizing how the aforementioned organizational and individual influences might affect cable news content, it is necessary to explore the role of the program host. An informal examination of the production structure and routines of the five programs under examination in this study (as elucidated by the FAQ pages on their

respective websites) revealed that cable news program hosts fulfill both journalistic and editorial/managerial roles. Typically, cable news hosts have staff members that choose an array of timely news stories or topics that could serve as material for a given show. The program hosts then decide which stories will be presented to the audience, and in what order. Further, they work together with producers and editors to write the program scripts, and often write their own monologues, commentary and interview questions. As such, they appear to exercise more control than is typical for the average newspaper reporter or television anchor, though they still must work within the purview of corporate owners who may exercise both direct and indirect means of control over news content. Given this information, however, it appears that various aspects of the literature presented in this chapter may indeed be generalizable to an examination of cable news program hosts.

In summary, this chapter demonstrates that various influences from owners, organizations and individual journalists may affect the way that news content is presented to audiences. While those at the top levels of news organizations may be responsible for slant in news coverage by way of favoring partisan politics and corporate economic goals (Bagdikian, 1992; McChesney & Nichols, 2002; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), lower members of staff, including editors and reporters, may also contribute to the biased coverage of certain people or issues by relying on their gender identities and their personal conceptions of masculinity and femininity to guide their coverage (Gabe et al., 2009; Hirsch, 1977; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Zoch & Turk, 1998). These findings are particularly critical, as cable news program hosts appear to be characterized by both their executive and journalistic duties, and as such, may exercise sizable influence over news

content in ways that demonstrate allegiance to both organizational and personal goals. And because their role has not yet been the focus of scholarly research, further examination of cable news program hosts is both warranted and well-situated among previous literature exploring key influences on news content.

CHAPTER 6

GOALS, THEORETICAL LINKAGES AND HYPOTHESES

Are primetime cable news programs continuing the trend of gender discriminatory coverage of female political candidates? In what ways has such coverage changed given the increased visibility of women in politics, particularly those in high profile positions? Has Hillary Clinton's unprecedented run for the 2008 presidential election and subsequent appointment as Secretary of State changed the nature of the coverage that she and future presidential hopefuls like Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann have and will continue to receive? This study aimed to answer these questions by examining the role that gendered framing plays in pundit-led primetime cable news programming's coverage of these three women's respective presidential pursuits.

Although both quantitative and qualitative studies of newspaper and network television coverage of female candidates have been examined in great number and detail, there have not been a sufficient number of women coveting such high-ranking leadership positions as that of the U.S. presidency to offer a comprehensive, comparative analysis. In examining Hillary Clinton, for instance, Scharrer (2002) notes that her results may not be particularly generalizable to other female candidates, as Clinton made quite a public transition from First Lady to Senator, and has been, in many cases, the sole female candidate under scrutiny. Thus, she has arguably formed an enigmatic relationship with the press. In addition, little to date has focused on the nature of cable news programming, a genre of "reporting" that as noted, rose in popularity among American viewing audiences in 2008 (Pew State of the Media, 2011). Research on demographic

representation on cable programming has focused on the entirety of cable channels,³ rather than the cable news genre specifically (Kubey & Shifflet, 1995). And even when pundit programs have indeed been the focus, studies often examine the ways in which said shows polarize the electorate and affect political knowledge (Baum, 2003b; Baum & Groeling; 2008; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Bernhardt, Krasa, & Polborn, 2008; Coe et al., 2008; Kim & Vishak, 2006; Moy et al., 2005; Morris, 2007; Prior, 2003), rather than address the potential use of gender stereotypes. As such, studying the use of gendered framing in cable news programming appears to fill a much-needed gap in the literature.

Such examination is also particularly critical if cable news' hyperbolic political criticism and blatant party favoritism are indeed found to expose audiences to narrow, stereotypical characterizations of people and issues, as this may influence viewers' political attitudes and voting behavior, subsequently impacting important national policy decisions (Bernhardt, Krasa, & Polborn, 2008; Coe et al., 2008; Morris, 2007). As such, a fundamental purpose of this study is to make cable news program viewers aware that there may be serious consequences to seeking out news outlets that (they believe) are already in line with their political leanings – most notably, they may not be obtaining accurate or full information on candidates and issues that could prove influential to their welfare.

³ The findings from this particular study still suggest a male-dominated television landscape. Across all cable channels, nearly 65.00% of the staffs were comprised of either all males or a majority of males.

Summary of Study and Hypotheses

Guided by framing theory, this study conducted a content analysis of cable news coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann during the pre-presidential election periods for 2008 and 2012, the races for which these individuals were contenders (It should be noted that although Palin and Bachmann are no longer in the running for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, the visibility of their campaigns arguably matched that of Clinton, and thus made their news coverage appropriate for comparison). Broadcast transcripts from the top conservative and top liberal cable news programs hosted by men and women, respectively, provided the content for study. Specifically, Nielsen media ratings identified those programs as *The O'Reilly Factor*, *The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*, *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, *The Rachel Maddow Show* and *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren*. Content provided by each of these programs was examined for the existence of gendered framing, as guided by prior research. Variables indicating such framing included the use of female specific derogatory words, citing women as notable or unconventional in the realm of politics, making "catfight" comparisons between candidates and focusing on personal items, including appearance, personality, parental/family status and marriage. References to traditional masculine and feminine traits and issues were also examined, along with the overall tone of coverage where applicable. The following provides more specific information regarding the study's hypotheses and their respective rationales.

The first and second hypotheses of this study stem from earlier analyses regarding the ways in which conservatism and liberalism are framed using the lens of gender. As conservative viewpoints continue to be understood as traditionally masculine and liberal

viewpoints as traditionally feminine (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993), it serves to reason that regardless of the party affiliation of the female candidate in question, conservative cable news programs may be more likely to make gender a relevant topic in their coverage as opposed to liberal programs that are more likely to accept the feminine as normative. Due to the likely masculine nature of conservative programs, they may specifically highlight female candidates' inability to handle male issues that are seen as essential to success in the realm of politics (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Gallagher, 2001; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Jamieson, 1995; Norris, 1997). As noted in previous studies (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Devere & Davies, 2006; Devitt, 2001; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Washburn & Washburn, 2011), they also may be more apt to criticize candidates who do not conform to feminine gender norms, focusing particularly on appearance, marriage, parental status and handling of policy issues typically cited as areas of feminine expertise. It is also important to note, however, that gendered coverage in this instance may not always be negative in tone. Programs may highlight candidates' exhibition of traditional female traits, for instance, as a means to positively reinforce such behavior. As such, accounting for tone in gendered coverage is also critical for garnering nuanced meaning from the data.

H1a: Conservative cable news programming will provide more “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann than liberal programming.

H1b: Conservative cable news programming will provide more negative “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann than liberal programming.

When taking political party affiliation into consideration, however, conservative programs (potentially with partisan, conservative owners) may also be more likely to particularly highlight Clinton’s femininity as a way to further distance her from conservative viewing audiences, noting her inability to adequately address policy issues particularly central to the Republican Party, both as a function of her gender and her status as a Democrat (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, Pomper et al., 1989; St. Dizier, 1986). While the possible masculine bent of conservative programming may also result in the use of gendered framing for Palin and Bachmann, this type of coverage may be less frequent than that of Clinton due to their Republican Party affiliation. Further, such coverage may entail more positive reinforcement of these candidates’ ascription to traditional gender roles. Conversely, given the characterization of liberals as more open to the viewpoints of females and other minorities (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Pomper et al., 1989), these outlets may rely less so on gendered framing of the three female candidates in question. Particularly, liberal programming may focus on substantive issues of policy, as Devitt (2002) found that this contributes to more positive voter evaluations of candidates’ abilities to be successful leaders.

H2a: Conservative cable news programming will provide more “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton than both Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann.

H2b: Conservative cable news programming will provide more negative “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton than both Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann.

The following research questions are in many ways related to notions of gender and political party allegiance. While prior research (Gabe et al., 2009; Hirsch, 1977; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Zoch & Turk, 1998) has indicated that female reporters typically rely on less gender stereotypical frameworks when writing news stories, some studies (Gabe et al., 2009; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) also indicate that the nature of the organization for which they work can also influence their reporting practices. As the cable news programs in question are particularly partial in terms of political party affiliation (ADT Research, 2002; Coe et al., 2008; Hollander, 2008), it is reasonable to question whether the goals of the party will override more “natural” gender-related impulses of the hosts of said programs. It is also critical to note that because the workplace role and influence that a television program host exercises over the writing and choosing of news stories may differ in significant ways (previously noted) from that of a newspaper or broadcast journalist, this area of research remains best framed by a research question rather than a more definitive hypothesis.

RQ1: How does coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann differ among cable news programs with female hosts as opposed to male hosts?

Further, the gender make-up of the production staffs for these programs as well as the political party affiliation of the executive staff and/or network owners is critical to consider as a possible influence on content. If the production staff of a program is largely male, for example, it is also logical to question if masculine organizational norms will

override both political party affiliation of the program *and* gender of the host, as these routines and policies have been cited as having a noticeable influence on the final version of content that reaches the public (Bagdikian, 1992; Bailey & Lichty, 1972; Boyer, 1989; Gabe et al., 2009; Hirsch, 1977; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; St. Dizier, 1989; Underwood; 1989). The effects of such norms may be most evident in examining coverage of Rachel Maddow's program, for example, as she arguably embodies their antithesis as a liberal woman. If her program has a largely male executive staff and the content shows trends in framing that contradict the partisan brand of the show as well her gender identity, then a correlation between such content and overarching masculine organizational norms may exist.

RQ2: How are the gender and political affiliation of the staff members responsible for producing each cable news program associated with coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann?

The aforementioned hypotheses and research questions either examine trends across candidates, or explore patterns among liberal versus conservative candidates. As such, the following research question aims to discover the type of coverage that may be unique to each individual candidate. Previous research (Carlin & Winfrey, 2008; Gibbons, 2008; Scharrer, 2002; Washburn & Washburn, 2011; Wojdyski, 2008) has shown that although coverage of both Clinton and Palin has been gendered in print and television news, the ways in which such tactics are employed are often contradictory. Clinton's coverage often focuses on her failure to conform to traditional feminine ideals (via appearance, political activity, lack of emotiveness etc.), while Palin's coverage overwhelmingly focuses on her ascription to conventional feminine roles and standards

(as mother, beauty queen, etc.). It will be of value to determine if these trends continue to subsist in cable programming. Further, as Bachmann is a relative newcomer to the political scene in comparison to Clinton and Palin, little is known about the potentially gendered ways she was covered during her primary campaign (Gibbons, 2008). Further, Scharrer (2002) suggests that it is important to consider enigmatic or celebrity-like relationships that candidates have with the press. As such, it will be interesting to see if Bachmann's coverage is less gendered and/or less critical, as Clinton and Palin have much longer-established relationships with the media.

RQ3: How does specific coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachmann differ?

CHAPTER 7

METHODOLOGY

Entman (1993) argues that the “major task of determining textual meaning should be to identify and describe frames” (p. 57). A content analysis informed by framing theory, he asserts, gauges the relationships of the most influential messages to the audience. As such, this research study aimed to answer the aforementioned hypotheses and research questions by conducting a content analysis of cable news coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann during the pre-presidential election periods for 2008 and 2012, respectively. The research design of this study was informed by my smaller study regarding gendered coverage of Hillary Clinton appearing on the top four cable news programs for the first quarter of 2010 presented at the 2011 AEJMC annual conference (Cassidy, 2011). The decision to expand this study to include two new candidates not only makes the results more timely - as Palin and Bachmann are two female candidates who enjoyed prominence during the 2012 presidential primary season - but also more generalizable to both liberal and conservative female presidential candidates. Further, as the previous research indicated the need for larger sample size, this study also addressed this shortcoming.

The unit of analysis for this study was story - specifically, each story covering the female political figures in question within broadcast transcripts from four of the top 30 cable news programs for the third quarter of 2011 according to Nielsen media ratings. It should be noted that although scholars assert that frames should have easily identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics, and as such, may benefit from being smaller in size (i.e. paragraph), story was chosen as the unit of analysis in this case because

broadcast transcripts are not organized in a traditional paragraph format and instead utilize a single-line structure (Devitt, 2002). *The O'Reilly Factor* airing on the Fox News Channel (2.886 million total viewers), *The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell* airing on MSNBC (840,000 total viewers), *The Rachel Maddow Show* airing on MSNBC (927,000 total viewers), and *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* (1.738 million total viewers) airing on the Fox News Channel were chosen to reflect the top conservative and top liberal cable news programs hosted by men and women, respectively. In addition, illustrative quotes were included in the discussion section of the study to help provide a fuller understanding of statistical results, which were quite numerous.

Sampling Decisions

“The O'Reilly Factor,” “The Rachel Maddow Show,” and “On the Record with Greta Van Susteren” were entered into the Lexis Nexis Academic database, and within these results, the name of each respective candidate was entered. It should be noted that for “The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell,” the Lexis Nexis Academic database largely only includes transcripts of interviews from the program rather than transcripts of the episodes in their entirety. As such, the sample for this program was selected from the Lexis Nexis News database, which functions in much the same way.

For Hillary Clinton specifically, however, “The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell,” was replaced with “Countdown with Keith Olbermann,” as during her pre-election period, it was the top liberal cable news show according to Nielsen media ratings. (Olbermann's program was eventually cancelled and replaced by O'Donnell's program in 2011). With this adjustment, the time period of January 1, 2007 to November

4, 2008 was used to locate relevant transcripts published during her pre-election coverage period. These pre-election dates were chosen as such to encompass the heightened speculation surrounding Clinton's possible entrance into the 2008 United States presidential race during January 2007 and the subsequent announcement of her bid on January 20, 2007, as well as the day of the election itself.

For Palin, the time period from July 3, 2009 to October 5, 2011 was entered into the Lexis Nexis Academic database to locate relevant transcripts. Though talk about Palin's running for president was spurred quite soon after the defeat of John McCain in 2008, her resignation as governor of Alaska on July 3, 2009 arguably created some of the highest speculation that she would indeed be running, as various news outlets and pundits asserted that such a move freed her to "build a national political team and travel the country in support of an expected 2012 presidential bid" (Cillizza, 2009). As previously noted, although Palin is presently no longer a presidential candidate – she officially announced her decision to bow out of the race in a letter to her supporters on October 5, 2011 - her campaign is still quite worthy of examination given the considerable amount of cable news coverage it received and her continued prominence on the national scene.

For Bachmann, the time period from May 26, 2011 to January 3, 2012 was entered into the Lexis Nexis Academic database. Although Bachmann's campaign team uploaded a YouTube video with her announcing that she had filed the necessary paperwork to run for the presidency in 2012 on June 13, 2011 and her formal announcement was not made until a speech in Iowa on June 27, 2011, May 26 marks a high profile speech in Des Moines where Bachmann implied that bow outs from former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, businessman Donald Trump and Indiana Governor

Mitch Daniels encouraged her to run. Further, although a final decision had not yet been made, she stated “We already have staff in South Carolina, in New Hampshire, in Iowa...we have people on the ground. We're doing every aspect that we need to be doing in this effort” (Zdechlik, 2011). As such, it was evident that her and her team were beginning a campaign push during this time. In fact, just one day later, she asserted that she felt a “calling” to run for president (Madison, 2011). January 3, 2012 was then chosen as the cut-off date for Bachmann’s sample to reflect the date of the Iowa Caucus, the results of which prompted her to drop out of the presidential primary race the following day.

It should also be noted that because Bachmann’s campaign period was significantly shorter than that of Clinton and Palin (6 months as compared to Clinton’s 10 and Palin’s 27), Lexis Nexis Academic search results retrieved fewer relevant transcripts for her examination. As such, systematic random sampling was used to make the searches equivalent. Specifically, every fifth relevant transcript was chosen for Clinton and Palin, while every second relevant transcript was chosen for Bachmann. 40 transcripts from each program were selected, resulting in a total of 160 transcripts each for Palin and Bachmann. A census sample of relevant transcripts for *The Rachel Maddow Show* was needed for Clinton (20 transcripts), however, resulting in a slightly smaller sample of 140 transcripts. As such, the overall sample size reached 460 transcripts. (See Table 1). It is also critical to note that transcripts that contained only passing references to the candidates in question were eliminated from the sample in order to ensure that the content they offered was both relevant and substantive.

Table 1: Transcripts in the Sample by Candidate

	O'Reilly	O'Donnell	Van Susteren	Maddow	Olbermann	Total
Hillary Clinton Jan. 1, 2007 - Nov. 4, 2008	40	0	40	20	40	140
Sarah Palin July 3, 2009 - October 5, 2011	40	40	40	40	0	160
Michele Bachmann May 26, 2011 - January 3, 2012	40	40	40	40	0	160
Total Sample Size	26.00% (120)	17.00% (80)	26.00% (120)	22.00% (100)	9.00% (40)	460

Defining and Measuring Variables

In order to reach meaningful, rich conclusions about the nature of “gendered” portrayals of Clinton, Palin and Bachmann in cable news programming, it was critical to both define the term “gendered” and to examine an array of variables that could indicate “gendered” coverage. Once patterns among those variables were identified, they were categorized into specific frames that have been popularly associated with gendered coverage - including an overall frame of “male-domination” in politics, an overabundance of “personal,” “strategy” and “unconventional breakthrough” frames, and a dearth of “issue” frames. The data were also assessed for any new ways that seemed unique to candidates and/or cable news coverage, including the use of a “political catfight” frame. And while recognizing the frames that operate in said coverage was particularly meaningful for building upon prior research and answering some larger-scale questions, it should also be noted that attending to a wide and detailed array of variables also allowed for a more nuanced examination into exactly how the news organizations in question achieved such frames. Further, it also allowed for a more intricate exploration of the ways in which each individual candidate was covered during their respective campaign periods.

