

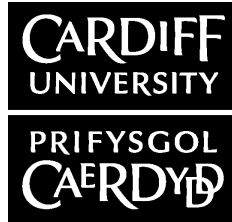


WOMEN IN THE ASSEMBLY:

**Representations of Female Assembly Members
in the Welsh Press**



**Weihua Ye
PhD in Journalism Studies
2014**



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Members in the Welsh Press**

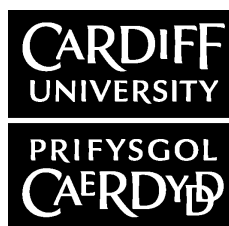
Thesis submitted for the award of PhD

**Weihua Ye
2014**

To Andrew, who is the love of my life

To my aunt, who is a second mother to me

To my beloved parents, who encouraged me to follow my dream



DECLARATION

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

Signed (candidate) Date: 28th December, 2014

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD.

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This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The views expressed are my own.

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Acknowledgements

First, and most of all, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen at JOMEC at Cardiff University. I would not have been able to finish this project smoothly without her kind and outstanding guidance, and her patience and encouragement! Thank you so much for everything, Karin!

I would also like to thank all my lecturers and friends at JOMEC who provided their precious advice and help during this research process. I want to extend my special thanks to Dr. Cindy Carter for her inspiration on this research topic. What's more, I am deeply indebted to you, Cindy, for your support and insights all these years! I am also grateful to the late Dr. James Thomas for his insightful suggestions on my MA! And Dr. Paul Bowman and Dr. Andy Williams, I will not forget your kindness and help! Thank you also to Andrew Salkeld, Bill Riley and Shaun McCarthy for your valuable suggestions and language support! Of course, thanks also to Nick Mosdell for your insightful advice on the coding sheet and your help on SPSS. Many thanks to Cindy, Dr. Heather Savigny, Dr. John Jewell and Prof. Liesbet van Zoonen for reading my thesis and your invaluable suggestions! I am also grateful to Prof. Jenny Kitzinger for sending me your article on press coverage of women scientists, even before it was officially published. I am deeply indebted to all my friends at JOMEC who offered me their help both academically and personally.

I am grateful to the 28 Welsh Assembly Members, and also Katie O'Brien, who participated in this research project and offered their valuable opinions and precious time. Thank you to all: Christine Chapman; Julie James; Julie Morgan; Jenny Rathbone; Leighton Andrews; Mick Antoniw; Jeff Cuthbert; Keith Davies; Mark Drakeford; Vaughan Gething; Suzy Davies; Janet Finch-Saunders; Antoinette Sandbach; Andrew RT Davies; Byron Davies; Paul Davies; Mark Isherwood; David Melding; Bethan Jenkins; Elin Jones; Leanne Wood; Dafydd Elis-Thomas; Lindsay Whittle; Alun Ffred Jones; Kirsty Williams; Eluned Parrott; William Powell and Aled Roberts.

A big thank-you to all the people who've helped me throughout this research project, especially my second coder, Cheng Yingzhe, and two friends who offered their support and help during the interview-transcribing process. I am extremely grateful to you, Leighton and Paul! Thank you for helping me with the interview records! I also wish to say thanks to the librarians at various libraries, especially those working at Cardiff Central Library.

Last, but certainly not least, I am truly grateful to Andrew and my family whose love and support is of great importance to me!

Abstract

This study highlights the significance of equal participation of men and women as central to the future health of politics and the democratic process in Wales. Following affirmative action taken by two major Welsh political parties, the National Assembly for Wales has been notable for the high level of female representation among its membership since the legislature was created in 1999. The large number of women in the Assembly is a unique phenomenon both politically and geographically. However, the question that remains unanswered is this: in spite of equal political representation in the Assembly, are men and women now treated equally and fairly by the Welsh press?

This research is the first comparative study of press representations of men and women in a political institution that has an almost equal number of male and female representatives. It specifically attempts to examine how 12 Welsh newspapers portrayed female Assembly Members [AMs] during a three-month Welsh national election period as well as during a later three-month routine press coverage period. It draws on content and discourse analyses of the press coverage of over 3000 articles from about 1000 newspaper editions during the two periods studied. It is also based on data generated by in-depth interviews with 28 AMs from the current Assembly.

This study shows that when there has been a relative equal participation of women in a political institution over a period, the gender issue initially remains noticeable and “business as usual”. However, over time, more complex media representations of male and female politicians have been observed and gender bias has gradually become less salient and controversial than before, both in colleagues’ perceptions of women politicians and in media representations, because gender parity has become a norm.