Previous research defines “gendered” framing in politics as using frames “where gender is regarded as relevant to the description of candidates, issues, or leaders” (Norris, 1997, p. 6). Broadly, this means that frames can either be gender-pertinent, or gender-neutral – think ‘middle-class problems with childcare facilities’ versus ‘women’s problems with childcare facilities.’ Norris (1997) also notes that conventional gendered frames often reinforce sex stereotypes. Here, it is important to recognize that frames are

understood as the broader context within which sex stereotypes may be located – i.e. they serve as indicators of particular gendered frames – but the terms “stereotypes” and “frames” are not synonymous. Devere and Davies (2006) also assert that gendered political coverage “usually involves seeing the male as the norm, and the female as remarkable...and includes an emphasis on appearance, marital and maternal status, and personality rather than policies and issues of debate” (p. 65). As such, this research study defined “gendered” coverage as that which highlights traditional male and female traits, issues and roles and uses them as a means of evaluating the candidates and their campaigns.

Defining gendered coverage in this way makes the analysis of tone of said coverage particularly important, as the way in which conventional gender norms are highlighted can serve as either an obstacle or a resource for the female candidates under examination. Whether Hillary Clinton’s emotionality is highlighted as a fitting display of her femininity or as “proof” that her femininity disables her from adequately handling the responsibilities of the presidency, for example, both instances were classified as “gendered” coverage and subsequently categorized as negative, positive or neutral so as to help make claims about the overall frames used and the possible impact of those frames. As such, the variables examined largely fell into two categories – those that assessed tone of the coverage as well as those that assessed the mentions of certain terms or themes within each transcript, as a higher frequency of mentions logically indicated a higher salience of those issues within the broadcast. The only variable that deviated from this pattern was “issue coverage,” which will be discussed in further detail below.

Coding Decisions

The first section of the coding scheme was devoted to the assessment of background variables, which included coder identification, program name and candidate in question. These variables were recorded in order to both effectively organize the coded content for examination by the primary researcher, as well as answer the posed hypotheses and research questions. The second section of the coding scheme was devoted to coding the transcript and was divided into the following categories: Assessing Mentions, Assessing Issues and Assessing Traits.

Assessing Mentions

First, as guided by the previous pilot study (Cassidy, 2011) coders were asked to record the number of times female-specific derogatory words were used in each story. For the purposes of this study, **female-specific derogatory words** were defined as those words used as a means to insult or devalue a candidate or her campaign that would not typically be applied to describing a male opponent, or to which a male equivalent term does not exist. Examples included but were not limited to nouns like “bitch,” and “ball-buster,” and adjectives like “shrill,” and “nagging” (Carlin & Winfrey, 2008). Next, coders were asked to record the number of times the story mentioned a candidate as being particularly **notable because she is a woman**, as previous research (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Gallagher, 2001; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Norris, 1997) has found that women are often covered for their novelty in competing and working within the political realm. Examples of such mentions included but were not limited to references to breaking the glass ceiling, being “unconventional” “unexpected”

or entering “uncharted territory for women.” Coders were then asked to assess the tone of this coverage by marking “positive,” “negative,” “neutral” or “could not be determined” respectively on each code sheet. A negative reference may have questioned the candidate’s ability to lead because there are few females in government-head positions, while a positive reference might have cited a candidate as being a role model for other women interested in careers in politics. It is also important to note that this particular variable relates directly to the “unconventional breakthrough” frame that is part of the relatively recent gendered mediation phenomenon in political news coverage of female candidates (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008). Similarly, coders were asked to record the number of times coverage placed an emphasis on **polling or electability**, as these are indicators of the broader “strategy” or “game” frame (Devitt, 2002; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Examples included but were not limited to references to how a candidate was performing in the polls, if she had a chance of winning, or if she could compete with other candidates. Such references may have also incorporated explicit mentions of “electability.” Coders were then asked to assess the tone of this coverage by marking “positive,” “negative,” “neutral” or “could not be determined” respectively on each code sheet. A negative mention may have noted a candidate’s particularly dismal performance in the polls among a certain segment of the voting population, while a positive mention may have noted that a candidate had a good chance of winning the nomination or overall presidential election.

Coders were also asked to assess coverage of **marriage and family** for all candidates within each story by indicating the frequency of references to any candidate as “wife,” “mother” and/or “motherly” and/or frequency of coverage regarding the history

or state of their marriages, as well as references to children and/or parenting, as previous research has also noted the frequent inclusion of these topics in gendered political coverage (Aday & Devitt; 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Devere & Davies; 2006; Devitt; 2001; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Scharrer, 2002; Washburn & Washburn, 2011). Coders were then asked to assess the tone of said coverage by marking “positive,” “negative,” “neutral” or “could not be determined,” respectively. A negative reference may have been a particularly biting assessment of Sarah Palin that explicitly or implicitly used rumored marital instability as a sign of weakness, while a positive reference may have been particularly strong praise for Hillary Clinton’s strength of character as demonstrated by her decision to stay with her husband during a challenging period of the marriage. In examining both marriage and family references, coders counted separate mentions as those that indicate different subjects. For example, “Hillary Clinton is a strong mother and wife. Still, many question her decision to stay with Bill after his affair,” would have been counted as two mentions for marriage, as it notes her as wife and also references the marriage itself, and one mention for family, as it notes her role as mother.

Other variables coded include mentions of candidate **appearance** and **personality**, as guided by prior research (Aday & Devitt; 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Devere & Davies; 2006; Devitt; 2001; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Washburn & Washburn, 2011). Appearance was defined as references to clothing, make-up, hairstyle, or attractiveness, while personality was defined as explicit references to the terms “personality,” “likeability” or other synonyms. Personality was defined as such because personality traits themselves were more deeply examined (including tone) by certain

variables to follow, and also because frequent references to these terms were noted during the initial study. Thus, coders noted references to personality by simply tallying the number of times the terms “personality,” “likeability,” and/or similar words were mentioned in each story. In regards to appearance, however, coders were asked to tally the number of times appearance mentions were made, noting that multiple references to appearance within the same sentence or story should be counted if those references were noticeably different. For example, “Hillary Clinton is dowdy, drab and dull” should have been counted as one reference to appearance because those adjectives are synonyms; however, “Hillary Clinton was wearing a pantsuit that made her look unfashionable and old” contains three references to different aspects of appearance and thus, should have been recorded as three separate references. In addition, coders were asked to count the number of “positive,” “negative,” neutral and “unable to determine” references to candidate appearance. A negative reference may have included a particularly critical assessment of Michele Bachmann’s eyes (her “crazed” stare noted by various news outlets) while a particularly positive reference may have described Sarah Palin as “one of the sexiest presidential hopefuls to date.”

Finally, as the only speculation on coverage of Bachmann thus far has involved the idea of a “**political catfight**” (GenderWatch, 2011), coders were asked to note the number of times the featured candidate was compared to other female candidates or political figures. Here, coders noted whether the point of comparison was another candidate under examination in this study, or another figure entirely. (Recall that since searches were made by candidate’s name, each news story was primarily about one candidate, whereas others might be mentioned as points of comparison). They were then

asked to assess the tone of said comparisons. A positive reference might have included a reference to the featured candidate as being more skilled than another – “Michele Bachmann is better versed in foreign policy than Sarah Palin” – while a negative reference might denote the opposite – “Sarah Palin has nowhere near the amount of political experience that Hillary Clinton had when she ran for president.” Negative and positive references that compared both candidates equally, however, were *not* included, as they do not pit the candidates against one another, which is the essence of a “catfight.” A negative reference in this case might be, “Both Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann are poor performers in political debates,” while a positive reference might assert that both “Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann bring something fresh to the Republican party.” Neutral references, however, were noted by the coders. These references included those that clearly set candidates up against one another - “It will be a battle between Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann to be the female voice for the Republican party” - but that did not make explicit references to one candidate performing better than the other.

Assessing Issues and Traits

The final variables coded were issues and traits. Coders assessed issues as “**male issues**,” “**female issues**,” or a **mixture of both**. In keeping with prior studies (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993), “male issues” were defined as issues where men are traditionally seen as being more competent and conversely, “female issues” were defined as issues where women are traditionally seen as being more competent. “Male issues” included foreign policy, immigration, the economy and defense (specifically “the War on Terror” and “the War on Iraq” in this study) while

“female issues” include women’s rights, abortion, education, healthcare, social security, gay rights and the environment. Coders were also be asked to record which of those specific issues were addressed within each story, circling all that apply, as well as to assess the tone of said “male” and “female issue” stories. Coders tallied the number of “positive,” “negative,” “neutral” and “unable to determine” references that were made, respectively, noting that a negative reference may have been one that discredited a candidate’s competency in handling issues or, conversely, her reliance on certain issues (i.e. she may be portrayed as ill-equipped to handle male issues or as relying too heavily on her experience with female issues to bolster her perceived effectiveness as a candidate), while a positive reference may have offered an optimistic remark regarding her competency regarding the issue in question. In addition, references to very similar issues were only counted once – i.e. “Hillary Clinton is equipped to handle the nation’s growing need to decrease pollution and tap into renewable energy” would have been marked as one (positive) reference as it is broadly related to the issue of “environment.”

Much in the way that issues were divided, coders also assessed each story as mentioning “**male traits**,” “**female traits**,” or a **mixture of both**. In keeping with prior studies (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Kahn & Goldenberg 1991), “male traits” were defined as those traits that are typically associated with men, including being assertive, tough, strong, dishonest, aggressive, powerful, unemotional, a strong leader, competitive, knowledgeable and ambitious. Conversely, “female traits” were defined as those traits that are typically associated with women, including being emotional or sensitive, passive, compassionate, dependent, a weak leader, unintelligent, honest, gentle and noncompetitive. Coders were then asked to assess the tone of “male” and “female trait”

coverage in each story by tallying the number of “positive,” “negative,” “neutral” and “unable to determine” references, respectively, in each story. Negative references may have included disparaging remarks regarding a candidate’s exhibition of traits that are either not typically feminine enough, too typically masculine or vice versa, while positive references may have reaffirmed her display of “appropriate” female traits or commend her as a viable candidate due to her unique exhibition of “appropriate” male traits. Here it was also important for coders to note that references to very similar traits were only to be counted once – i.e. “Sarah Palin is loving and kindhearted” would have been one (positive) reference to the broader feminine trait of “compassion.”

After all variables were coded, research into the owners and executive staffs of the affiliated networks as well as the production staffs of the programs themselves was conducted – particularly regarding gender and political party affiliation – as studies demonstrate that this too may influence content in gendered ways (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; St. Dzier, 1986). The executive staff positions examined included overarching CEOs, chair-people and/or presidents. Production staff members examined included news directors and producers only. Assignment editors were not included as they typically fall below program hosts in the chain of command (Stovall, 2005). The gender-makeup of the production staffs (male-dominated, female-dominated or equitable mix) as well as the political party affiliation of the owners and executive staffs were then used as independent variables in statistical analyses to determine if these factors increased the likelihood of certain gendered strategies (See Table 2). It is critical to note, however, that during analysis of the data, it became clear that the political affiliation of the respective executive staffs largely match the political leanings of the programs themselves. This

said, the results found regarding how the political party affiliations of the programs are associated with gendered content apply equally to the question of how political party affiliation of the staff is associated with gendered content and thus, it is not necessary to explore this aspect in further detail. The discussion section, however, will address exactly what staff members were included in the analysis, as well as how a determination on their respective political affiliations were made.

Table 2: Gender Make-Up of Production Staffs

Position	O'Reilly Factor	Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell	On The Record with Greta VanSusteren	The Rachel Maddow Show	Countdown with Keith Olbermann
Director	Steve Goodman	Chris Barrett	Steve Goodman	Chris Barrett	Christopher Ballante (Current TV)
Senior Executive Producer		Izzy Povich	Meade Cooper (f)		David Sarosi
Executive Producer	David Tabacoff	Greg Kordick	Suzanne Scott	Bill Wolff/ Matthew Saal	Izzy Povich
Senior Producer				Tina Cone	Leslie Bella-Henry
Producer	Jesse Watters (m)	Ronnie Polidoro	Christine Melly	Tricia McKinney	Jennifer Bermon
Producer	Dan Bank	Sarah Muller	Kerry O'Connor-Aouad	Julia Nutter	Katy Ramirez-Karp
Producer	David Brown	Joy Fowlin	Cory Howard (f)	Laura Conway	Joe Lapointe
Producer	Dave Huppert	Chris Godbum		Kent Jones	Joel Schwartzberg
Producer	Porter Barry	Danielle Weisberg		Steve Brenan	Aaron Volkman
TOTALS	Total Male: 6 Total Female: 0	Total Male: 4 Total Female: 4	Total Male: 1 Total Female: 5	Total Male: 4 Total Female: 4	Total Male: 4 Total Female: 4
<p>*Note: Programs have varying titles/number of staff. As such, some cells displayed are blank. In addition, (m) = male, (f) = female.</p>					

Assessing Inter-coder Reliability

A second coder reviewed approximately 15% of the content in conjunction with the primary researcher (who also served as the primary coder) in order to achieve inter-coder reliability. As the primary researcher is female, a male was chosen to be the second coder so as to account for both perspectives in the coding process, as gender is one of the principal topics under examination. It may be more likely, for example, for two female coders to more critically interpret female gender stereotypes, and conversely, it may be more likely for two male coders to be less aware of and/or critical towards female gender stereotypes. Thus, accounting for gender of the coders allowed for a reasonable consensus on what constitutes “gendered” framing of each candidate in news coverage. The second coder was asked to review the coding scheme a week prior to the implementation of the research study. During this time, the primary researcher trained the second coder on each item included in the coding scheme so as to answer any questions that arose. The primary researcher also reviewed the appropriate method for completing the code sheet at this time. As such, high inter-coder reliability was achieved on each variable under examination. The average percent agreement for variables in which traditional inter-coder reliability testing was performed was 88.56%, while the intraclass coefficient testing yielded an average intraclass coefficient estimate of .88. It is also important to note that some data were best suited for Holsti’s method to calculate percent agreement, which does not account for chance. Intraclass correlation coefficient testing was used for the remaining data. Below, Tables 3 and 4 display the results of said testing.

Table 3: Intercoder Reliability - Holsti's Percent Agreement

Coverage	Percent Agreement ($2M/N_1 + N_2$)
Appearance	100.00%
Derogatory Words	96.70%
Electability	86.70%
Notable for Women	100.00%
Marriage	96.70%
Mother/Family	100.00%
Personality	86.70%
Political Catfight	90.00%
Issues	86.70%
Traits	83.30%
Healthcare	90.00%
Economy	100.00%
War on Iraq	90.00%
War on Terror	90.00%
Foreign Policy	83.30%
Abortion	100.00%
Gay Rights	100.00%
Education	100.00%
Environment	86.70%
Social Security	100.00%
Immigration	100.00%

Table 3: Intercoder Reliability - Holsti's Percent Agreement Continued

Coverage	Percent Agreement ($2M/N_1 + N_2$)
Gender	90.00%
Other	80.00%

Table 4: Intercoder Reliability - Intraclass Correlation Coefficient Testing

Coverage	ICC
Positive Electability	.92
Negative Electability	.95
Neutral Electability	.85
Positive Marriage	1.00
Negative Marriage	.94
Neutral Marriage	.95
Positive Mother/Family	1.00
Negative Mother/Family	1.00
Neutral Mother/Family	.92
Positive Notability	1.00
Negative Notability	1.00
Neutral Notability	1.00
Positive Female Issues	.79
Positive Political Catfight	.92
Negative Political Catfight	.97
Neutral Political Catfight	.85

Table 4: Intercoder Reliability - Intraclass Correlation Coefficient Testing Continued

Coverage	ICC
Positive Female Issues	.81
Negative Female Issues	.97
Neutral Female Issues	.92
Positive Male Issues	.95
Negative Male Issues	.95
Neutral Male Issues	.71
Positive Female Traits	.85
Negative Female Traits	.92
Neutral Female Traits	.95
Positive Male Traits	.85
Negative Male Traits	.97
Neutral Male Traits	.79

CHAPTER 8

RESULTS

A Description of the Sample

Though the transcripts included in the sample all either incorporated significant segments or dedicated their feature stories to the candidates in question, it is important to note that a majority of the transcripts examined did not contain many of the variables being coded, despite the increase in sample size from the pilot study. Further, it is also critical to highlight that slightly more than half of the transcripts examined were from conservative-leaning cable news programs (53%), as there was a decreased availability of relevant transcripts from *The Rachel Maddow Show* (48%).