I would argue that when affirmative action is taken, even for a brief period, to achieve a gender balance in political institutions such as the Welsh Assembly, then the participation of female politicians is gradually normalised over time. It also seems that the political culture changes both in terms of how media cover women and in terms of male and female politicians’ perception of the role of gender in the political process. In short – a temporary artificial push, to equalise representation between the genders, has resulted, in Wales, in dynamic changes in the culture of media coverage of women politicians and their capabilities, and in the nature of Assembly debate. It seems to be having a longer term impact on the culture of journalism, the experiences of female politicians and the attitudes of the public towards women politicians in that women continue to be elected despite the withdrawal of artificial election measures.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

Although women's movements started in the West when women in the United States and Great Britain began to speak up for themselves for equal rights in the late 18th century and early 19th century (Banks 1981; Charvet 1982; Spender 1983; Waters 2005), it seems that equality in politics has still not been fully achieved in the contemporary United Kingdom. The 1918 UK general election produced the first female MP, Constance Markiewicz; however, she refused to take her seat by not attending the House of Commons as the other 72 Irish Sinn Fein elected MPs did (Spartacus Educational 2013a). This made Nancy Astor the first elected woman MP. She entered the British Parliament in a by-election in 1919 (Spartacus Educational 2013b).

In the UK of the 21st century, there are still far fewer women MPs in the British Parliament in Westminster than men, so it might be reasonable to expect that media coverage of female MPs will be less than that of males, and that when there are the same amount of male and female elected Members, the reporting will be balanced. However, as a previous study demonstrates when there were a majority of women in the second Welsh Assembly, the press coverage of women AMs [Assembly Members] was still far less substantial than their male counterparts (Ye 2007). Therefore, a series of questions have been raised: why is this the case; why do the media still pay less attention to women AMs than males when equal political representation has been achieved in the Assembly; how do the media cover female AMs when the AMs are reported on; how do the media cover the Assembly and its AMs in general¹?

There have been 60 seats in total in the National Assembly for Wales since it was created. In 1999, 25 women (Chaney 2006) were elected to the first Assembly as a result of the Welsh Labour party's all-women shortlist policy (Squires 2005; Chapman 2006; Lovenduski 2005; Ye 2007) and of Plaid Cymru's candidate selection rule of reserving its

¹ See detailed research questions outlined in Chapter 3.

top places for women on its five regional lists (Lovenduski 2005; Krooka and Squires 2006; Chapman 2006). In 2003, the Welsh Assembly election brought into office 30 women and 30 men, which was a world record (Chaney 2004). In a by-election on 29th June, 2006, Trish Law won the seat of Blaenau Gwent in the Assembly which had been held by her late husband Peter Law before his death. Due to this by-election, women then outnumbered men in the second Assembly, holding 31 seats out of 60. In the 2007 Assembly election, women once again achieved an almost equal level of representation among the membership. 23 women were re-elected and five were newly elected in that election, so in total 28 out of 60 AMs were female in the third Welsh Assembly. The most recent 2011 Welsh national election produced 25 women AMs, so there is still a significant level of female representation in the current Assembly.

Dr. Cindy Carter, senior lecturer at Cardiff University, was a member of the Global Media Monitoring Project 2000² in charge of analysing the Welsh media during the monitoring day in 2000 (Spears *et al.* 2000). In a casual chat with Cindy, when I was studying for my MA at Cardiff University in the academic year of 2006/2007 and sought her advice for possible MA research topics, one comment that made an impression on me was that, “There was not a single quote from women AMs in the Welsh press on that day.” As mentioned, there were a large number of women AMs in the Assembly. When I asked for information about the Welsh local media, my then course coordinator Dr. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen introduced me to her colleague Dr. James Thomas. The late Dr. Thomas³ had done several studies on the Welsh media. During a conversation with James, among other things, I learned that in the 2004 Welsh local election, news coverage of women politicians was far less than that of males; all the four political party leaders in Wales were male and he suggested that might be the reason.

² The Global Media Monitoring Project was founded at the 1994 international Bangkok conference on “Women Empowering Communication”. It was organised by the WACC (The World Association for Christian Communication) along with two other international women’s networks, the *International Women’s Tribune Centre* and *Isis International, Manila*. A great number of gender and communication activists and scholars called for a one-day study of the media’s news coverage to be examined across the world with the aim of “documenting the participation and portrayal of men and women in the world’s news media, creating a research instrument and establishing a benchmark which would serve as a standard for measuring future change” (http://www.whomakesthenews.org/about_us/what_is_gmmp).

³ Dr. James Thomas was a lecturer at Cardiff University, who was an expert in the Welsh media. Sadly, he passed away on 17th August, 2007, aged 35. It was a great loss to many.

With the third Assembly election approaching in May 2007, I consequently became extremely interested in doing my MA dissertation on women politicians and the Welsh media. Finally, with the help of Cindy and Karin, I decided to concentrate my MA research project on representations of female AMs in three Welsh major newspapers: the *Western Mail*, *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday*. The MA research examined the way in which female AMs were portrayed in these three newspapers. To a certain extent, it also discussed the differences in the press coverage of male and female AMs. However, my MA dissertation was only a preliminary study of the Welsh national press coverage of the female AMs during the 2007 Assembly election.

My MA findings suggested that, in terms of gender, there were significant differences in the national press coverage of the AMs. Analysis of the examined newspaper articles also showed that Assembly women were given comparatively more negative⁴ attention than their male colleagues. For instance, the *Western Mail* carried out an exercise of scoring all AMs in the second Assembly out of a mark of 10, just before the third Assembly election. In the week between 21st and 27th April, 2007, the newspaper published one report every day, which scored 10 AMs each. Take one of these reports for example. Three out of the five scored women in this particular report received a mark below five. According to the newspaper's chief reporter Martin Shipton, these women AMs' performance in the second Assembly was below average: Irene James was considered as a "useless nonentity"; Janice Gregory was a "well below par performer" and Christine Gwyther "has failed to inspire" (*Western Mail* 24th April, 2007:21). Even though there was no evidence of sexist remarks, it was a fact that in every single report, women were given the lowest marks and most negative comments.

⁴ See further explanations of the terms "negative", "positive" and "neutral" in **Appendix II**, Code Book, entry No. 23.

Western Mail 13

ELECTION 2007

Mike German, South Wales East, Liberal Democrat



Comment: Experienced political operator who punches above his party's weight.

Marks out of 10: **8**

End of term report ... we score each of our AMs out of 10

Marlin Shipton
Chief Reporter
martin.shipton@wme.co.uk

WE have decided to give readers an indication of how, in our opinion, their AMs have performed. As we approach the third Assembly election some of our politicians have performed well, others have been average, while a worryingly large proportion have been either largely invisible or seriously below calibre.

In awarding marks out of 10 to every AM, we have tried to take a broad view of their performance, based not simply on what they say and how they say it in the debating chamber and committees, but also on their effectiveness in representing their constituents and the way they communicate with the media and others.

In the case of Cabinet Ministers, there has also been an assessment of how they have handled their portfolio.

We have given our honest opinion – where AMs have performed well we have said so. Where AMs are in our view not up to scratch, we have also said so.

We are now half way through our report card, watch out for our verdict of the remaining 30 throughout this week.

Brian Gibbons, Aberavon, Labour



Comment: As Health Minister has tried to get a grip on the NHS, but it still has massive problems.

Marks out of 10: **6**

Christine Gwyther, Carmarthen West & Pembrokeshire South, Labour



Comment: Sacked by Rhodri Morgan as a Minister, she has failed to inspire as chair of the enterprise committee.

Marks out of 10: **5**

William Graham, South Wales East, Conservative



Comment: Patrician, old-style, Tory who often fails to convince.

Marks out of 10: **5**

Edwina Hart, Gower, Labour



Comment: An assertive Social Justice Minister whose abrasive approach is not endearing.

Marks out of 10: **7**

Janice Gregory, Ogmore, Labour



Comment: Well below par performer by our reckoning.

Marks out of 10: **4**

Jane Hutt, Vale of Glamorgan, Labour



Comment: Disastrous Health Minister who is doing a better job now.

Marks out of 10: **6**

John Griffiths, Newport East, Labour



Comment: Principled politician who probably deserves to be a Minister.

Marks out of 10: **7**

Mark Isherwood, North Wales, Conservative



Comment: Tory with a conscience who should lighten up.

Marks out of 10: **6**

Irene James, Islwyn, Labour



Comment: Useless nonentity as far as we are concerned. Has added nothing to the Assembly that we can see.

Marks out of 10: **2**

The scoring system

10 The best AM in Wales
9 Very high standard of performance – certainly in Assembly terms
8 High standard of performance
7 Above average
6 Average
5 Below average
4 Will need to do more to justify being there
3 Very doubtful whether should be there
2 Definitely should not be there
1 Was never there

Before moving on to discuss the selected Welsh newspapers, it is important to examine the history and content of the national and local community newspapers in Wales. This enables this study to contextualise the ways in which each type of press tends to depict female AMs. The following two sections are a brief discussion of the history of the print medium in Wales and an understanding of the roles of the major Welsh newspapers played in the local and regional communities and in a devolved Wales.

The History of the Welsh Press and Welsh Identity

No newspaper “was being produced” (Jones 1993:1; Robbins 1994; Williams 1996) in Wales at the end of the 18th century. However, the 19th century was a remarkable expansion period for newspaper publishing in Wales in both the Welsh and the English language. As Jones claimed, the development and transformation of the Welsh printing industry was “exceptionally rapid in the course of the 19th century” (1993:2). Even though in a media context the Welsh press demonstrated a “considerable capacity to adapt, innovate, and survive” (Robbins 1994:607) in the 20th century, the power of the press in Wales was not what it once was. That was because the Welsh daily newspapers had been weak in comparison to their London-based rivals, leading to 85 per cent of the morning dailies purchased in Wales being produced in England in 2003 (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Thomas 2006; Delp 2008).