The indicator of gendered coverage that was most frequently found in the sample across candidates was an overabundance of electability references in comparison to substantive issue or policy coverage (See Tables 5-8). Such references appeared in 41.74% (n = 192) of the stories from the transcripts included in the overall sample, while issues (regardless of their gender affiliation) were covered in only approximately one-third (n = 138) of the stories across candidates. Further, the majority of the electability coverage was negative, questioning the ability of the candidates to compete with their male opponents and often highlighting negative polling results and their implications for campaign success. Specifically, Michele Bachmann received the most negative electability coverage, with over one-third (35.00% or n = 93) of her stories questioning the legitimacy of her campaign. The second most frequently occurring variable in the data was marriage coverage, with 15.43% (n = 71) of stories within all transcripts containing such references. It is also worthy to note that of the overall sample, 11.52% (n

= 71) of the marriage references were neutral, referring to the candidate as a wife or as a married unit instead of an individual – i.e. “she and her husband,” – while 5.65% (n = 40) were critical about the state of the candidates’ marriages and 2.17% (n = 18) offered comments of praise or support (See Table 8). Specifically, Clinton received the most marriage mentions, with a quarter of her stories (25.00% or n = 62) noting her relationship with former president Bill Clinton in varying fashions.

Although all of the candidates were evaluated on their ability to handle a variety of issues – from those that were particularly relevant during the time of their respective elections to those that any presidential candidate would likely need to demonstrate competency in handling – coverage containing references to their marriages and roles as mothers (14.78% of stories, n = 68) was more abundant than coverage for every policy issue coded, excluding the economy (19.78%, n = 91). Personality coverage (9.13%) also trumped nearly all issues, excluding healthcare (13.48%, n = 32) and the economy. It was on par with coverage including general mentions of “women’s issues” (10.43%, n = 48), and surprisingly surpassed substantive issues like the “War on Terror” (4.78%, n = 22) and foreign policy (7.39% n = 34) by noticeable margins. Overall, the economy was the issue most frequently covered by the programs in question, with a total of 91 stories mentioning voting records, perspectives and/or plans in this realm. Healthcare and “women’s issues” came in a close second and third, with 13.48% (n = 61) of stories covering the former and 10.48% (n = 48) covering the latter (See Tables 6-7).

In terms of tone, neutral coverage occurred most frequently across candidates and programs, though the differences between this type of coverage and that with a positive or negative tone were quite small. In total, 35.02% of all references (coded for tone)

were coded as neutral (n = 650), while 33.68% (n = 628) were coded as positive and 32.33% (n = 603) were coded as negative (See Table 8). More significant trends in tone of coverage among individual candidates and programs did arise, however, and will be discussed in the sections to follow.

Table 5: Frequency of Gendered Terms

Terms Mentioned	Percent of Total Stories/ N of Stories	Number of References
Electability	41.74% (192)	428
Marriage	15.43% (71)	129
Mother/Family	14.78% (68)	123
Appearance	9.35% (43)	81
Personality	9.13% (42)	42
Political Catfight	7.39% (34)	58
Notable for Women	6.09% (28)	45
Derogatory Words	3.48% (16)	19

Table 6: Frequency of Gendered Terms by Candidate

Terms Mentioned	Percent of Clinton Stories / N of Stories	Percent of Palin Stories / N of Stories	Percent of Bachmann Stories / N of Stories
Electability	42.14% (148)	35.63% (111)	47.50% (169)
Marriage	25.00% (62)	9.38% (18)	13.13% (43)
Personality	16.43% (32)	7.50% (18)	4.38% (12)
Mother/Family	12.86% (36)	23.12% (74)	8.13% (23)
Notable for Women	11.43% (27)	6.25% (16)	1.25% (2)
Appearance	7.86% (25)	12.50% (44)	7.50% (19)
Derogatory Words	6.43% (9)	1.25% (2)	3.13% (5)
Political Catfight	2.14% (5)	7.50% (20)	11.86% (33)

Table 7: Frequency of Issue Coverage

Issue	Percent of Total Stories	Clinton (N of Clinton Stories)	Palin (N of Palin Stories)	Bachmann (N of Bachmann Stories)
Economy	19.78% (91)	12.86% (18)	14.38% (23)	31.25% (50)
Healthcare	13.48% (62)	17.14% (24)	7.50% (12)	16.25% (26)
Women's Vote/Issues	10.43% (48)	22.86% (32)	7.50% (12)	2.50% (4)
Foreign Policy	7.39% (34)	17.14% (24)	2.50% (4)	3.75% (6)
Environment	5.87% (27)	4.29% (6)	10.63% (17)	2.50% (4)
War in Iraq	5.65% (26)	16.43% (23)	.63% (1)	1.25% (2)
War on Terror	4.78% (22)	5.71% (8)	4.36% (7)	4.36% (7)
Other	4.57% (21)	5.00% (7)	6.25% (10)	2.50% (4)
Immigration	3.26% (15)	7.14% (10)	1.25% (2)	1.88% (3)
Gay Rights	3.04% (14)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	8.88% (14)
Abortion	2.61% (12)	0.00% (0)	3.75% (6)	3.75% (6)
Education	1.30% (6)	1.43% (2)	2.50% (4)	0.0% (0)
Social Security	1.09% (5)	.71% (1)	2.50% (4)	0.00% (0)
Total Issue Coverage	30.0% (138)	14.35% (66)	13.91% (64)	16.30% (75)

Table 8: Frequency of Positive/Negative/Neutral Coverage

Coverage	Total Stories (N of References)	Clinton Stories	Palin Stories	Bachmann Stories
Appearance				
Positive	3.04% (25)	2.14% (2)	6.25% (16)	.63% (1)
Negative	3.70% (31)	2.14% (12)	2.5% (5)	6.25% (14)
Neutral	4.34% (31)	4.29% (11)	7.50% (16)	1.25% (4)
Electability				
Positive	23.04% (157)	26.42% (55)	15.00% (32)	29.38% (67)
Negative	31.09% (235)	27.14% (71)	27.50% (71)	35.00% (93)
Neutral	6.09% (36)	15.7% (22)	2.50% (5)	5.63% (9)
Marriage				
Positive	2.17% (18)	2.86% (4)	1.88% (9)	1.88% (3)
Negative	5.65% (40)	10.00% (19)	0.00% (0)	7.50% (21)
Neutral	11.52% (71)	19.29% (39)	8.13% (15)	8.13% (17)
Mother/Family				
Positive	3.91% (36)	2.86% (10)	7.50% (22)	1.25% (2)
Negative	1.74% (12)	.71% (1)	3.75% (8)	1.25% (3)
Neutral	11.30% (75)	9.29% (15)	18.13% (44)	6.25% (16)
Notable for Women				
Positive	6.52% (44)	11.43% (26)	6.25% (16)	1.25% (2)
Negative	.22% (1)	.71% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)
Neutral	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)

Table 8: Frequency of Positive/Negative/Neutral Coverage Continued

Coverage	Total Stories (N of References)	Clinton Stories	Palin Stories	Bachmann Stories
Political Catfight				
Positive	3.04% (21)	.71% (1)	.63% (1)	7.50% (19)
Negative	1.96% (10)	0.00% (0)	3.75% (7)	1.88% (3)
Neutral	5.22% (27)	1.43% (4)	6.88% (12)	5.63% (11)
Female Issues				
Positive	7.39% (67)	15.71% (42)	7.50% (24)	.63% (1)
Negative	9.57% (67)	7.86% (18)	8.75% (16)	11.88% (30)
Neutral	20.00% (147)	21.43% (55)	20.00% (60)	18.75% (42)
Male Issues				
Positive	6.52% (46)	15.00% (38)	3.75% (6)	1.25% (2)
Negative	7.61% (69)	11.43% (38)	4.38% (9)	7.50% (33)
Neutral	22.17% (224)	23.57% (63)	15.63% (36)	33.13% (125)
Female Traits				
Positive	5.87% (47)	10.71% (29)	6.25% (15)	1.25% (3)
Negative	9.57% (58)	10.00% (18)	11.25% (23)	7.50% (17)
Neutral	1.52% (8)	2.14% (4)	0.00% (0)	2.50% (4)
Male Traits				
Positive	20.65% (167)	30.00% (70)	63 (19.38%)	13.75% (34)
Negative	11.09% (80)	17.14% (47)	28 (13.75%)	3.13% (5)
Neutral	4.78% (31)	10.71% (22)	5 (3.13%)	1.25% (4)

Assessing Hypotheses and Research Questions

H1a: Conservative cable news programming will provide more “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann than liberal programming.

H1b: Conservative cable news programming will provide more negative “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann than liberal programming.

H1a was largely supported by the data. (See Table 9) Although only eight of the 42 variables (19.05%) coded to operationalize gendered coverage showed a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of the variable and the political affiliation of the cable news program, five (62.50%) of those eight variables showed more gendered coverage among conservative programs than liberal programs. Further, it is of note that two of the 44 variables - those that denoted coverage containing equitable amounts of male and female traits and issues - were removed from the variable count in this instance, as the meaning and implications of the male- and female-related coverage would likely contradict one another. Chi-square and independent t-testing revealed that the use of female-specific derogatory words occurred more frequently in conservative programming than liberal programming, $\chi^2(1,460)=3.46^a$, $p = .06^4$, as did references to each candidate’s personality, $\chi^2(1,460)=5.27$, $p = .02$, positive references to candidates as mothers $t(460)=2.14$, $p = .03$, and positive references to candidates’ appearances, $t(460)=2.19$, $p = .03$. In terms of issues, conservative shows were also more likely to discuss those issues traditionally considered male areas of expertise, $\chi^2(1,460)=4.43$, $p = .04$. Interestingly,

⁴ Although a p-level of .05 was used as the threshold for significance, p-levels of up to .07 are included in the analysis as they approached statistical significance.

however, conservative programs also more frequently featured coverage that mixed both male and female-associated issues than liberal programming, $\chi^2(1,460)=5.36$, $p = .02$.

Aside from the data regarding their increased use of female-specific derogatory words, which are by nature negative, independent t-testing also revealed other statistically significant results demonstrating that negative gendered coverage was more frequent in liberal programming than conservative programming. Liberal shows featured more negative male issue coverage, $t(460)=-2.03$, $p = .04$, as well as more negative electability coverage, where $t(460)=-3.19$, $p = .002$. Consequently, *H1b was not supported* (See Table 10), as these variables accounted for two out of three (66.67%) statistically significant variables that indicated negative tone of gendered coverage. It is also important to note that of all ten variables denoting negative gendered coverage, only three out of ten (30.00%) demonstrated that conservative programs employed such coverage more frequently than liberal programs, though their results were not statistically significant (and as such, less emphasis can be placed on this trend).

Table 9: Chi-Square Tests Comparing Conservative vs. Liberal Programming

Coverage	Conservative	Liberal
Appearance $\chi^2(1,460) = .02, p = ns$	5.00% (23)	4.35% (20)
Electability $\chi^2(1,460) = .184, p = ns$	20.22% (93)	21.52% (99)
Marriage $\chi^2(1,460) = 28, p = ns$	7.61% (35)	7.83% (36)
Mother/Family $\chi^2(1,460) = .44, p = ns$	8.26% (38)	6.52% (30)
Political Catfight $\chi^2(1,460) = .10, p = ns$	3.91% (18)	3.48% (16)
Male Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = 4.43, p = .04$ Cramer's V = .10	7.83% (36)	4.57% (21)
Female Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = .415, p = ns$	8.04% (39)	3.91% (31)
Mixed Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = 5.36, p = .02$ Cramer's V = .11	10.9% (50)	6.09% (28)
Male Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 1.74, p = ns$	12.61% (58)	9.13% (42)
Female Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = .61, p = ns$	4.35% (20)	5.00% (23)
Mixed Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = .11, p = ns$	3.48% (16)	2.27% (13)

Table 10: T-Tests Comparing Conservative vs. Liberal Programming

Coverage	Conservative <i>M(SD)</i>	Conservative Total Mentions	Liberal <i>M(SD)</i>	Liberal Total Mentions
Positive Appearance t(460) = 2.19, p = .03	.09(.51)	73.33% (22)	.01(.12)	26.67% (8)
Negative Appearance t(460) = .17, p = ns	.07(.53)	54.84% (17)	.06(.34)	66.67% (14)
Neutral Appearance t(460) = .22, p = ns	.07(.34)	54.84% (17)	.03(.22)	66.67% (14)
Derogatory Words t(460) = 2.08, p = .04	.06(.29)	2.61% (12)	.02(.13)	.86% (4)
Positive Electability t(460) = -.50, p = ns	.06(.33)	50.32% (78)	.07(.32)	51.97% (79)
Negative Electability t(460) = -3.19, p = .002	.38(.80)	39.15% (92)	.65(.99)	60.85% (143)
Neutral Electability t(460) = 1.40, p = ns	.10(.34)	66.66% (24)	.05(.35)	33.33% (12)
Positive Marriage t(460) = .51, p = ns	.05(.35)	61.11% (11)	.03(.22)	38.89% (7)
Negative Marriage t(460) = -.87, p = ns	.07(.33)	42.50% (17)	.10(.49)	57.50% (23)
Neutral Marriage t(460) = 1.07, p = ns	.18(.60)	58.11% (43)	.13(.37)	41.89% (31)

Table 10: T-Tests Comparing Conservative vs. Liberal Programming Continued

Coverage	Conservative <i>M(SD)</i>	Conservative Total Mentions	Liberal <i>M(SD)</i>	Liberal Total Mentions
Positive Mother/Fam t(460) = 2.14, p = .03	.12(.58)	82.05% (32)	.03(.22)	17.95% (7)
Negative Mother/Fam t(460) = .84, p = ns	.03(.22)	66.67% (8)	.02(.17)	33.33% (4)
Neutral Mother/Fam t(460) = -.02, p = ns	.16(.54)	54.17% (39)	.16(.52)	48.00% (36)
Positive Notability t(460) = 1.48, p = ns	.13(.54)	71.43% (30)	.06(.30)	28.57% (12)
Negative Notability	.00(.00)	0.00% (0)	.00(.00)	0.00% (0)
Personality t(460) = 2.77, p = .01	.20(.63)	69.10% (29)	.07(.29)	30.95% (13)
Positive Catfight t(460) = -.96, p = ns	.03(.20)	53.33% (8)	.06(.36)	46.66% (7)
Negative Catfight t(460) = .44, p = ns	.03(.18)	60.00% (6)	.02(.13)	40.00% (4)
Neutral Catfight t(460) = .94, p = ns	65.38% (17)	.07(.34)	34.62% (9)	.05(.23)
Positive Male Issues t(460) = .71, p = ns	54.35% (25)	.10(.43)	37.50% (21)	.08(.45)

Table 10: T-Tests Comparing Conservative vs. Liberal Programming Continued

Coverage	Conservative <i>M(SD)</i>	Conservative Total Mentions	Liberal <i>M(SD)</i>	Liberal Total Mentions
Negative Male Issues t(460) = -2.03, p = .04	.09(.39)	30.00% (21)	.25(.90)	70.00% (49)
Neutral Male Issues t(460) = 1.30, p = ns	.55(1.32)	59.38% (133)	.41(.95)	91 (40.63% (91))
Positive Female Issues t(460) = 1.68, p = ns	.20(.09)	70.15% (47)	.09(.41)	29.85% (20)
Negative Female Issues t(460) = -1.28, p = ns	.12(.43)	43.75% (28)	.18(.58)	56.25% (36)
Neutral Female Issues t(460) = 1.65, p = ns	.39(.94)	63.27% (93)	.25(.90)	36.73% (54)
Positive Male Traits t(460) = 1.02, p = ns	.40(.91)	58.08% (97)	.32(.89)	41.92% (70)
Negative Male Traits t(460) = -.69, p = ns	.15(.65)	46.25% (37)	.20(.64)	53.75% (43)
Neutral Male Traits t(460) = -.34, p = ns	.06(.33)	56.76% (21)	.05(.32)	43.24% (16)
Positive Female Traits t(460) = 1.54, p = ns	.14(.53)	70.21% (33)	.06(.50)	29.79% (14)
Negative Female Traits t(460) = -1.11, p = ns	.10(.42)	43.10 % (25)	.15(.47)	56.90% (33)

Table 10: T-Tests Comparing Conservative vs. Liberal Programming Continued

Coverage	Conservative <i>M(SD)</i>	Conservative Total Mentions	Liberal <i>M(SD)</i>	Liberal Total Mentions
Neutral Female Traits t(460) = -1.39, p = ns	.01(.13)	25.00% (2)	.03(.16)	75.00% (6)

H2a: Conservative cable news programming will provide more “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton than both Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann.

H2b: Conservative cable news programming will provide more negative “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton than both Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann.