What is more, the Welsh daily press is “provincial” or “regional” rather than national (Williams 1997; Davies 1999; Barlow 2005; James 2006; Ye 2007; Ye 2010). Aldridge (2007) defined the term “regional press” as other than London-based “national press”. This stresses the fact that, geographically speaking, national newspapers in the UK are London-based printing publications; Welsh dailies are regional compared to their counterparts in provincial England and Scotland in the United Kingdom (Robbins 1994). Interestingly, the creation of the first two Welsh journals in the Welsh journalism history was at a time when officials of Carmarthen attempted to show the “loyalty, spirit and unanimity” of their country, Wales, to a wider public under a patriotic defence against France in 1797 (Jones 1993). This is echoed by Robbins (1994) and Jones (1993):

... substantial sections of the burgeoning Welsh press saw themselves as possessing a particular responsibility to a Welsh nation. Since Wales lacked the institutions of statehood yet possessed ... a sense of national identity, the role of the press was of exceptional significance in providing a forum and a platform for the discussion of issues that were of special significance in and for Wales (Robbins 1994:608).

Moreover, according to various scholars, such as Day (2002), Evans (1968; 1975) and

Smith (1991; 1995; 1999), to a large extent, Wales can be considered as a country politically and historically or, in general, culturally. In addition, the survival of Welsh as an official language is a symbol and hallmark of “Welsh identity and nationalism” (Bourhis *et al.* 1973; Aitchison and Carter 1999; Davies 2007). Aitchison and Carter (2004) have stated that the use of the Welsh language in everyday communication has slightly declined (see also Davies 2007), but the number of Welsh speakers is still slightly increasing, constituting approximately 21 per cent of the population in Wales due to Welsh education (Williams 2007). In 2011, there was a two percentage point drop, from 21 per cent to 19 per cent, in the proportion of Welsh speakers (BBC News 11th December, 2012). However, Welsh-language newspapers have a certain readership in the local communities. Although this research project analyses the representations of female AMs in the Welsh press, it is beyond the scope of this study to map out how the Welsh-language newspapers portray Assembly women as the study concentrates on the English-language press in Wales only.

The Roles of Major Welsh English-Language Newspapers

As Savigny noted, “the significance of the media in political processes” is to “provide the site for the negotiation and dissemination of ideas” (2011:270). Bathla, who also pointed out that free media which represent public interests are an essential part of the foundation of a democratic society, argued that “the doctrine of freedom of speech took birth in liberal political philosophy whereby it was recognized that freedom of speech, especially in the form of freedom of the press, had an important political role to play in a democracy” (1998:14). This is evidence of Keane’s observation (1991) that the “democratic tradition” and liberty of the press go hand-in-hand. As an embodiment of democratic values, the media provide a “liberal, constitutional public sphere permitting a rational, well-informed conversation between equals capable of resolving their differences by non-coercive means” (Schlesinger and Tumber 1995:9; cited in Bathla 1998:14). In terms of the role of the media, many scholars have suggested that they mainly perform as a watchdog within the development of the society of a democracy, as Bathla asserted (1998:14):

In a democratic set up, the government is elected by the people representing the interests of the majority and securing the interests of minority. The press, in this process, ensures the best possible participation of interested parties, helps people to choose between real alternatives by providing information on them, encourages debates on issues taken up by various parties and performs the ‘watchdog’ function of protecting against the tendency of the state to abuse the rights of its citizens (Lichtenberg 1990; Kelley and Donway 1990; Keane 1991).

With regard to the local press, Franklin *et al.* (2005:134) defined local newspapers as “any publication in written form on newsprint or similar medium, published ... at regular intervals not exceeding seven days, and available regionally rather than nationally”; the local newspapers should be expected to “articulat[e] the history and concerns of a local community and be central to local democracy by providing a forum for public debate” (cited in Davies 2007:11). According to Franklin and Murphy (1991), local newspapers are still of utmost importance within today’s British media landscape because of six factors:

- (1) There are still an enormous number of published local papers throughout the UK;
- (2) The local press have substantial circulations and extremely high readerships;
- (3) They are demonstrably influential in defining news in local communities;
- (4) They provide their readers with a forum for public debates and discussions;
- (5) They create extremely high advertising revenues;
- (6) They usually serve as a training ground for young people who consider undertaking journalistic professions.

Glover (1998) found that more than 90 per cent of the population read a local newspaper each week, which emphasises the fact that the local press plays a significant part in reflecting the community it serves, providing readers with local news and information. However, Franklin and Murphy (1997), Barter (2005), Franklin (2006a; 2006b) and Thomas (2006) demonstrated the declining number of local newspapers, readerships and circulations, and found that the quality of editorials of local newspapers was diminishing. Similarly, Williams (2011) noted that Cardiff has not yet lost a newspaper, but that the future of Cardiff-based newspapers was worrying. Port Talbot and Neath, which are close

to Cardiff, were among those 60 UK towns that lost their local newspapers between 2008 and 2009 (Greenslade 2009; Williams 2011). Therefore, the readerships and circulations of Welsh newspapers are in a declining process, and the future is not promising.