H2a was supported by the data. (See Tables 11-12) Although less than half - 18 out of 42 (42.86%) - variables coded to operationalize gendered coverage showed a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of the variable, the candidates and the political affiliation of the cable news program, 11 out of 18 statistically significant variables (55.55%) did demonstrate more gendered coverage of Hillary Clinton than Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann among conservative programming. Chi-square and independent t-tests revealed that the variables that did not show this trend included electability coverage, where Palin and Bachman received more references from conservative programming than Clinton, $\chi^2(1,460)=2.88$, $p = .09$, political catfight coverage, where Palin and Bachmann were more often pitted against one another, $\chi^2(1,460)= 6.76$, $p = .01$, positive coverage that more frequently reinforced Palin’s and Bachmann’s traditional roles as mothers in lieu of substantive issue coverage, $t(240)=2.14$, $p = .05$, and positive coverage that more frequently reinforced Palin and

Bachmann's exhibition of traditional female traits, where $t(240)=2.22$, $p = .03$. The statistically significant data that followed the trend as outlined by the hypothesis, however, are as follows according to chi-square and independent t-testing: Clinton received more negative appearance coverage, $t(240)=2.48$, $p = .01$, marriage coverage, $\chi^2(1,460)=7.45$, $p = .01$, neutral marriage coverage, $t(240)=3.79$, $p < .001$, negative marriage coverage, $t(240)=4.00$, $p < .001$, personality coverage, $t(240)=2.11$, $p = .04$, positive and negative male issue coverage, $t(240)=3.97$, $p < .001$ and $t(240)=3.87$, $p < .001$ respectively, neutral female traits coverage, $t(240)=2.02$, $p = .05$, and negative and neutral male traits coverage, where $t(240)=4.38$, $p < .001$ and $t(240)=3.03$, $p = .003$ respectively. She was also described using more female-specific derogatory words, where $t(240)=2.87$, $p = .004$.

Although Clinton received a substantial amount of negative gendered coverage on conservative programs in comparison to Palin and Bachmann, ***H2b was not supported*** (See Table 12). Of the 10 negative coverage variables,⁵ five (50.00%) reached statistical significance to reveal that Clinton's gendered coverage was more negative, and they are outlined in the previous paragraph. Independent t-testing also showed that Palin and Bachmann actually received significantly more negative coverage regarding their exhibition of traditional female traits, $t(240)=3.34$, $p = .001$, as well as of their handling of traditional female issues, $t(240)=2.13$, $p = .03$. Of the non-statistically significant t-test trends, it is also important to note that while Clinton received more negative electability coverage, Palin and Bachmann received more negative political catfight coverage and more negative mother/family coverage.

⁵ Negative notability coverage was eliminated because there were no mentions in the coverage examined.

Table 11: Chi-Square Tests of Clinton vs. Palin and Bachmann in Conservative Programming

Coverage	Candidates	Mentions
Appearance $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.20, p = ns$	Clinton	2.17% total transcripts (10)
	Palin & Bachmann	3.26% (15)
Electability $\chi^2(1,460) = .288, p = .09$ Cramer's V= .11	Clinton	7.39 % (34)
	Palin & Bachmann	12.83% (59)
Marriage $\chi^2(1,460) = 7.45, p = .01$ Cramer's V= .18	Clinton	5.00% (23)
	Palin & Bachmann	2.14% (12)
Mother/Family $\chi^2(1,460) = .001, p = ns$	Clinton	2.17% (10)
	Palin & Bachmann	6.09% (28)
Notable for Women $\chi^2(1,460) = .01, p = ns$	Clinton	1.96% (9)
	Palin & Bachmann	1.52% (7)
Political Catfight $\chi^2(1,460) = 6.76, p = .01$ Cramer's V = .17	Clinton	.22% (1)
	Palin & Bachmann	3.70% (17)
Male Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = .91, p = ns$	Clinton	2.39% (11)
	Palin & Bachmann	5.43% (25)
Female Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = .47, p = ns$	Clinton	2.83% (13)
	Palin & Bachmann	1.74% (8)
Mixed Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = .36 p = ns$	Clinton	3.91% (18)
	Palin & Bachmann	6.96% (32)
Male Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.30 p = ns$	Clinton	5.00% (23)
	Palin & Bachmann	7.61% (35)
Female Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = .408, p = ns$	Clinton	2.17% (10)
	Palin & Bachmann	2.17% (10)
Mixed Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = .77, p = ns$	Clinton	15.22% (70)
	Palin & Bachmann	33.48% (154)

Table 12: T-Tests Comparing Clinton vs. Palin and Bachman in Conservative Programming

All negative and statistically significant positive/neutral variables are displayed below.

Coverage	Candidate	Mentions <i>M(SD)</i>	Df	T	Sig.
Negative Appearance	Clinton	.28(1.21)	240	2.48	.01
	Palin & Bachmann	.03(.21)			
Derogatory Words	Clinton	.15(.51)	240	2.87	.004
	Palin & Bachmann	.03(.16)			
Negative Electability	Clinton	.41(.81)	240	.54	.59
	Palin & Bachmann	.36(.73)			
Negative Marriage	Clinton	.18(.52)	240	4.00	<.001
	Palin & Bachmann	.01(.08)			
Neutral Marriage	Clinton	.44(1.09)	240	3.79	<.001
	Palin & Bachmann	.08(.34)			
Positive Mother/Fam	Clinton	.12(.50)	240	2.14	.05
	Palin & Bachmann	.25(.81)			
Negative Mother/Fam	Clinton	.01(.11)	240	-1.03	.30
	Palin & Bachmann	.04(.26)			
Personality	Clinton	.35(.91)	240	2.11	.04
	Palin & Bachmann	.15(.55)			
Negative Notability	Clinton	No Instances			
	Palin & Bachmann	No Instances			
Negative Political Catfight	Clinton	.00(.00)	240	-1.51	.13

Table 12: T-Tests Comparing Clinton vs. Palin and Bachman in Conservative Programming Continued

Coverage	Candidate	Mentions <i>M(SD)</i>	Df	T	Sig.
	Palin & Bachmann	04(.22)			
Negative Female Issues	Clinton	.09(.33)	240	2.13	.03
	Palin & Bachmann	.22(.67)			
Positive Male Issues	Clinton	.29(.73)	240	3.97	<.001
	Palin & Bachmann	.04(.22)			
Negative Male Issues	Clinton	.30(.22)	240	3.87	<.001
	Palin & Bachmann	.03(.16)			
Neutral Male Issues	Clinton	.25(.70)	240	-2.42	.02
	Palin & Bachmann	.68(1.51)			
Positive Female Traits	Clinton	.09(.43)	240	2.22	.03
	Palin & Bachmann	.26(.74)			
Negative Female Traits	Clinton	.01(.11)	240	3.34	.001
	Palin & Bachmann	.07(.32)			
Neutral Female Traits	Clinton	.05(.31)	240	2.02	.05
	Palin & Bachmann	.00(.00)			
Negative Male Traits	Clinton	.30(.62)	240	4.38	<.001
	Palin & Bachmann	.06(.23)			
Neutral Male Traits	Clinton	.10(.38)	240	3.03	.003
	Palin & Bachmann	.01(.08)			

RQ1: How does coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann differ among cable news programs with female hosts as opposed to male hosts?

The data demonstrate that the frequency of several variables indicating gendered coverage was associated with the gender of the cable program's host. Specifically, they showed trends that countered the host's political affiliation, insofar as liberal program hosts were projected to be more sensitive to gendered issues - as they are often seen as aligning with a more feminine perspective - and vice versa. (See Tables 13-14). Chi-square and independent t-testing showed that male hosts were more likely to mention appearance during the course of election coverage, $\chi^2(1,460)=5.74$, $p = .02$, and those references were more often positive, $t(460)=2.17$, $p = .03$, highlighting attractiveness as an important quality to consider when forming an evaluation of the candidates in question. Despite their positive reinforcement of appearance factors, however, male hosts were also more likely than female hosts to negatively reference the state of the candidates' marriages, $t(460)=3.20$, $p = .001$, and they also tended to question their electability, $t(460)=3.01$, $p = .003$. This often included deeming Clinton, Palin and Bachmann unlikely winners as well as reporting on their performance in the polls as opposed to substantive issue coverage.

Interesting trends also emerged when examining issue and trait coverage. Male hosts were less likely than female hosts to include a discussion of traditional male issues in their election coverage, $\chi^2(1,460)=7.81$, $p = .01$. Further, female hosts were more likely to present those issues with a neutral tone, $t(460)=-1.80$, $p = .07$, while male hosts' coverage of such issues tended to be negative (though the trend was not statistically significant). Male hosts were also more likely to report negatively on the candidates'

abilities to handle traditional female issues, $t(460)=2.00$, $p = .05$, whether they were seen as “playing the gender card” by catering to women’s issues, or failing to adeptly handle such issues with which they should excel. And although these negative trends are critical to address, it is also important to recognize that overall, male hosts’ were more likely to include coverage that focused on the candidates’ exhibition of certain traits as opposed to substantive issue coverage. In fact, male hosts were more likely to talk about the candidates’ demonstration of traditional male and female traits, be it in a positive, negative or neutral tone, than female hosts in each instance. When discussing traits, female hosts tended to give more coverage to male traits (6.96% of their transcripts) than to female traits (1.96% of their transcripts).

Table 13: Chi-Square Tests Comparing Male Hosts vs. Female Hosts

Coverage	Male Host	Female Host
Appearance $\chi^2(1,460) = 5.74, p = .02$ Cramer's V = .11	6.52% total transcripts (3)	2.83% (13)
Electability $\chi^2(1,460) = .105, p = ns$	23.04% (106)	18.70% (86)
Marriage $\chi^2(1,460) = 1.54, p = ns$	9.13% (42)	6.30% (29)
Mother/Family $\chi^2(1,460) = 1.3, p = ns$	8.70% (40)	6.09% (28)
Notable for Women $\chi^2(1,460) = .27, p = ns$	3.48% (16)	2.61% (12)
Political Catfight $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.23, p = ns$	4.78% (22)	2.61% (12)
Male Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = 7.81, p = .01$ Cramer's V = .13	4.35% (20)	8.04% (37)
Female Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = .05, p = ns$	8.70% (40)	6.52% (30)
Mixed Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = .05, p = ns$	8.70% (40)	8.26% (38)
Male Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.95, p = ns$	10.87% (50)	6.96% (32)
Female Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.86, p = ns$	4.13% (19)	1.96% (9)
Mixed Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 7.41, p = .01$ Cramer's V = .13	4.57% (21)	1.30% (6)

Table 14: T-Tests Comparing Male Hosts vs. Female Hosts

Coverage	Male Host <i>M(SD)</i>	Total Mentions Male Host	Female Host <i>M(SD)</i>	Total Mentions Female Host
Positive Appearance t(460) = 2.17, p = .03	.09(.52)	88.00% (22)	.01(.11)	13.64% (3)
Negative Appearance t(460) = 1.61, p = ns	.10(.59)	77.42% (24)	.03(.20)	22.58% (7)
Neutral Appearance t(460) = .98, p = ns	.08(.39)	64.52% (20)	.05(.32)	35.48% (11)
Derogatory Words t(460) = .83, p = ns	.05(.25)	41.40% (12)	.03(.20)	58.62% (17)
Positive Electability t(460) = -.93, p = ns	.31(.66)	48.70% (75)	.37(.79)	51.30% (79)
Negative Electability t(460) = 3.01, p = .003	.63(1.03)	64.22% (149)	.38(.73)	34.30% (83)
Neutral Electability t(460) = 1.66, p = ns	.10(.42)	69.44% (25)	.05(.24)	30.56% (11)
Positive Marriage t(460) = 1.14, p = ns	.05(.34)	72.22% (13)	.02(.22)	27.78% (5)
Negative Marriage t(460) = 3.20, p = .001	.15(.55)	77.59% (45)	.02(.15)	22.41% (13)
Neutral Marriage t(460) = 1.66, p = ns	.18(.58)	63.24% (43)	.13(.39)	36.76% (25)

Table 14: T-Tests Comparing Male Hosts vs. Female Hosts Continued

Coverage	Male Host <i>M(SD)</i>	Total Mentions Male Host	Female Host <i>M(SD)</i>	Total Mentions Female Host
Positive Mother/Fam t(460) = 1.14, p = ns	.09(.47)	61.11% (22)	.06(.42)	38.89% (14)
Negative Mother/Fam t(460) = -.14, p = ns	.02(.18)	50.00% (6)	.03(.21)	50.00% (6)
Neutral Mother/Fam t(460) = -.58, p = ns	.15(.44)	50.00% (36)	.18(.62)	50.00% (36)
Positive Notability t(460) = .20, p = ns	.10(.43)	54.55% (24)	.09(.46)	45.45% (20)
Negative Notability	.00(.00)	00.00% (1)	.00(.00)	0.00% (0)
Personality t(460) = 1.41, p = ns	.17(.53)	67.80% (40)	.10(.46)	32.20% (19)
Positive Catfight t(460) = 1.30, p = ns	.06(.37)	71.43% (15)	.03(.16)	28.57% (6)
Negative Catfight t(460) = .95, p = ns	.02(.16)	60.00% (6)	.02(.15)	40.00% (4)
Neutral Catfight t(460) = .44, p = ns	.08(.33)	70.37% (19)	.04(.25)	29.63% (8)
Positive Male Issues t(460) = 1.04, p = ns	.06(.37)	63.04% (29)	.03(.16)	36.96% (17)

Table 14: T-Tests Comparing Male Hosts vs. Female Hosts Continued

Coverage	Male Host <i>M(SD)</i>	Total Mentions Male Host	Female Host <i>M(SD)</i>	Total Mentions Female Host
Negative Male Issues t(460) = 1.19, p = ns	.19(.69)	69.23% (45)	.11(.70)	36.92% (24)
Neutral Male Issues t(460) = -1.80, p = .07	.39(.93)	42.41% (95)	.59(1.37)	57.59% (129)
Positive Female Issues t(460) = -.99, p = ns	.12(.45)	41.80% (28)	.18(.84)	58.21% (39)
Negative Female Issues t(460) = 2.00, p = .05	.19(.57)	68.66% (46)	.10(.43)	31.34% (21)
Neutral Female Issues t(460) = .80, p = ns	.35(1.05)	57.82% (85)	.28(.77)	42.18% (62)
Positive Male Traits t(460) = 2.02, p = .04	.44(.98)	56.61% (107)	.27(.81)	43.39% (82)
Negative Male Traits t(460) = 2.94, p = .003	.26(.81)	60.19% (6.2)	.08(.36)	41 (39.80% (41))
Neutral Male Traits t(460) = 1.94, p = .05	.10(.39)	74.19% (23)	.04(.23)	25.81% (8)
Positive Female Traits t(460) = 2.43, p = .02	.16(.65)	80.85% (38)	.04(.31)	19.15% (9)
Negative Female Traits t(460) = 2.67, p = .01	.18(.54)	74.14% (43)	.07(.29)	25.86% (15)

Table 14: T-Tests Comparing Male Hosts vs. Female Hosts Continued

Neutral Female Traits t(460) = 2.44, p = .02	.03(.20)	100.00% (8)	.00(.00)	0.00% (0)
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Significant interactions also occurred between the gender of the host and the candidates, affecting their coverage in several areas (See Table 15). ANOVA testing demonstrated that male hosts were most likely to give Hillary Clinton neutral marriage coverage, $F(2,460)=2.90$, $p = .06$, personality coverage, $F(2,460)=2.86$, $p = .06$, and neutral female issue coverage, $F(2,460)=3.27$, $p = .04$, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealing significant differences between she and Palin for marriage and female issue coverage, and she and Bachmann for personality coverage. Male hosts also gave the most positive mother/family coverage to Palin, $F(2,460)=5.53$, $p = .004$, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests showing a significant difference between she and Clinton in this regard. As for Bachmann, male hosts gave her the most positive and neutral political catfight coverage, $F(2,460)=3.74$, $p = .03$ and $F(2,460)=4.55$, $p = .01$ respectively, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests demonstrating that the significant differences were between her coverage and Clinton's in each instance. She also received the most negative marriage coverage, $F(2,460)=2.90$, $p = .06$ with Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealing a significant difference between she and Palin in this regard.

ANOVA testing also revealed intriguing trends among female hosts. Clinton received the most positive notability coverage from female hosts, $F(2,460)=5.90$, $p = .033$, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealing that she was significantly different from Palin in this regard. She also received the most positive male trait coverage from female

hosts, $F(2,460)=3.07$, $p = .05$, though Bonferroni post-hoc tests show that she significantly differed from Bachmann in this area. Instead, Bachmann received the most neutral male issue coverage from female hosts, $F(2,460)=7.56$, $p < .001$, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests showing that she significantly differed from Clinton here.

Table 15: Gender of Host and Candidate Interaction

Only results that are approaching or have statistical significance are included below.