Even though the readership and circulation of the Welsh newspapers have dramatically declined in recent years, they still play an important role in the political landscape in Wales. First, the Welsh newspapers are one of the best sources of news for the people who are interested in local Welsh political stories, often among the older age group. Second, the newspapers also have an additional impact through their websites, online versions and even on the broadcast media covering politics (Hall 2008; Meech 2008; Berte and Bens 2009). During 2013, although circulations of almost all daily Welsh newspapers fell, their news websites, such as WalesOnline.co.uk and *South Wales Evening Post*, saw their online audience increase by about 35 per cent; and the more locally focused newspapers, such as the *North Wales Pioneer*, *Wrexham Evening Leader*, saw their sales rise by 0.2 per cent (BBC News 26th February, 2014). Most importantly, the Welsh newspapers still play a central part in the daily lives of policy-makers, such as AMs and local MPs. AMs rated their local press as the most important medium which gives coverage to Welsh politics (Cushion and Morgan 2003; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). As will become clearer in the main body of this thesis, Welsh politics is rarely covered by the UK national media; although the Welsh print and broadcast media do not cover Assembly politics extensively, the Welsh press, like the *Western Mail*, is still an important source of information for the AMs. As Jackson (1971) noted, the local newspapers consider the opinion of their local authorities highly important. Local community leaders also spend more time and energy cultivating good working relationships with their local media (Harrison 2006; Delp 2008). Therefore, in this project, I consider the question of who reads the Welsh newspapers to be more urgent and important than the question of how many people read them.

Overview of the Research Project

This study builds on the work carried out in my MA dissertation. It explores in depth a

wide range of Welsh national and local newspapers, including 12 titles: the *Western Mail*, *Daily Post*, *South Wales Echo*, *Wales on Sunday*, *South Wales Argus*, *South Wales Evening Post*, *Evening Leader*, *Western Telegraph*, *Llanelli Star*, *Cambrian News*, *North Wales Pioneer* and *Penarth Times*. All these are English-language newspapers. As mentioned above, only about 19 per cent of Welsh population uses Welsh language in everyday communication (BBC News 11th December, 2012). Wales does not have a daily Welsh-language newspaper, and the Welsh-language press concentrates on hyperlocal community news (Williams 2007). Considering the research scale and focus, this project, therefore, does not examine the Welsh-language press and only focuses on the Welsh English-language press.

This study is a thorough examination of the ways in which AMs, both males and females, were portrayed in the aforementioned 12 newspapers, especially in the local press, during the third Assembly election period between March and May 2007, as well as during a routine coverage period from December 2008 to February 2009. It examines and discusses the differences in the coverage between male and female AMs, and the differences between the national and local press coverage of the AMs and the Assembly activities in general, in order to conduct a comparative study in terms of gender, routine coverage versus election coverage, and national versus local newspapers.

In this PhD thesis, I will argue that the Assembly and its AMs were not extensively covered by the Welsh press during the two periods examined; in fact the coverage was limited, especially in the local newspapers. In addition, women AMs did not enjoy an equal voice with their male counterparts in the Welsh press, in spite of the fact that there has been a significant level of female representation in the Assembly since it was first established in 1999. However, matters such as these do not stand still, and in more recent years the Welsh press, the *Western Mail* in particular, has often given more positive attention to women AMs collectively acknowledging their contributions to Welsh politics. Assembly women have been frequently portrayed as agents of change in the Welsh press in that they have brought changes to Welsh politics. Both men and women in the Assembly often acknowledge the difference that female AMs have made in Welsh politics

since 1999.

This research is designed to make a contribution in the field of gender, politics and media studies. The large number of women in the Assembly is a unique phenomenon both politically and geographically. So this has provided a rare opportunity to study the shift in the type of media focus and attention to women politicians. This study shows that when there has been a relative equal participation of women in political institutions over a period, gender bias gradually becomes less salient and controversial both in colleagues' perceptions of women politicians and in media representations because gender parity has become a norm. I hope that my study of the gender-balanced Assembly can provide broader insights into the challenges and opportunities of gender equality in other legislatures.

When affirmative action is taken, even for a brief period, to achieve a gender balance in political institutions such as the Welsh Assembly, then it seems that attitudes, in the press and in people's perception, about the capabilities of women shift over time as well, and even on a permanent basis. A study of the Welsh situation, set out in this thesis is therefore recommended to those interested in balancing power and perception between the genders in other legislatures and similar bodies around the world. In short – an artificial push, even for a brief period, to equalise representation between the genders, has resulted in dynamic changes in gender representation, media coverage of women politicians' capabilities and focus, and in public attitudes towards women legislators who continue to be elected despite the withdrawal of artificial election stimuli.

Chapter Outlines

Before moving on to the main body of this study, it is useful to outline the chapters. In the following chapter, the Literature Review (Chapter 2) demonstrates the research field of gender, politics and the media, and addresses important existing academic literature and provides a better understanding of this project.

Regarding methodology, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied in this study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology underpinning this project in greater detail. The three main research methods are content analysis, discourse analysis and interviewing.

This study carries out content and discourse analyses of the written newspaper texts and images printed alongside the texts, the locations and positions of these texts and images within the pages of the 12 above-mentioned Welsh English-language newspapers. For instance, how frequently AMs were reported in terms of gender; how many times male and female AMs were mentioned or as the main focus of the articles. The study examines a number of selected news articles by asking the questions of whether Assembly women were trivialised or marginalised by the Welsh press; whether women AMs spoke in the media while dealing with important political issues; whether there was obvious sexist coverage of women in the Assembly; and whether there were prejudices or biases against women AMs in the Welsh press. It discusses how many photos of the AMs were displayed alongside the collected articles according to gender and leadership; what backgrounds they were against; what were the angle of camera shots; where the AMs were photographed, and so on. One-to-one in-depth interviews were conducted with 28 AMs who were elected into the 2011 Assembly. The interviews included questions like whether they thought it had made any difference to politics when women were the majority in the second Assembly; whether they thought their voices were heard by the Welsh press as individual politicians; and whether they agreed with the *Western Mail*'s exercise of marking all 60 AMs out of 10 before the 2007 and 2011 Assembly elections⁵.

Apart from the Literature Review and Methodology, the next three chapters (4, 5 and 6) primarily draw on the data generated from content analysis, combined with discourse analysis. Chapter 4 is a detailed overall examination of the Welsh press coverage of the AMs and Assembly activities. It argues that the Welsh press coverage of the Assembly as

⁵ As mentioned earlier, the *Western Mail* carried out an exercise of giving scores to all sitting AMs just about a week before the 2007 Assembly election. They did it again before the fourth Assembly election in 2011. Interviewed AMs' opinions of the newspaper's marking exercises will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

a whole was very limited during the two studied periods; however, the *Western Mail* stood out in terms of giving far more substantial coverage to the Assembly than any other Welsh newspaper. Chapter 5 is a comprehensive comparative study of the press coverage of the male and female AMs. This chapter argues that overall Assembly women were far less visible in the Welsh press than were their male colleagues. However, they were more likely to receive positive comments than male AMs once they were discussed by others in the articles. Chapter 6 continues to discuss the different press coverage that men and women in the Assembly received in terms of gender, but it focuses more on the questions of whether the Welsh press covered the female AMs under gender stereotypes and whether there are gendered prejudices in the Welsh press coverage of Assembly women. Interestingly, other researchers, such as Carroll and Schreiber (1997), suggested that female politicians tended to voice issues related to women more often than did male politicians, but there was no clear evidence to support that claim in terms of what Assembly men and women had done with regard to issue concerns. What is more, male AMs received more substantial and negative attention on their dress styles than did their female counterparts. This finding is different from what many other researchers have found: female politicians receive far more coverage from the media on their appearance and their personal relationships than do males (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Witt *et al.* 1994; Greenberg-Lake; Congressional Record 1993; see more discussion in the main body of the thesis and Chapter 9).

The data and analyses identified in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 are mainly based on the in-depth interviews with the AMs. Chapter 7 concentrates on the AMs' thoughts on the London-based UK's national media coverage of the Assembly activities and whether they feel there are sexist biases towards female AMs in the Welsh press. Unsurprisingly, a few interviewed female AMs noted that prejudiced coverage of Assembly women still exists now in the Welsh press, but it is not as obvious as when the institution was first created. Most significantly, a majority of the interviewees, both men and women, did not consider that the Welsh press has treated Assembly women differently, and several female AMs suggested that much more positive coverage of women AMs has appeared in recent years. In Chapter 8, I argue that female AMs have often been seen as agents of change in terms

of changing the nature of Welsh politics, such as cross-party committees' work, issue concerns and political debates in the Senedd, and also in terms of shifting the Assembly to a different kind of legislature compared with other political establishments, notably the British Parliament in Westminster. This chapter continues to explore the Welsh press coverage of the women in the Assembly in recent years, and it also unfolds how the interviewees feel about the differences that women AMs have made in devolved politics in Wales, despite the fact that some women AMs have to struggle to balance responsibilities for their families with the demands and obligations of their careers.