Coverage	Clinton Mean (SD)	Palin Mean (SD)	Bachmann Mean (SD)	Df	F	Sig.
Negative Marriage				2	2.90	.06
Male Hosts	.20 (.56)	.00 (.00)	.24 (.75)			
Female Hosts	.05 (.22)	.00 (.00)	.03 (.16)			
Neutral Marriage				2	4.55	.01
Male Hosts	.36 (.86)	.02 (.16)	.15 (.45)			
Female Hosts	.17 (.46)	.16 (.44)	.05 (.28)			
Positive Family				2	5.53	.004
Male Hosts	.00 (.00)	.22 (.73)	.05 (.31)			
Female Hosts	.17 (.74)	.05 (.27)	.00 (.00)			
Positive Notability				2	5.90	.003
Male Hosts	.11 (.42)	.19 (.60)	.00 (.00)			

Table 15: Gender of Host and Candidate Interaction Continued

Coverage	Clinton Mean (SD)	Palin Mean (SD)	Bachmann Mean (SD)	Df	F	Sig.
Female Hosts	.28 (.83)	.19 (.60)	.03 (.16)			
Personality				2	2.86	.06
Male Hosts	.33 (.74)	.10 (.41)	.07 (.31)			
Female Hosts	.10 (.40)	.13 (.46)	.07 (.31)			
Positive Political Catfight				2	3.74	.03
Male Hosts	.00 (.00)	.02 (.13)	.19 (.62)			
Female Hosts	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.19 (.62)			
Neutral Political Catfight				2	4.55	.01
Male Hosts	.00 (.00)	.10 (.34)	.14 (.44)			
Female Hosts	.07 (.41)	.05 (.22)	.00 (.00)			
Neutral Female Issues				2	3.27	.04
Male Hosts	.50 (1.58)	.20 (.46)	.36 (.77)			
Female Hosts	.25 (.48)	.43 (1.13)	.15 (.43)			
Neutral Male Issues				2	7.56	< .001
Male Hosts	.63 (1.09)	.07 (.31)	.49 (1.10)			

Table 15: Gender of Host and Candidate Interaction Continued

Coverage	Clinton Mean (SD)	Palin Mean (SD)	Bachmann Mean (SD)	df	F	Sig.
Female Hosts	.22 (.66)	.38 (.74)	1.09 (1.63)			
Positive Male Traits				2	3.07	.05
Male Hosts	.44 (.78)	.57 (1.30)	.33 (.74)			
Female Hosts	.58 (1.20)	.22 (.71)	.10 (.34)			

In specifically examining the differences among each of the programs (See Table 16), it is interesting to note that the largest discrepancies often occurred between either Olbermann or Van Susteren's programs and the others. While in many instances Olbermann's show offered the highest frequency of variables being coded, Van Susteren's program often offered the least. Specifically, ANOVA testing showed that Olbermann's coverage contained the most references to neutral and positive male issues, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealing significant differences between he and O'Reilly, $F(4,460)=10.18$, $p < .001$, and he and both Maddow and O'Donnell, $F(4,460)=2.48$, $p = .04$, respectively. In addition, Olbermann embraced female-related coverage, having the most coverage positively reinforcing candidates' exhibiting positive female traits, $F(4,460)=2.54$, $p = .04$, and the most neutral discussion of issues seen as traditionally feminine, $F(4,460)=2.46$, $p = .04$. He also gave the most positive coverage of candidates' abilities to handle traditionally masculine issues, $F(4,460)=2.48$, $p = .04$, however, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealing that the significant differences were between he and

Maddow in each of the aforementioned types of coverage. Interestingly, Olbermann also reflected negatively upon candidates' exhibition of male traits more so than any other program, $F(4,460)= 2.34$, $p = .05$, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests showing that in this particular instance, he significantly differed from O'Reilly.

ANOVA testing of the data showed that Van Susteren's coverage, on the other hand, differed from O'Donnell's in several instances. O'Donnell most frequently reflected negatively upon the candidates' marriages, $F(4,460)= 6.23$, $p < .001$ and the candidates' exhibition of female traits, $F(4,460)= 2.95$, $p = .02$, as well as employed the most positive political catfight metaphors in his coverage, $F(4,460)= 2.78$, $p = .03$. In each instance, Bonferroni post-hoc tests reveal that he significantly differed from VanSusteren, who used such tactics the least. Bonferroni post-hoc tests also reveal that Van Susteren significantly differed from her conservative counterpart, O'Reilly, in three key areas. For positive reflections upon the candidates' exhibition of traditional male traits, $F(4,460)=4.54$, $p = .001$, and negative reflections upon candidates' handling of traditional female issues, $F(4,460)=2.41$, $p = .05$, O'Reilly's coverage contained the most of such mentions while Van Susteren's contained the least. (Interestingly, Maddow was quite close to O'Reilly in this regard, having the second largest amount of coverage dedicated to such reflections). O'Reilly also made the most positive references to candidates' appearances as part of his election coverage, $F(4,460)= 3.46$, $p = .01$, while Bonferroni post-hoc tests reveal significant differences from both Van Susteren and Maddow in this regard, as they had the least of such references. Finally, it also important to note that O'Reilly used the most female-specific derogatory words in his coverage,

$F(4,460) = 2.23, p = .07$, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests showing a significant difference from Maddow in this regard.

Table 16: Differences in Coverage Among Programs

Only results that are approaching or have statistical significance are included below. In addition, abbreviations are used for program titles, and male (m) and female (f) coverage.

Coverage	O'R <i>M(SD)</i>	O'D <i>M(SD)</i>	VS <i>M(SD)</i>	M <i>M(SD)</i>	O <i>M(SD)</i>	Df	F	Sig.
Positive Appear.	.16(.03)	.03(.04)	.02(.04)	.02(.04)	.00(.06)	4	3.46	.01
Negative Marriage	.13(.04)	.23(.04)	.02(.04)	.03(.04)	.05(.06)	4	6.23	<.001
Positive Political Catfight	.02(.03)	.15(.04)	.04(.03)	.01(.03)	.00(.05)	4	2.78	.03
Negative F Issues	.21(.05)	.21(.06)	.03(.05)	.15(.05)	.10(.08)	4	2.41	.05
Neutral F Issues	.34(.08)	.25(.10)	.44(.08)	.10(.10)	.60(.15)	4	2.46	.04
Positive M Issues	.08(.04)	.03(.05)	.13(.04)	.03(.05)	.43(.07)	4	2.48	.04
Neutral M Issues	.24(.10)	.35(.12)	.87(.10)	.22(.11)	.95(.17)	4	10.18	<.001
Positive M Traits	.61(.08)	.23(.10)	.19(.08)	.51(.09)	.38(.14)	4	4.54	.001
Negative M Traits	.25(.06)	.19(.07)	.06(.06)	.11(.11)	.43(.43)	4	2.34	.05
Positive F Traits	.21(.05)	.03(.06)	.07(.05)	.01(.05)	.28(.08)	4	2.54	.04
Negative F Traits	.17(.04)	.23(.05)	.03(.04)	.09(.05)	.10(.07)	4	2.95	.02
Derogatory Words	.07(.02)	.04(.03)	.06(.02)	.00(.02)	.02(.04)	4	2.23	.07

RQ2: How are the gender and political affiliation of the staff members responsible for producing each cable news program associated with coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann?

Breaking down the production staff into categories of “majority male,” “majority female,” and “mixed gender” allowed for an examination of how the gender make-up of each program affected the content (See Tables 17-18). Interestingly, all of the liberal programs under examination appeared to have an equal amount of men and women working on their production staffs, while *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren’s* staff is largely female, and *The O’Reilly Factor’s* staff was found to be largely male. As such, the only difference between these analyses to the ones prior is that the liberal hosts were essentially collapsed together. That said, chi-square and ANOVA testing revealed that Van Susteren’s program was most likely to reference candidates as mothers, $\chi^2(1,460)=7.26$, $p = .03$, and to refer to the candidates engaging in political catfights, $\chi^2(1,460)=13.7$, $p = .001$, highlighting such fights both negatively $F(2,460)=2.69$, $p = .07$ and positively, $F(2,460)=3.51$, $p = .03$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests demonstrated that the significant difference in each of these instances was between Van Susteren’s majority-female staff and the liberal programs with mixed-gender staffs. Bonferroni post-hoc testing also revealed that the predominantly female staff of Van Susteren’s program focused most on the neutral presentation of male issues, where $F(2,460)=5.17$, $p = .01$, while mixed-gender production staffs employed such coverage the least.

Programs with mixed-gender production staffs also focused the least election coverage on traditional male traits, $\chi^2(1,460)=7.54$, $p = .02$, as well as candidate personality, $F(2,460)=2.73$, $p = .07$, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests showing the

significant difference between such programming and those with Bill O'Reilly's predominantly male staff. O'Reilly's staff also focused most on both positive and neutral appearance references, where $F(2,460)=7.09$, $p = .001$ and $F(2,460)=2.69$, $p = .07$, respectively. Bonferroni post-hoc tests showed that in the positive case, the significant difference was among O'Reilly's male staff and liberal programming's mixed-gender staff. In the neutral case, however, the significant difference was among male and female staffs. Also worthy of note is that while Van Susteren's female staff referenced candidates as mothers the most, O'Reilly's male staff gave them the most positive reinforcement for fulfilling their duties in that role, $F(2,460)= 3.20$, $p = .04$, with Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealing the significant difference between male and mixed-gender staffs. In terms of coverage of mixed-gender traits, however, results showed a surprising trend. O'Reilly's male staff was most likely to highlight a mix of male and female traits in their coverage, $\chi^2(1,460)=9.33$, $p = .01$, instead of staffs of all females or mixed-gender. Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed, however, that the significant difference among such coverage was between male and female staffs.

Table 17: Chi-Square Tests Comparing Gender of Production Staff

Coverage	Majority Male	Majority Female	Mixed Gender
Appearance $\chi^2(1,460) = 4.71$, $p = ns$	3.70% total transcripts (17)	3.70% (17)	1.96% (9)
Derogatory Words $\chi^2(1,460) = 4.6$, $p = ns$	1.30% (6)	1.96% (9)	.22% (1)

Table 17: Chi-Square Tests Comparing Gender of Production Staff Continued

Coverage	Majority Male	Majority Female	Mixed Gender
Electability $\chi^2(1,460) = .30,$ $p = ns$	10.43% (48)	1.85% (85)	12.83% (59)
Marriage $\chi^2(1,460) = .11,$ $p = ns$	39.13% (18)	6.96% (32)	4.57% (21)
Mother/Family $\chi^2(1,460) = 7.26,$ $p = .03$ Cramer's V = .11	3.48% (16)	8.48% (39)	2.83% (13)
Notable for Women $\chi^2(1,460) = 1.51,$ $p = ns$	1.96% (9)	1.96% (9)	2.17% (10)
Political Catfight $\chi^2(1,460) = 13.7,$ $p = .001$ Cramer's V = .16	1.74% (8)	5.22% (24)	.43% (2)
Male Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.37,$ $p = ns$	2.17% (12)	2.61% (30)	1.30% (15)
Female Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.50,$ $p = ns$	4.78% (22)	6.96% (32)	4.70% (16)
Mixed Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = .50,$ $p = ns$	5.00% (23)	6.96% (32)	5.00% (23)
Male Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 7.54,$ $p = .02$ Cramer's V = .10	8.04% (37)	8.04% (37)	5.43% (26)
Female Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.14,$ $p = ns$	2.61% (12)	4.78% (22)	1.96% (9)

Table 17: Chi-Square Tests Comparing Gender of Production Staff Continued

Coverage	Majority Male	Majority Female	Mixed Gender
Mixed Traits	3.04% (14)	.87% (6)	1.96% (9)
$\chi^2(1,460) = 9.33,$ $p = .01$ Cramer's V = .16			

Table 18: ANOVA Tests Comparing Gender of Production Staff

Only results that are approaching or have statistical significance are included below.

Coverage	Male Mean (SD)	Female Mean (SD)	Mixed Mean (SD)	Df	F	Sig.
Positive Appearance	.17 (.71)	.02 (.14)	.01 (.09)	2	7.09	.001
Neutral Appearance	.12 (.45)	.03 (.16)	.09 (.46)	2	2.69	.07
Positive Mother/Family	.59 (.05)	.11 (.50)	.00 (.00)	2	3.20	.04
Personality	.21 (.65)	.13 (.51)	.07 (.29)	2	2.73	.07
Positive Political Catfight	.02 (.20)	.09 (.40)	.01 (.09)	2	3.51	.03
Neutral Political Catfight	.08 (.36)	.08 (.34)	.01 (.09)	2	3.16	.04
Negative Political Catfight	.02 (.13)	.04 (.22)	.00 (.00)	2	2.69	.07
Neutral Male Issues	.24 (.62)	.66 (1.51)	.45 (.89)	2	5.17	.01

RQ3: How does specific coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachmann differ?

Several significant differences in coverage arose between the candidates. Half of the variables coded to operationalize gendered coverage - 21 out of 42 or 50.00% - showed a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of the variable and the candidate (See Tables 19-20). Specifically, chi-square testing revealed that Hillary Clinton received substantially more marriage coverage than Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann across programs, $\chi^2(1,460)=14.96$, $p = .001$, with the largest difference lying between Clinton and Palin, while Palin received the most coverage dealing with her role as a mother across programs, $\chi^2(1,460)=14.88$, $p = .001$, with the largest difference actually lying between Palin and her fellow conservative, Bachmann. There was also a significant difference among coverage that addressed the candidates as unconventional because of their gender, $\chi^2(1,460)=13.54$, $p = .001$, with Clinton receiving the most of said coverage and Bachmann receiving the least. As expected via previous research (GenderWatch, 2011), Bachmann instead received the most political catfight coverage $\chi^2(1,460)=10.34$, $p = .01$, while Clinton received the least.

In terms of gendered issues and traits, chi-square testing demonstrated that male issue coverage was significantly different among the candidates $\chi^2(1,460)=17.10$, $p < .001$, particularly between Bachmann, who received the most of such coverage, and Palin, who received the least. Similarly, traditional female issue coverage also showed differences approaching significance among the candidates, $\chi^2(1,460)=5.46$, $p = .07$, with Palin receiving the most of this coverage and Bachmann receiving the least. Interestingly, although Palin was often discussed for her ability to handle typical female issues, she was most often described using traditional male traits, $\chi^2(1,460)=14.41$, $p = .001$. She differed most from Bachmann in this regard. Finally, it appears that Clinton

may have received the most “equitable” coverage regarding traits, as the programs most often referenced her using a combination of male and female traits. This variable showed a statistically significant difference among the candidates, $\chi^2(1,460)=11.92$, $p = .003$, with the largest difference lying between Clinton and Bachmann.

In terms of negative/positive/neutral references (See Table 20), ANOVA testing revealed that over a third – 12 out of 31 variables (38.71%) – of the data showed a statistically significant relationship between the tone of coverage and the candidates, with most differences lying between Clinton and Palin. Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed that for both neutral and negative references to marriage, $F(2,460)=6.31$, $p = .002$ and $F(2,460)=5.53$, $p = .004$ respectively, negative references to political catfights, $F(2,460) = 2.85$, $p = .06$, use of female-specific derogatory words, $F(2,460)=4.08$, $p = .02$, and neutral references to electability, $F(2,460)= 5.52$, $p = .004$, the significant differences were between Clinton and Palin in each instance. Specifically, Clinton received more neutral and negative marriage references, more neutral questions of her electability and was described using more female-specific derogatory words, while Palin was more often described as being on the losing end of a political catfight with another female candidate (in fact, Clinton received no such references). Bonferroni post-hoc tests also showed that only for positive mentions of notability as female candidates, $F(2,460)=5.86$, $p = .003$, and positive references to candidates’ abilities to handle both male and female issues, $F(2,460)=16.33$, $p < .001$ and $F(2,460) = 7.41$, $p = .001$ respectively, did the significant differences lie between Clinton and Bachmann. Specifically, Clinton received more positive coverage than Bachmann in each instance.

Interestingly, more differences were found between fellow conservatives, Palin and Bachmann, than were found between Bachmann and Clinton. For neutral references to both candidates' roles as mothers and male issues, $F(2,460)=5.51$, $p = .004$, and $F(2,460)=9.57$, $p < .001$ respectively, positive references to political catfights, $F(2,460)=8.16$, $p < .001$, and positive references to candidates' electability, $F(2,460)=3.59$, $p = .03$, Bonferroni post-hoc tests revealed the significant differences were between Bachmann and Palin in each instance. Specifically, Bachmann was seen as more likely to or adept at winning political catfights, as well as more electable than Palin. Further, Bachmann's campaign coverage made the most neutral references to male issues, while Palin's coverage most often highlighted her role as mother as important to her campaign.

Table 19: Chi-Square Tests Comparing Individual Candidates

Coverage	Clinton	Palin	Bachmann
Appearance $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.89, p = ns$	33.48% of transcripts (11)	4.35% (20)	2.61% (12)
Electability $\chi^2(1,460) = 4.63, p = ns$	12.83% (59)	12.39% (57)	16.52% (76)
Marriage $\chi^2(1,460) = 14.96, p = .001$ Cramer's V = .18	7.61% (35)	3.26% (15)	4.57% (21)
Mother/Family $\chi^2(1,460) = 14.88, p = .001$ Cramer's V = .18	3.91% (18)	8.04% (37)	2.83% (13)
Notable for Women $\chi^2(1,460) = 13.54, p = .001$ Cramer's V = .17	3.48% (16)	2.17% (10)	.43% (2)
Political Catfight $\chi^2(1,460) = 10.34, p = .01$ Cramer's V = .15	.65% (3)	2.61% (12)	4.13% (19)
Male Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = 17.10, p = <.001$ Cramer's V = .19	3.26% (15)	1.96% (9)	7.17% (33)
Female Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = 5.46, p = .07$ Cramer's V = .11	4.57% (21)	6.96% (32)	3.70% (17)
Mixed Issues $\chi^2(1,460) = 2.95, p = ns$	6.52% (30)	5.00% (23)	7.61% (35)
Male Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 14.41, p = .001$ Cramer's V = .33	8.70% (40)	8.91% (41)	4.13% (19)
Female Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = .001, p = ns$	2.83% (13)	3.26% (15)	3.26% (15)
Mixed Traits $\chi^2(1,460) = 11.92, p = .003$ Cramer's V = .19	3.26% (15)	2.61% (12)	.43% (2)

Table 20: ANOVA Tests Comparing Individual Candidates

Only results that are approaching or have statistical significance are included below.

Coverage	Clinton Mean (SD)	Palin Mean (SD)	Bachmann Mean (SD)	df	F	Sig.
Derogatory Words	.09 (.35)	.01 (.11)	.03 (.18)	2	4.08	.02
Positive Electability	.39 (.83)	.22 (.58)	.42 (.75)	2	3.59	.03
Neutral Electability	.16 (.53)	.03 (.21)	.06 (.23)	2	5.52	.004
Neutral Mother/Family	.11 (.37)	.28 (.69)	.10 (.45)	2	5.51	.004
Neutral Marriage	.28 (.72)	.09 (.33)	.11 (.38)	2	6.31	.002
Negative Marriage	.14 (.45)	.00 (.00)	.13 (.55)	2	5.53	.004
Positive Notability	.19 (.63)	.10 (.44)	.01 (.11)	2	5.86	.003
Personality	.23 (.66)	.11 (.43)	.08 (.41)	2	5.39	.02
Positive Political Catfight	.01 (.09)	.01 (.08)	.12 (.47)	2	8.16	.001
Negative Political Catfight	.00 (.00)	.04 (.23)	.02 (.14)	2	2.85	.06
Positive Female Issues	.30 (.99)	.12 (.63)	.01 (.08)	2	7.41	.001
Neutral Male Issues	.19 (.62)	.06 (.28)	.21 (.98)	2	9.57	<.001
Positive Male Issues	.27 (.73)	.04 (.22)	.01 (.11)	2	16.33	<.001

In certain instances, there were statistically significant interactions between programs and candidates that affected the frequency and/or type of coverage found throughout the transcripts examined (See Table 21). For Clinton, those interactions revealed interesting trends in her coverage on both the O'Reilly and Van Susteren programs. Specifically, Clinton was most likely to receive negative appearance mentions, $F(5,460)=3.22$, $p = .01$, negative references regarding her exhibition of traditional female traits, $F(5,460)=2.45$, $p = .03$, and neutral references to her marriage, $F(5,460)=4.18$, $p = .001$, on *The O'Reilly Factor*, while Van Susteren's gendered coverage was more blatantly supportive of Clinton, positively noting her breakthrough as a female leader, $F(5,460)= 5.09$, $p = .001$, more so than any other candidate. It is important to note that Maddow's program was also supportive of Clinton, however, positively reinforcing her exhibition of traditional male traits, $F(5,460)=4.68$, $p = .001$. Conversely, O'Reilly's program was more favorable - though still quite gendered - to Palin, making more positive references to her marriage, $F(5,460)=2.43$, $p = .04$, appearance, $F(5,460)=2.06$, $p = .07$, and role as a mother, $F(5,460)=4.10$, $p = .001$, than any other candidate.

Interesting trends also emerged in coverage of Bachmann. Among the statistically significant interactions between coverage of her and specific programs, negative coverage of Bachmann was often found on *The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*. Specifically, O'Donnell made more negative marriage references about Bachmann than any other candidate, $F(5,460)=5.45$, $p = .001$, as well as more negative references to her handling of traditional female issues, $F(5,460)=2.25$, $p = .05$. It is also important to note that although the *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* program

neutrally discussed male issues most frequently in their coverage of Bachmann, $F(5,460)=3.22$, $p = .001$, while *The Rachel Maddow Show* most often criticized Bachmann’s handling of those issues, $F(5,460)=2.15$, $p=.06$.

Table 21: Interaction Between Candidates and Programs

Only results that are approaching or have statistical significance are included below.

Coverage	Clinton <i>M(SD)</i>	Palin <i>M(SD)</i>	Bachmann <i>M(SD)</i>	Df	F	Sig.
Positive Appearance				5	2.06	.07
O’Reilly	.18(.96)	.32(.76)	.00(.00)			
O’Donnell	.00(.00)	.02(.16)	.03(.16)			
Van Susteren	.00(.00)	.05(.22)	.00(.00)			
Maddow	.05(.22)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Olbermann	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Negative Appearance				5	3.22	.01
O’Reilly	.30(1.22)	.02(.156)	.00(.00)			
O’Donnell	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.28(.72)			
Van Susteren	.00(.00)	.08(.35)	.02(.16)			
Maddow	.00(.00)	.02(.158)	.05(.22)			
Olbermann	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Positive Marriage				5	2.43	.04
O’Reilly	.05(.22)	.15(.65)	.00(.00)			
O’Donnell	.00(.00)	.13(.46)	.00(.00)			
Van Susteren	.00(.00)	.08(.48)	.00(.00)			

Table 21: Interaction Between Candidates and Programs Continued

Coverage	Clinton <i>M(SD)</i>	Palin <i>M(SD)</i>	Bachmann <i>M(SD)</i>	Df	F	Sig.
Maddow	.10(.31)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Olbermann	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Negative Marriage				5	5.45	<.001
O'Reilly	.35(.70)	.00(.00)	.03(.16)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.45(1.01)			
Van Susteren	.05(.22)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Maddow	.05(.22)	.00(.00)	.05(.22)			
Olbermann	.05(.32)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Neutral Marriage				5	4.18	.001
O'Reilly	.52(1.13)	.00(.00)	.10(.44)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.05(.22)	.20(.46)			
Van Susteren	.23(.53)	.10(.31)	.10(.38)			
Maddow	.05(.22)	.23(.53)	.00(.00)			
Olbermann	.20(.41)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Positive Mother/Family				5	4.10	.001
O'Reilly	.00(.00)	.37(.97)	.00(.00)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.08(.27)	.10(.44)			
Van Susteren	.25(.90)	.10(.39)	.00(.00)			
Maddow	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Olbermann	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Positive Notability				5	5.09	<.001

Table 21: Interaction Between Candidates and Programs Continued

Coverage	Clinton <i>M(SD)</i>	Palin <i>M(SD)</i>	Bachmann <i>M(SD)</i>	Df	F	Sig.
O'Reilly	.05(.22)	.32(.79)	.00(.00)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.05(.22)	.00(.00)			
Maddow	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Olbermann	.00(.00)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Negative Female Issues				5	2.25	.05
O'Reilly	.32(.80)	.17(.44)	.13(.40)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.08(.27)	.35(.83)			
Van Susteren	.02(.16)	.00(.00)	.05(.22)			
Maddow	.00(.00)	.22(.70)	.23(.66)			
Olbermann	.10(.38)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Negative Male Issues				5	2.15	.06
O'Reilly	.37(.81)	.02(.16)	.05(.22)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.10(.44)	.32(1.14)			
Van Susteren	.05(.32)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Maddow	.00(.00)	.10(.30)	.42(1.55)			
Olbermann	.25(.74)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Neutral Male Issues				5	3.22	<.001
O'Reilly	.30(.82)	.07(.26)	.35(.62)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.08(.35)	.63(1.41)			
Van Susteren	.30(.79)	.41(.60)	1.95(2.54)			

Table 21: Interaction Between Candidates and Programs Continued

Coverage	Clinton <i>M(SD)</i>	Palin <i>M(SD)</i>	Bachmann <i>M(SD)</i>	Df	F	Sig.
Maddow	.05(.22)	.35(.86)	.25(.44)			
Olbermann	.95(1.22)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Negative Female Traits				5	2.45	.03
O'Reilly	.32(.76)	.17(.54)	.02(.16)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.17(.54)	.02(.16)			
Van Susteren	.02(.16)	.03(.16)	.03(.16)			
Maddow	.00(.00)	.20(.52)	.08(.27)			
Olbermann	.10(.30)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			
Positive Male Traits				5	4.68	<.001
O'Reilly	.50(.72)	.90(1.70)	.43(.75)			
O'Donnell	.00(.00)	.22(.53)	.23(.73)			
Van Susteren	.28(.55)	.18(.45)	.13(.41)			
Maddow	1.20(1.80)	.25(.90)	.08(.27)			
Olbermann	.37(.84)	.00(.00)	.00(.00)			

Much like the interactions found between program and candidate, significant interactions between political affiliation of the program and specific candidates were also associated with the type and frequency of coverage received (See Table 22). Echoing the previous findings for *The O'Reilly Factor*, conservative programming on the whole gave more coverage with negative appearance references to Clinton, $F(5,460)=4.28$, $p = .01$, as

well as more coverage with neutral marriage references, $F(5,460)=3.87$, $p = .02$, and female-specific derogatory words, $F(5,460)=4.05$, $p = .02$. Conservative programming also gave more coverage with positive marriage references, $F(5,460)=3.75$, $p=.03$, and positive mother role references to Palin, $F(5,460)=3.36$, $p = .04$. Interestingly, however, conservative programming made the most negative references to motherhood in Palin's coverage as well, $F(5,460)=3.33$, $p = .04$. And in regards to Bachmann, conservative programming reveals less definitive trends, only showing a significant results for neutral male issue coverage, $F(5,460)=8.41$, $p < .001$, for which she received the most.

Trends in liberal programming also show the employment of gendered techniques for the conservative candidates in question. Such shows were responsible for making the most negative appearance references in Bachmann's coverage, $F(5,460)=4.28$, $p = .01$ (though conservative programming gave almost as much to Clinton, a mean of .15 mentions as opposed to .16 mentions for Bachmann), along with the most negative marriage references, $F(5,460)=8.76$, $p < .001$, and negative male and female issue coverage, $F(5,460)=3.24$, $p = .04$ and $F(5,460)=3.38$, $p = .04$, respectively. Trends among Palin's coverage in liberal programming were less consistent, however; her only statistically significant interaction reveals that she obtained the most negative coverage for her exhibition of traditional female traits, $F(5,460)=3.37$, $p = .04$. Conversely, Clinton, received the most positive coverage for her exhibition of traditional male traits, $F(5,460)=3.94$, $p = .02$. Note that in order to help clearly demonstrate the main patterns of these results and others, a summary table was produced. See Table 23 for a summary of the key findings for all hypotheses and research questions.

Table 22: Interaction Between Candidates and Political Affiliations of Programs
 Only results that are approaching or have statistical significance are included below.

Coverage	Clinton M(SD)	Palin M(SD)	Bachmann M(SD)	Df	F	Sig.
Negative Appearance				5	4.28	.01
Conservative	.15(.87)	.05(.27)	.01(.11)			
Liberal	.00(.00)	.01(.11)	.16(.54)			
Positive Marriage				5	3.75	.03
Conservative	.03(.16)	.11(.57)	.00(.00)			
Liberal	.03(.18)	.00(.00)	.06(.33)			
Negative Marriage				5	8.76	<.001
Conservative	.20(.53)	.00(.00)	.01(.11)			
Liberal	.05(.29)	.00(.00)	.25(.76)			
Neutral Marriage				5	3.87	.02
Conservative	.37(.89)	.05(.22)	.10(.41)			
Liberal	.15(.36)	.14(.41)	.10(.34)			
Positive Mother/Family				5	3.36	.04
Conservative	.13(.64)	.24(.75)	.00(.00)			
Liberal	.00(.00)	.04(.19)	.05(.31)			
Negative Mother/Family				5	3.33	.04
Conservative	.01(.11)	.09(.36)	.00(.00)			
Liberal	.00(.00)	.01(.11)	.04(.24)			
Negative Female Issues				5	3.38	.04
Conservative	.17(.59)	.09(.33)	.09(.33)			
Liberal	.07(.31)	.15(.53)	.29(.75)			
Negative Male Issues				5	3.24	.04
Conservative	.21(.63)	.01(.11)	.03(.16)			
Liberal	.17(.62)	.10(.38)	.38(1.35)			
Neutral Male Issues				5	8.41	<.001
Conservative	.30(.80)	.24(.48)	1.14(1.99)			
Liberal	.65(1.09)	.21(.67)	.22(1.05)			
Negative Female Traits				5	3.37	.04
Conservative	.17(.57)	.10(.41)	.02(.16)			
Liberal	.07(.25)	.19(.48)	.18(.57)			

Table 22: Interaction Between Candidates and Political Affiliations of Programs Continued

Coverage	Clinton M(SD)	Palin M(SD)	Bachmann M(SD)	Df	F	Sig.
Positive Male Traits				5	3.94	.02
Conservative	.39(.65)	.55(1.30)	.28(.62)			
Liberal	.65(1.29)	.24(.73)	.15(.55)			
Derogatory Words				5	4.05	.02
Conservative	.14(.44)	.03(.16)	.01(.11)			
Liberal	.02(.13)	.00(.00)	.04(.19)			

Table 23: Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypothesis/Research Question	Results
H1A - Conservative cable news programming will provide more “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann than liberal programming.	SUPPORTED Five of eight statistically significant variables (62.50%) showed more gendered coverage among conservative programs than liberal programs.
H1B - Conservative cable news programming will provide more negative “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann than liberal programming.	NOT SUPPORTED Two out of three statistically significant variables (66.67%) indicated that liberal shows featured more negative coverage.
H2A - Conservative cable news programming will provide more “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton than both Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann.	SUPPORTED 11 out of 18 statistically significant variables (55.55%) demonstrated more gendered coverage of Hillary Clinton than Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann among conservative programming.
H2B - Conservative cable news programming will provide more negative “gendered” coverage of Hillary Clinton than both Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann.	NOT SUPPORTED Of the 10 negative coverage variables, five (50.00%) reached statistical significance to reveal that Clinton received more negative coverage in conservative programming than her counterparts.

Table 23: Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions Continued

Hypothesis/Research Question	Results
<p>RQ1 - How does coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann differ among cable news programs with female hosts as opposed to male hosts?</p>	<p>Male hosts generally employ more gendered coverage, regardless of tone and candidate. However, some unique interactions between specific candidates and male/female hosts were found.</p>
<p>RQ2 - How are the gender and political affiliation of the staff members responsible for producing each cable news program associated with coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann?</p>	<p>Programs with largely female staffs focused on political catfights, candidates roles as mothers and neutral male issues, while mixed-gender programs focused least on personality and exhibition of traditional male traits. Programs with largely male staffs included coverage of stereotypical male and female traits, as well as focused on appearance and positively reinforced candidates roles as mothers.</p> <p>Political affiliation affects coverage in the same ways as outlined by the first and second hypotheses.</p>
<p>RQ3 - How does specific coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michelle Bachmann differ?</p>	<p>Half of the variables coded to operationalize gendered coverage showed a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of the variable and the candidate. Coverage of Clinton and Palin often showed the most stark differences. Interestingly, more differences were found between fellow conservatives Palin and Bachmann than between Clinton and Bachmann.</p>

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Overall Trends

Due to the large number of variables included in this study, there are many trends in the coverage and nuances among the findings that warrant attention. As such, I will attempt to discuss the broadest of trends first – those that encompass the sample as a whole and apply to all candidates – and then work toward elucidating more specific results that apply to particular candidates and programs. Foremost, it should be noted that the sample did not contain particularly high incidences of the variables operationalized to code gendered coverage. This is telling, as it appears that the majority of coverage disseminated by the primetime cable news programming examined was not explicitly or implicitly gendered. And although this trend might be surprising given the format of cable news programs that anecdotally appear to rely on over-the-top language that by nature may be more likely to include gendered perspectives, previous research has also found that gendered coverage does not occur in news in particularly large quantities. For instance, in Scharrer's (2002) research on coverage of Clinton's Senatorial campaign, she noted that discussion of Clinton's physical appearance and marital troubles only occurred in single-digit percentages of the newspaper editorials and articles she examined. Further, Devitt's (2002) research on newspaper coverage of female gubernatorial candidates showed a similar trend, with personal framing occurring in under a quarter of the stories examined, while Washburn and Washburn's (2011) recent study regarding newsmagazine coverage of Palin's vice presidential pursuits again showed small percentages for coverage of particularly gendered issues, such as

appearance or domestic life. What is also key to note here, however, is that while the amount of gendered coverage for women may have been small in these instances, it still surpassed the amount of such coverage that their male opponents received in each study (Devitt, 2002; Scharrer, 2002; Washburn & Washburn, 2011).

Having noted this, the results also show that when programs did employ gendered tactics in their campaign coverage of the female candidates in question, they were often employed both as a means to criticize candidates that do not share their political party affiliations as well as to positively reinforce those candidates that do. Though this did not consistently occur for every individual variable – for instance, conservative programs gave a significant amount of both positive and negative coverage of Bachmann and Palin’s handling of traditional female issues – the overall trend among statistically significant data showed this to be the case. Further, this trend is perhaps best exemplified in coverage of Palin and Clinton, where conservative programs used negative appearance or negative motherhood coverage to attack Clinton’s viability as a candidate, while conversely reflected positively upon Palin’s role as a wife and mother to bolster her candidacy. Much of the language used within the gendered coverage found was also blatantly gendered in nature, which diverges from previous literature that suggests a more subtle, gendered mediation of contemporary election coverage (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008). Blatant, in this instance, refers to the fact that primetime cable news programming seems to highlight particularly traditional ways of understanding masculinity and femininity, from noting the importance of motherhood to questioning the “toughness” or “thin skin” of the candidates in question.

In keeping with findings of previous research (Devitt, 2002; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991), the data did reveal, however, that the familiar electability frame dominated gendered coverage of female political candidates in cable programming. Thus, the candidates in question received more “horserace” coverage than substantive issue coverage, and such coverage was most often negative. For the conservative candidates, this negative coverage most frequently had to do with falling poll numbers. It should be noted, however, that there were a few references to Palin and Bachmann as “bimbos” running “simple-minded campaigns,” suggesting that some of their negative electability coverage itself was particularly gendered; it was specifically rooted in the idea that females are typically less intelligent than men. This is particularly evident in the use of the word “bimbo,” a derogatory term that is typically only applied to women.