Finally, the last chapter (9) of this thesis is reserved for conclusions and reflections. It gives a full account of what this study has observed, examined and discovered, and it also suggests some possible future research topics. This PhD is the first comparative study of media representations of men and women in a political institution that has an equal number of male and female representatives. The examination of the possible outcomes of managing to artificially swing the pendulum in favour of female representation in legislatures demonstrates that it is possible to give a kick-start to the realignment of media reporting and public perception of women's capabilities in public office.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction: Outline and Initial Intention

This literature review examines the existing academic literature addressing gender, politics and the media: more specifically, public sphere theory and feminist interventions in public sphere theory, the movements of feminism, feminist media studies, women politicians and news literature. It examines the literature that surrounds the topics of women and politics, and how the media represent women in general and female politicians in particular.

There is a relative dearth of academic writing on media representations of women politicians in the UK as a whole. There are even fewer thorough academic studies on how the media portray Welsh women politicians. Therefore, this research project is designed to fill the existing academic research gap in the field of gender, politics and the media, and to show a particular case of a gender-balanced Welsh Assembly and the implications that gender balance has on a devolved Wales and on the Welsh media. In this PhD thesis, I argue that Welsh women politicians did not enjoy an equal voice with their male counterparts in the Welsh national press, even though they achieved an almost equal level of representation among the Assembly membership in 2007. Although the local newspapers gave much fairer routine coverage to the female AMs, including the period during the 2007 Welsh national election, the local press in general pays far less attention to the Assembly and its AMs than does the Welsh national press. Most significantly, women in the Assembly have received more positive coverage from the Welsh local and national press as a whole in recent years, because women AMs are often seen as agents of change⁶ by the Welsh press as well as by the men and women I interviewed from the fourth Assembly.

The intent of this literature review is to provide a better understanding of major theories, important concepts and common concerns around the research area, and to offer some

⁶ See detailed discussion of “agents of change” in Chapter 8.

insight into the debates about media representations of female politicians and the role of women in politics. Moreover, this review will provide the overall research project with a solid foundation with which to facilitate an evaluation of the theoretical and political objectives of this study.

Women and Politics: Representations of Women Politicians in the Media

In spite of the large volume of existing writing on women, politics and the media across the world, research analysing how the media represent Welsh women politicians is lacking. This literature review is divided into five main sections. As a start, in order to view women's position in politics more clearly, it is useful to review women's struggles for equal political citizenship in the public sphere. Therefore, the first section provides an introduction to Habermas' notion of the public sphere and explores work on women and citizenship, as well as key feminist definitions and theories. In the second section, the existing body of academic literature on the portrayal of women in Western media will be examined, while the third section is a reflection on media representations of female politicians. Then, the fourth section will provide an account of the academic literature on images and representations of women politicians in the news media in the UK. The fifth and final section looks at representations of Welsh female politicians in the Welsh media.

First of all, it is vital to clarify the origin of the idea of the public sphere. That is because to have a better understanding of the concept is to have a clearer view of where this research project is situated.

Public and Private Spheres

The name of Jürgen Habermas and the notion of the public sphere are inseparable. His book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, is focused on the origin and development of a bourgeois public sphere in Europe from the late 17th century to the early 19th century. This book, which is a "historical-sociological account of the emergence, transformation, and disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere" (1989:XI), raises crucial questions for democratic theory. Habermas has defined the public sphere as "the

sphere of private people [who] come together as a public” (1989:27; cited in Calhoun 1999:9), and it is “a social place between the market (economy) and the state in which private citizens used to get together to discuss public issues” (Bathla 1998:14) and question the state. According to Hauser, the public sphere is “a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment” (1998:86; Hauser 1999), while Nancy Fraser considered the public sphere in Habermas’ sense in contemporary times as:

... a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, and hence an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state (1990; 1999:110-111).

Fraser (1999), who clarified the application of Habermas’ notion of the public sphere to feminist thought, asserted that the use of the very same expression “the public sphere” is less precise and less useful than the original concept in contemporary feminisms. Fraser has emphasised that to feminists today the public sphere refers widely to “everything that is outside the domestic or familial sphere” (1999:110). She praised Habermas’ concept of the public sphere for providing “a way of circumventing some confusions that have plagued progressive social movements and the political theories associated with them” (1999:109), but she also questioned his bourgeois conception of the public sphere from four aspects in terms of its existing limitations in late-capitalist democracies.

First, it is Habermas’ assumption that participants in a public sphere can bracket status differentials and act as social equals, and that social equality is not a necessity for a democracy. Fraser suggested that “an adequate conception of the public sphere requires not merely the bracketing, but rather the elimination, of social inequality” (1999:136). Second, she argued that a multiplicity of competing publics is preferable to Habermas’ ideal notion of a single, comprehensive public sphere. Habermas emphasised a singularity of his bourgeois notion of the public sphere, while Fraser argued that “the ideal of participatory parity is better achieved by a multiplicity of publics than by a single public”