Also worthy of note is that when Palin and Bachmann did receive positive electability coverage, it too was often rooted in gendered assumptions. Most frequently, being able to win the Republican nomination and/or the presidential election was tied to issues of appearance or sexuality. While some references used more subtle language or sexual innuendo – O’Donnell asserted that Palin “continued to fool most pundits...by pretending to *flirt* with the notion of running for president” (*The Last Word with Lawrence O’Donnell*, May, 10, 2011), others were more straightforward. *The O’Reilly Factor* focused one segment of the program on comments made by Bachmann’s top advisor, Tim Pawlenty, where he noted that she would be “tough to beat” because “she’s got a little sex appeal” (July, 7, 2011). While similarly, fellow Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson noted that Palin “has what it takes” because “she is very attractive in every sense of the word” in a segment of *On The Record with Greta Van Susteren* (July,

27, 2009). On the whole, these tactics are particularly troubling, not only from a feminist perspective due to their blatant focus on body as opposed to skills, mind or voice, but also from an academic standpoint. These trends show a possible step backward from those found in more recent political communication scholarship (Burke & Mazzarella, 2008), or at the very least, a stagnation that is characterized by media's lingering inability to fully move past the fetishization of the female body, regardless of whether it is from the entertainment or news genre.

Clinton's negative electability coverage, however, was often seen as an effect of her personality rather than her position on substantive issues, and this trend in and of itself has also been identified as gendered in previous literature (Aday & Devitt; 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Devere & Davies; 2006; Devitt; 2001; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Washburn & Washburn, 2011). Specifically, O'Reilly often noted that some people just "hate Hillary" and "it's personal." Further, when he asked popular radio talk show host Opeo Saconi if it was a matter of policy as to why he did not think Clinton could win the election, he simply responded, "I don't like the way she talks. I don't like the way I feel when she talks." (*The O'Reilly Factor*, January 15, 2008). This coverage is also particularly disconcerting, as it shows little movement away from the popular framing of politics as a male-dominated professional sphere as elucidated by previous research (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Jamieson, 1995; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). And as voice in this context is essential in both resisting and changing that male-dominated political space, criticizing it in such a way devalues the worth of Clinton's political perspectives and campaign. Further, it raises the question as to what exactly is unlikable about her voice that may be tied to narrow conceptions of

masculinity and/or femininity. Perhaps she fails to fit within the traditional feminine standards of talk insofar as she speaks too loudly, assertively, or is in the position to speak at all.

Also in keeping with prior research (Aday & Devitt; 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Devere & Davies; 2006; Devitt; 2001; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Washburn & Washburn, 2011), the data showed that a personal frame dominated the gendered campaign coverage of Clinton, Palin and Bachmann in primetime pundit programming. As noted in the description of the sample, marriage was the second most referenced issue in the transcripts examined. Candidates' roles as mothers and coverage regarding their personality also occurred in frequencies greater than or equal to nearly all of the policy issues coded. These findings are significant, as they suggest that traditional conceptions of gender appropriate relationships and skills are being noted in cable news coverage, despite their seeming irrelevance to the candidates' abilities to successfully carry out their duties as political leaders. Further, this also suggests that the introduction of more female candidates to the political sphere has not altered the fact that the media still sometimes tend to place particular importance on these issues. In addressing specific candidates, it is also interesting to note that both conservative and liberal programming used this gendered strategy in their coverage, though it heavily depended upon the candidate in question. For instance, conservative programs most frequently attacked Clinton for her inability to handle her husband's extramarital affairs appropriately, while liberal programs questioned Bachmann most for being married to a man whose views on homosexuality were deemed quite archaic. Further, the overall predominance of the discussion of marriage is critical despite the tone of such coverage, as these references

have been shown to occur less frequently for male candidates (Jamieson, 1995; Scharrer, 2002), essentially affording them more media space to address substantive issues of policy that may be critical to their campaign success. As such, this data also provided evidence of a dearth of issue framing that has been consistently found throughout previous political communication research (Aday & Devitt 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Devitt, 2002; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Kahn, 1994; Washburn & Washburn, 2011).

The consistent trend of coupling candidates with their husbands is troubling not only because it often takes the place of more nuanced coverage of female candidates' policy perspectives, however, but also because idea that female candidates cannot be separated from the views of their husbands suggests that they are incapable of having and expressing independent thought and/or that they are somehow inferior to their husbands for whom they need to defer for advice. While Palin escaped such criticism in the sample (though her relationship with John McCain has been described in similar ways – Carlin & Winfrey, 2008; Gibbons, 2008), Bachmann often took the proverbial fall for her husband's actions, particularly regarding his comments on homosexuality and the Christian counseling clinic that they co-own. During the race for the Republican nomination, O'Donnell quipped that “Mr. and Mrs. Michele Bachmann surged into the lead in the category of craziest campaign couple of the year,” when footage of Bachmann's husband calling gay people “barbarians” and offering them “education” to eradicate “sinful” behaviors surfaced in the media, despite Bachmann's comments denying that their counseling service provided such “therapy” in the first place (*The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*, July 12, 2011). Due to Bachmann's rigid Christian

beliefs on the issue of marriage, Bachmann was also asked, “As president, would you be submissive to your husband?” during a televised debate that was later made the topic of campaign coverage on conservative and liberal programming alike for several days following (Qtd. by *The Washington Examiner’s* Byron York, August 12, 2011).

Frequent references to Hillary Clinton’s marriage also reinforced the message of women’s inferiority, particularly reminding viewers of her inferior position as helpless wife. Political author (and fervent Clinton-supporter turned critic) Dick Morris was quoted as saying that although it was “about time she got a real job,” Clinton’s prior marital issues demonstrated that she would ultimately have “a hard time disciplining Bill” while trying to simultaneously run the nation (*The O’Reilly Factor*, January 21, 2009). These references made no seeming connection between her less than picture-perfect marital history and substantive campaign issues or her stance on those issues. Interestingly, however, some references made ties between a feeling of sympathy for her marital troubles and an increased chance of electoral success. In one colorful interview, political commentator/comedian Dennis Miller asserted that “there [was] the residual warm feeling for her, because America realizes she’s been cheated on more frequently than a blind woman playing scrabble with gypsies” (*The O’Reilly Factor* on January 6, 2008). And while most assessments weren’t that scathing, the sentiment was often the same – women voters were aligning with her as a sign of allegiance to wives scorned everywhere and that people should value her not because she is an effective leader, but because she is a victim.

Overall, there was no discernible trend in the tone of election coverage of Clinton, Palin and Bachmann among the cable news programs examined. As noted in previous

research (Burke & Mazarella, 2008; Devitt, 2002; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991), substantial critical coverage for female candidates has been the predominant trend across print, broadcast and some Internet news media, which is often provided as evidence of gender bias in reporting in and of itself. While the focus of this study is more so on the language used to promote certain frames over others in such coverage, it should not be ignored that the findings suggest that cable news programming may buck this trend. The candidates in question seemed to garner near equitable amounts of positive, negative and neutral coverage, each tone presenting itself in approximately one-third of all stories coded, though neutral coverage did receive the highest amount of coverage by a small margin (this echoes the work of Scharrer (2002), who actually found that over 50.00% of newspaper stories regarding Clinton's U.S. Senate campaign were neutral in tone). Further, no individual variables were coded as overwhelmingly positive or negative, with the exception of mentions of the candidates as notable by virtue of their status as female contenders for the presidency. All of such mentions were coded as positive, though they occurred in only 6.08% of the sample, demonstrating that an overall "unconventional breakthrough frame" was not particularly popular throughout cable news coverage.

Discussion of Hypotheses

In more specifically addressing the first set of hypotheses regarding expected results for conservative and liberal cable news programming, the data revealed interesting trends. While under a quarter of the variables coded to operationalize gendered coverage showed statistically significant relationships between the political affiliation of the program and the type of coverage given, both the results with and without statistical

power are telling. Foremost, of those findings with statistical significance, it appears that conservative programming is not only more gendered than liberal programming, but also more explicit in their highlighting gender as a main focus in election coverage of female candidates. While they continue to paint politics as a male-oriented professional sphere by providing more coverage of issues that are traditionally considered male areas of expertise, they also provided positive reinforcement for female candidates on the basis of traditional conceptions of femininity. Specifically, trends toward more explicit gendered coverage were noted in conservative programming's more frequent use of female-specific derogatory words (included but not limited to "witch," "bitch," "airhead," "bimbo," "ice queen," and "nutcracker"), as well as their attempting to applaud conservative candidates for their handling of particularly traditional roles as caretakers and their attractiveness, for instance.

In specifically addressing the statistically significant coverage first - positive references to motherhood and appearance - conservative programming used these as a measure of worth for conservative female candidates, especially. Regarding Palin, for instance, senior economic writer for *The Wall Street Journal* Sophia Nelson was quoted as saying, "She's beautiful. She's got a family. She has a husband that stands by her," in an interesting attempt to combat those who said she didn't have the political or academic pedigree to run (*On the Record with Greta Van Susteren*, July 3, 2009). This focus also resulted in a branding of Palin as the new conservative feminist. *Newsweek* columnist Lisa Miller asserted that Palin was "conveying a very powerful message...she's saying, look, we don't have to choose. We can be powerful working women, and be wives, and be mothers, and take our children, you know, put our children first, and make money, and

be visible in the world all at the same time” (*The O’Reilly Factor*, June 14, 2010). This new brand of feminism, conservatives argued, emphasized the idea that women could care about professional advancement while still putting their appearance and their duties as mothers and homemakers first. They also often discussed how “liberal media” attacks were based on the very fact that they “don’t like conservative women who are attractive” (qtd. by Tucker Carlson on *The O’Reilly Factor*, June 29, 2010). It is worthy of note, however, that in many respects the conservative candidates in question also played into these gendered stereotypes. For instance, when O’Reilly asked Bachmann questions like “Did it affect the children that you weren’t in the house...?” (due to her budding legal and political career), Bachmann replied that her priorities are always “marriage and the kids...they are number one” and went on to state that her primary duty had remained being sole caretaker of the children while her husband oversaw their counseling business (*The O’Reilly Factor*, September 22, 2011).

In addition to these findings, it is important to note that a majority of the non-statistically significant data also showed a trend toward conservative programming being more gendered than its liberal counterpart – 29 out of 42 variables (69.05%) coded to operationalize gendered coverage appeared more often in said shows, regardless of the candidate under examination. The only area where coverage seemed to diverge from this trend was, as previously noted, in their increased likelihood to provide coverage that dealt with a mix of issues deemed traditionally male and female. While this may be perceived as a positive trend on its surface, it also seems to raise the question as to whether or not this strategy simply emphasized male issues that conservatives often deem as more

important to electoral politics while it simultaneously played up areas of presumed strengths for the female candidates under examination.

In regards to the second set of hypotheses, the statistically significant data did reveal that Clinton received more gendered coverage from conservative programs. Further, although there was not enough statistically significant data to support a trend in tone, the data suggest that conservative programs rarely employed the positive feminine reinforcement that they used in coverage of Palin and Bachmann for Clinton. Instead, over half of her coverage in conservative programming tended to be negative. In addition, such coverage fell largely into the personal frame, having to do with marriage, appearance and traits. For instance, O'Reilly negatively reflected on Clinton's display of femininity, asserting that her crying on the campaign had some "wondering if the pressure [was] actually getting to her" (*The O'Reilly Factor*, January 13, 2008). He also called Clinton an "ice queen," though asserted that such a label was not a personal attack, but rather a relevant description of her "demeanor" (*The O'Reilly Factor*, January 15, 2008). These findings are unsurprising, however, given my previous research on Clinton's depiction in cable news programming that also revealed such negative trends in coverage (Cassidy, 2011). Further, the differences among Clinton and Palin's coverage were also largely predictable, given previous research (Carlin & Winfrey, 2008; Gibbons, 2008; Washburn & Washburn, 2011) that often saw the two contrasted among one another in gendered ways across print and broadcast media during the 2008 election. Largely, these differences again emerged in the personal realm rather than the policy arena, where Palin was shown to be more attractive and more favorable as a wife and mother, while Clinton was shown to more effectively embody male traits (particularly

regarding leadership skills whereas Palin's positive reinforcement had more so to do with vague descriptions of her "toughness") as well as an understanding of traditional male issues, particularly foreign policy and war.

Analysis of the differences in coverage between Palin and Bachmann, however, reveals some more intriguing trends. While both Palin and Bachmann received the majority of issue coverage regarding the economy – most likely a product of both unemployment rates at the time of the campaign and conservative ideology that gives economic policy primacy – Bachmann was often depicted as the overall more serious candidate by garnering the most discussion of traditional male issues which have and continue to be seen as essential to success in the political realm. Palin, however, received the most coverage regarding traditional female issues that are deemed less substantive and can often garner questions of pandering to obtain the women's vote. In fact, an O'Donnell transcript featured a story with comments from Bachmann's advisor Ed Collins, who asserted that,

Sarah has not been serious over the last couple of years. She got the vice presidential thing handed to her. She didn't go to work in the sense of trying to gain more substance. She gave up her governorship. I think Michelle Bachmann and others who worked hard -- she has been a leader of the Tea Party (June 8, 2011).

As cited in previous research (Gibbons, 2008), discussion of Palin's potential presidential campaign subsequently kept a narrow focus on issues of family and motherhood. Interestingly, however, she was still often described using traditional male traits, perhaps in attempt to disguise what most deemed as her inability to handle and/or comprehend substantive policy issues. On the *On The Record with Greta Van Susteren* program, Nelson asserted that "Sarah Palin...is rough-and-tumble. She shoots mooses [SIC]. She,

you know -- she's just a basketball player, hard-charging, very pretty lady, but she's tough" (July 3, 2009).

The potential for a political catfight frame (particularly a negative one) to emerge in Bachmann and Palin's coverage was also supported by the data. They were significantly more likely to be compared against one another than Clinton was to be compared against another female political figure. While O'Reilly noted that if Palin ran for president, "an interesting situation" would emerge that would "pit Palin against Bachmann," and asked who his viewers would support if the two went "head-to-head," (*The O'Reilly Factor*, May 31, 2011), O'Donnell asserted that "if you are looking for a lack of civility or the argumentative stuff...you really have to go to Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann" and commented that the media was "patiently awaiting a Bachmann versus Palin war" (*The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell*, June 8, 2011). He also featured several guests and stories that drove the catfight frame further, including an interview with *Daily Beast* columnist Meghan McCain, who called Bachmann "no better than a poor man's Sarah Palin" (January 26, 2011), and *New York Magazine* columnist who noted that Bachmann's advisor was fueling a feud between she and Palin – "What Ed Rollins wants to do is let Sarah Palin know this is going to be a rough game if you decide to run get in it and run against my lady, Michele Bachmann" (June 8, 2011). Overall, the majority of coverage on Bachmann echoed these sentiments, often deeming her the winner of the metaphorical catfights, which also may have contributed to her garnering more positive evaluations of her electability over Palin.

Discussion of Research Questions

In examining the differences among male and female hosts, the data revealed that shows with male hosts tended to be the disseminators of gendered coverage, regardless of their political affiliation. These findings are in line with those of previous literature that note that male and female journalists may cover issues and candidates differently (Gabe, Samson, Yegiyany & Zelenkauskaitė, 2009; Hirsch, 1977; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Zoch & Turk, 1998). The ways in which such gendered coverage is employed, however, largely depended upon the party identification of the candidate in question. For instance, while O'Donnell's democratic affiliation was hypothesized to make his coverage more sensitive and supportive of the female perspective, the data showed that he often used stereotypical gendered coverage to criticize Palin and Bachmann. Along with O'Reilly, he was also more likely to discuss appearance and marriage as pertinent campaign topics than female hosts, though again most often in regards to Palin and Bachmann. Conversely, O'Reilly gave a statistically significant amount of positive focus to these items as well as those of motherhood and family when discussing Palin and Bachmann in possible attempts to bolster their appeal, despite research that has shown conservatism to give primacy to masculinity. As such, it appears that while gendered coverage was more often present in male-hosted programs regardless of political affiliation, its tone often depended on the juxtaposition of their political allegiance and the party of the candidate in question. The only area where this did not appear to be true was in coverage of male issues on programs with male hosts', where the tone tended to be negative across candidates.

Interestingly, female hosts were more likely to talk about male issues than men, which suggests that female hosts may be trying to demonstrate that women are capable of successfully handling such issues, and as such, those issues should no longer be considered areas of male expertise. This could change news framing of politics that sees male issues as normative (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Jamieson, 1995; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991), and encourage more women to enter the field. Also intriguing is that Maddow devoted a significant amount of her coverage to a positive reflection on candidates' exhibition of male traits, which may suggest an attempt to frame female political figures as worthy and effective in the proverbial political "boy's club." Whether this is best strategy to do so, however, is up for debate, as it appears to give primacy to displays of masculinity in politics while simultaneously attempting to fight it with the infusion of female candidates who can embody such qualities as well as their male opponents. In this case, more equitable coverage may instead give both masculine and feminine traits equitable weight and coverage, or forgo their discussion altogether for a more direct focus on issues of policy.

Also critical to address are the associations between program staff/ownership and gendered coverage, as the results both raised interesting questions and reaffirmed some suspected results. Data found regarding the gender make-up of the overall production staffs of the programs revealed that while those programs with an equal or near equal distribution of men and women were often less likely to utilize particularly blatant gendered strategies such as the use of female specific-derogatory words or a focus on candidate appearance, they did not provide an equitable discussion of male and female issues and traits, as might be expected by examining previous research (Shoemaker &

Reese, 1996; St. Dzier, 1986). And while all-male production staffs often focused the most on the aforementioned blatant strategies, it is critical to note that gender of staff and political affiliation may be conflated in this instance. For example, the conservative *O'Reilly Factor* was the only program to have a male-dominated staff, leading to questions of whether such trends had more so to do with the male-dominated nature of the staff, the nature of the program's conservative ideology or a mixture of both.

Further, in examining the influence of partisanship of owners and executives on content, it became clear that they largely matched the ideologies of the programs that they own and operate. A combination of public comment, campaign donations and previous professional experience was used to determine the most likely party IDs for each of the individuals included in the study. In examining the staff for the conservative programs in question, Roger Ailes and Rupert Murdoch were two of the most important figures to consider. Ailes, the current president of the Fox News Channel and chairman of the Fox Televisions News Group, has had quite a visible career working as a media consultant for Republican presidents Nixon, Reagan and H.W. Bush. Further, Rupert Murdoch, the founder, chairman and CEO of NewsCorp (the multinational media conglomerate that owns Fox News), has also had a long, public career in which he has openly endorsed and donated to the campaigns of Republican candidates at all levels of office.⁶ Within the last year, both men have made contributions to the conservative Fox News PAC (Newsmeat.com⁷), while Murdoch also stirred controversy in 2010 over his one-million-dollar donation to the Republican Governors Association (Folkenflik, 2010).

⁶ See the literature review for further details on Murdoch's political activities.

⁷ Newsmeat.com is a federal campaign contribution search engine.

The political affiliations and/or ideologies of the owners and executives at MSNBC seemed considerably less clear-cut than those at Fox, though they did indeed appear to lean in a liberal direction at the time of my examination. Steve Burke was one important figure to consider, as he is both the Executive Vice President of Comcast Cable and CEO/President of NBC Universal. (The nation's largest cable operator, Comcast recently acquired a majority stake in the media conglomerate NBCUniversal, which owns the MSNBC news network.) Burke, while described as a "slightly patrician Republican with a Harvard M.B.A" by the *New York Times*, was also cited as having "no desire to push his own agenda in the media" (Arango & Carter, 2011). Further, his recent campaign contributions show a mix of Republican and Democratic campaigns, including Rudy Guiliani and Harry Reid, as well as more recent donations to both John McCain and Barack Obama.

Due to Burke's self-professed aversion to pushing a political agenda, however, it proved more prudent to examine the political affiliations of additional executive staff, Brian Roberts and Phil Griffin. Roberts, who is the overarching CEO of Comcast, has been open about his democratic campaign contributions. In fact, his last ten contributions were to democratic senate and presidential contenders, including John Kerry and Hillary Clinton. And although Griffin – President of MSNBC – has not as eagerly disclosed the details of his campaign donations⁸, he has been quoted as saying that he sees MSNBC as "the place to go for progressives" (Joyella, 2011). Further, it is arguable that his liberal political leanings have become most obvious with his recent hires of Al Sharpton and *The*

⁸A search in the federal campaign contributions database yielded no results.

Nation columnist Melissa Harris-Perry as hosts for new political news programs on MSNBC.

Given that the executive staff's personal political beliefs largely seemed to align with those of the programs under examination, the results could not bring a particularly nuanced perspective to bear on the ways in which ownership of the program may be associated with the amount and type of gendered coverage disseminated. The data can only show that the same results found regarding the connection between the conservative/liberal slant of the program itself and gendered coverage apply in this instance. Shows with conservative executive staffs tended to employ more gendered strategies overall, although the positivity or negativity of the gendered coverage depended largely upon the party-ID of the candidate on whom they were reporting. Similarly, when liberal programming employed gendered strategies, they were more likely to do so in the process of criticism of a Republican candidate, rather than as a form of praise for a liberal candidate. They were also less likely to use blatant gendered strategies (with the exception of marriage coverage) than shows with a conservative executive staff, focusing more so on the discussion of issues, traits and electability as opposed to motherhood, family, appearance or political catfighting.

Limitations and Concluding Thoughts

Although women are 51.00% of the U.S. population, they make up only 16.80% of Congress, 23.70% of state legislatures, 8.00% of state governors and 33.33% of the Supreme Court (Center for American Women in Politics, 2012). As such, men still hold over three-quarters of all legislative seats nationally, and have continued to fully

dominate the nation's highest office – accounting for 100.00% of U.S. presidents thus far. While several factors may contribute to gender disparity in politics, there may not be an element as pervasive as the American news media environment. Seeing fewer women in office may lead women to think that a career in politics simply isn't an attainable or desirable goal (Atkeson & Carrillo, 2007; Kahn, 1996; Phillips, 1991; Sapiro, 1983), but the news media help to further emphasize that politics is a “man's game” (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Gallagher, 2001; Gidengil and Everitt, 1999; Jamieson, 1995; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Norris, 1997). They often give male candidates more favorable, substantive coverage on policy issues (Aday & Devitt 2001; Blankenship et al., 1986; Devitt, 2002; Kahn, 1994; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Scharrer, 2002; Washburn & Washburn, 2011), while women are depicted as outsiders whose coverage more often focuses on the personal than the political (Aday & Devitt; 2001; Blankenship et al. 1986; Devere & Davies; 2006; Devitt; 2001; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Washburn & Washburn, 2011). Further, even when women are elected, they are often treated as a faceless group categorized only by gender, rather than recognized for their individual accomplishments (Carroll & Schreiber, 1997). And as men continue to dominate the news business as directors, editors, publishers and hosts (Nicholson, 2007; Radio Television Digital News Association, 2008; Weaver et al., 2007), it is not surprising that content often reflects this masculine ideology.

As a new genre of news has emerged and gained considerable popularity in the 21st century, an opportunity to change the nature of women's representation in media and politics has arisen. Often categorized as “soft news,” cable punditry has combined entertainment and political information in a way that has drawn audiences in numbers

equal to, and sometimes surpassing, those of mainstream network news (Pew State of The Media, 2011; United Press International, 2005). Thus, the content of their coverage has become particularly critical to examine. While many scholars have undertaken this pursuit, most notably to discuss questions of partisanship and political knowledge (Baum, 2003b; Baum & Groeling, 2008; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Bernhardt, Krasa, & Polborn, 2008; Coe et al., 2008; Kim & Vishak, 2006; Moy et al., 2005; Morris, 2007; Prior, 2003), few have raised representation of gender as a serious question. This is a glaring hole in the research, as the visibility of female candidates vying for high profile positions of political leadership – most notably that of the presidency – has also risen alongside the popularity of this programming.

As such, it was the goal of this study to fill that gap by conducting a content analysis of the most popularly rated cable news programs' coverage of Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann, three prominent female candidates for president whose campaigns were in the spotlight during the peak in popularity for the cable punditry genre. Guided by framing theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman 1974)– historically used quite consistently and effectively to determine the gendered nature of representations in both news and other genres of media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) – this study attempted to uncover trends among cable program coverage that may have either helped or hindered the candidates in question in their campaigns for electoral success.

Ultimately, the data offer mixed hope for the future. Only a small percentage of the transcripts coded contained coverage of the female candidates in question that could be considered gendered, which suggests that as women as political leaders move more

into the mainstream, so too does their media coverage. Further, the coverage for Clinton, Palin and Bachmann was not overwhelmingly negative, as previous patterns in news reporting may have suggested. In fact, the candidates collectively received a near equal amount of positive, negative and neutral coverage across the programs in question. It is critical to note, however, that the types of gendered “reporting” strategies that were found throughout the transcripts were arguably easy to find, as they were rooted in particularly traditional views of femininity and masculinity. Further, they did not diverge from the frames found in previous literature, despite the high profile nature of the position for which the candidates in question were running. Cable news coverage of Clinton, Palin and Bachmann revealed that gendered political framing still relies on a picture of politics as a male-dominated sphere through particular attention on male issues and consistent coupling of the candidates with their husbands. Further, the presidential hopefuls still experienced an overabundance of strategy framing in comparison to a more substantial discussion of policy, with particular focus on the “horserace” aspect of their campaigns in this regard, as well as personal framing that addressed their likability, marriages, roles as mothers and appearances. Potentially, political catfight coverage was the only unique trend found that could constitute a new frame in campaign news, as such coverage was not as likely to be found previously given the lack of female candidates competing against one another in prominent national electoral races up to this point. Further, it may also be possible that such a trend was specifically found in cable news coverage because it adds to the dramatic nature of the partisan pundit program genre.

It is also important to note that because the media environment that viewers of these cable programs likely emerge themselves in is quite homogenous – as they actively

seek out programs that match their pre-existing political ideologies (Baum & Groeling, 2008; Bernhardt et al., 2008; Morris, 2007) – they may be more likely to encounter the same types of gendered concepts on a repeated basis, which could help to reinforce gender-stereotypical attitudes. And while it is critical to highlight that conservative programming was more likely to disseminate gendered coverage that could result in such beliefs within this context, it is also certainly worthy to address the fact that they were not the sole programs responsible for it. Despite conceptions of liberal programming as being more female-friendly, they too were not without their blatant gendered election stories, particularly when the topics of such stories were Republican female candidates.

Despite the intriguing data found, this study was also not without its limitations, the largest of which was likely its text-only examination of broadcast transcripts. Previous research has demonstrated that visuals alone can influence the content and effects of gendered framing (Lister & Wells, 2001; Lundell & Ekström, 2008; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001), and as such, forgoing an examination of this component may have eliminated some meaningful content from the sample. It is also likely, however, that the visual representations utilized in the programs would strengthen the ways in which a particular candidate, issue or story is framed, rather than contradict or negate it (Graber, 1990). In addition, visuals might be better addressed via an additional study altogether, the focus of which could more explicitly address the content and impact of images - as opposed to text - on framing effects and perceptions of female political leaders in cable news.

Further, although the inclusion of both Bachmann and Palin is integral to the study, insofar as including additional female candidates from which to compare Clinton

potentially allows for more generalizable results regarding the framing of female political leaders regardless of party identification, it is also important to note that their levels of involvement in the pre-election process varied greatly from one another. Specifically, the timeframes selected for Clinton and Palin's pre-election periods were quite long in comparison to Bachmann's. Additionally, Palin's campaign never moved past speculation. As such, it may be reasonable to assume that certain candidates received certain types of issue coverage based on the amount of time spent in the public spotlight and the varying degrees to which they might have been considered front-runners in their respective elections (Scharrer, 2002). Results did demonstrate some trends that challenged this prediction, however. For example, Bachmann received the most issue coverage out of all candidates, despite having the smallest campaign window.

It is also reasonable to expect that readers may question where the male candidates are located within this study. For the purposes of this research, the decision not to offer coverage of male candidates as a point of comparison was largely the result of two factors. The first is that much of the previous literature used as the foundation for this study had already skillfully done this (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Devitt, 2002; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991, 1994; Scharrer, 2002; Washburn & Washburn, 2011) – so much so that the framing techniques found have become widely accepted as signifying gendered coverage. As such, the content was approached with the knowledge that the presence of these frames would likely be a strong enough indicator of gendered coverage alone. The inclusion of male candidates in this case, however, may have certainly served to further solidify what was indeed interpreted as gendered, or perhaps may have even offered new insight into how gendered framing may play a role for contemporary coverage of male

candidates in cable news coverage as well. As this study already addressed over 40 variables and three candidates, however, this methodological choice was also partly based upon logistics. Just as the examination of visuals could have encompassed an entirely new study altogether, so too could the examination of coverage of male candidates in cable pundit programming.

A discussion of this study's limitations would also not be complete without addressing whether the methods chosen adequately measured the degree to which the host and other structural variables shaped the coverage examined. In retrospect, it may have been both interesting and useful to have a variable that accounted for whether the gendered references were made by the pundit him or herself as opposed to a guest featured on the program. Ultimately, however, the choice to forgo inclusion of such a variable had to do with the unique role of the cable host, which blends both journalistic and production and/or editorial roles. In-depth research into the inner-workings of the programs via the programs' websites (as noted in the literature review) revealed that cable pundits most often have the final say on which stories will be presented to the audience, as well as the order that they will be presented and the angle that said stories will take. Further, they often work with producers to write the program scripts, which include their own monologues and interview questions.

So while a separate examination of hosts' commentary may have offered some interesting insight into their personal perspectives as well as potentially allowed for more definitive conclusions to be made regarding the *direct* influence they have on content, that influence is arguably still quite present in their choice of features, the frames utilized in said features and in their choice of guests. For instance, O'Reilly's choice to have

Dennis Miller appear on *The Factor* to talk about Clinton was not made in a vacuum; Miller is well-known as a particularly biting right-wing political comedian. O'Reilly could have chosen a less hyperbolic guest, but he or she would likely not have delivered certain messaging as strongly as Miller could. Further, research into the production process also indicated that the interviews that cable hosts conduct often go through a vetting process (though they vary in degree as to how "pre-planned" they are), so in most instances the hosts do indeed have an idea of the direction that the guests' commentary is going to take for any given segment.

This also segues into a discussion of the micro-level political economic approach used to determine the influence of ownership and production staff on content. Previous literature found that the gender and political affiliation of various personnel in production or other leadership positions did indeed influence content, particularly as tone of stories and range of issues covered were concerned (Craft & Wanta, 2004; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; St. Dzier, 1986). What was difficult about assessing how the gender of the production staff influenced content here, however, was largely determining the degree of control that each staff member had on the respective programs. While they may have had similar titles, that certainly did not mean that they all contributed in similar ways. As such, trying to collapse this into one variable that could be utilized in a content analysis meant that some of the nuances of their duties were overlooked. Further, the amount of direct, daily control that owners/presidents/CEOs had over programs seemed nearly impossible to determine without somehow gaining access to conducting interviews with them, and as such, the political leanings of the program and said figures proved difficult to separate from one another.

It is critical to note, however, that although this study may not have gotten at the desired level of depth as far as examining the media environment that creates these texts is concerned, it is an arguably more common limitation of quantitative content analyses to not always include a full and thorough inquiry into the context in which media texts are created. Thus, the variables that aimed to answer these broader political economic questions were included because failing to do so would have left a glaring hole in the research for readers, particularly given the addressed literature that notes the critical influence of various media personnel on the texts created. In addition, their inclusion helped to further highlight the fact that while owners and executive staffs of cable news networks may certainly have a stake in the financial success of their programs, they likely also have quite a strong ideological stake in the programming's content. This raises a serious question as to the degree to which they are able to critically evaluate the accuracy, fairness and newsworthiness of the content their programs produce – a concern that may not have been as openly exposed had this study not attempted to engage with these extra-media variables.

Having noted these limitations as well as this study's potential impact on the viewing public, this research also elucidated new methods for future inquiry regarding this topic. In order to adequately assess the changing nature of the landscape of the electoral news realm for female candidates, forthcoming studies in the area may be served well by a qualitative, inductive approach to content. While using past framing research offers important guideposts for the researcher to follow, conducting a content analysis guided by such theory less easily allowed for the recognition and nuanced examination of unique patterns in content that could constitute new framing techniques or

perhaps demonstrate a veering from strict framing strategies altogether (which may be more likely appear in contemporary journalistic genres like citizen blogs, for instance). As such, using qualitative research methods in this regard may allow scholars to escape the potential pitfalls of reductionism, as all quantitative content analyses may be inherently reductive in some ways when dealing with particularly complex texts. Further, while this research highlighted the utility of using content analysis to reveal non-dominant coverage patterns – i.e. the fact that gendered coverage was not particularly prevalent throughout the transcripts – it also raised questions regarding the utility of content analyses in interpreting the meaning of less strongly defined trends.

Overall, however, this research did indeed demonstrate how the application of frames can be useful in gauging the advancement or lack thereof among the strategies used to purposefully package news content for the public. This particular study also did not wholly ignore the context that produced the content, nor did it dismiss the potential state of the political environment after the content had been produced. In contrast, it aimed to directly confront these matters. Further, careful consideration of the aforementioned issues as well as the trends found within the data collected also offered new insight into how female presidential candidates are covered by contemporary news media, particularly in the realm of popular primetime cable news programming. By unmasking patterns in the coverage of Clinton, Palin and Bachmann, we can see that acceptance of women's increasing activity in the political realm among media may be growing, though this should not be taken without the proverbial "grain of salt." As findings show that cable programs still use conventional framing techniques to perpetuate some particularly traditional gender conceptions, this study also demonstrates that a

greater awareness regarding such coverage should be promoted among cable news viewers.

Further, it is undeniable that the study outlined here as well as others that may learn and move forward from it could likely serve as a starting point for media practitioners, politicians and members of the public alike to envision ways to reform the current news media environment, pushing for more gender equitable practices in reporting across political news program genres. Further, the data collected may demonstrate to female candidates and their advocates that finding a unique means of navigating the complex contemporary media landscape in order to achieve success would prove useful until such comprehensive reforms can be implemented. Perhaps in embracing the use of new media technologies and utilizing debates, public appearances and their own advertisements and websites, they can provide examples of fair and productive ways that voters should be thinking about the political process.

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