(1999:127). Third, the assumption concerning the appropriate scope of publicity in relation to privacy was questioned. Habermas stressed that the “common good” is the most important element in the bourgeois public sphere, and that the appearance of private interests and issues was undesirable. By contrast, Fraser pointed out that “a tenable conception of the public sphere must countenance not the exclusion, but the inclusion, of interests and issues that bourgeois, masculinist ideology labels ‘private’ and treats as inadmissible” (1999:137). Finally, Fraser was suspicious of Habermas’ assumption that “a functioning democratic public sphere requires a sharp separation of civil society and the state” (1999:118; 132). She argued that a defensible conception of the public sphere must permit the co-existence of both strong publics “whose discourse encompasses both opinion formation and decision making” and weak publics “whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion formation and does not also encompass decision making” (1999:134), and that it must assist with theorising the range of possible relations among such publics. This research project is predicated upon Fraser’s ideas of eliminating inequalities of class and gender, especially concerns about women’s position in the economic and domestic sphere.

Whether in relation to participation in public debates or in struggles for democracy and political rights, women’s position in the public sphere is considerably different from that of men. Ruth Lister argued that “the history of women’s exclusion from citizenship in Western societies is thus intimately linked with their relegation to the private side of the public-private dichotomy” (1997:71). In the context of this study, citizenship is acknowledged as “both as a status, carrying a wide range of rights, and as a practice, involving both obligations and political participation” (Lister 1997:41). Even though women have entered the public sphere and are enjoying the formal admission to citizenship via universal suffrage and political enfranchisement through the right to vote, they have still not been able to simply eliminate the stereotypical images which have been constructed by traditions or through various kinds of means of communications – media in particular, in certain societies. As Lister stated, women have not yet been able to “shed the sexualized and familialised skin” (1997:71) that bound them to the private sphere.

In terms of politics, women's political citizenship is obviously an important manifestation of citizenship as a practice. Today women participate in both formal and informal politics. As Lister (1997) has emphasised, women play an important part both in the "masculine sphere of formal politics" and in the "feminine sphere of informal politics". However, Lister also noted the gap between women's formal political status and their actual power in the formal political sphere embodied in one particular observation: "political space belongs to all citizens, but men monopolize it" (UNDP 1995:41; cited in Lister 1997:146). Due to women's under-representation in formal politics, it appears that what women politicians do today is still marginalised, which limits their political potential and delays the realisation of the ideals of political citizenship in terms of equality at all aspects with male politicians. Lister clarified the ambiguity between the different and equal forms of women's political citizenship: the difference by which it means the form of women's political representation evolves from the ideas and practices of citizenship in terms of the dominant sexual division of labour within the private sphere, and the equality which questions the traditions and conditions in both private and public spheres for women's rights and equal opportunities as political citizens at all levels. Interestingly, Lister presented a suggestion of combining the difference and equality of political citizenship in order to promote the links between the masculine sphere of formal politics and the feminine sphere of informal politics, and she suggested a combination of the two in order to point a way towards "a more women-friendly political citizenship". If this has indeed become a reality, to a certain extent, it encourages more potential women candidates to become involved in politics, and to make contributions as equal participants, and not simply to act in a supporting role to men by doing all the trivial work such as filing documents and arranging meetings. Furthermore, it enables women politicians to deliver their policies more effectively and to bring freshness and novelty to politics through their perspectives as an opposite sex to male. As subsequently discussed in more detail in another section of the role of women politicians, it seems that women are likely to introduce a somewhat different style of politics (Norris 1996; Bochel and Briggs 2000; Mackey 2001; Childs 2002; Childs 2004; Childs and Withey 2004; Bird 2005; Ye 2007; Blomeley 2011).

As will become clearer in the following discussion, this research project associates with liberal feminist theory, because I believe that in a fair society a person's gender is no longer relevant in politics. In the Welsh case, after the positive discrimination action was dismantled by both Labour and Plaid Cymru before the 2011 Assembly election, there were still as many women elected as in 1999. This fits in with liberal feminist thinking which seeks to improve the status of women within the system, via legal changes in legislatures, working in the belief that progressive reforms will lead to full gender equality (Kaplan 1992). Consequently, it is useful, in this context, to examine key definitions of feminism and different feminist theories.

Feminist Perspectives

According to Boles and Hoeveler (2004), even though the present-day feminist activities and organisations are most familiar to people, they build on actions of role models and movements which date back hundreds of years, even into antiquity and the biblical era. Therefore, it is of great importance to examine the history of feminism or the history of women's movements, and key concepts and different theories of feminism. This helps to understand a broader picture of contemporary women and gives insights into the lives of women in the wider community today.

(1) What is feminism?

We start with van Zoonen's assertion that "feminist academic project is intrinsically political" (1994:2). In her earlier work, she noted (1991:34):

With its substantial project, it is the reciprocal relation between theory, politics and activism, the commitment of feminist academics to have their work contribute to a larger feminist goal – however defined, the blurred line between the feminist as academic and the feminist as activist, that distinguishes feminist perspectives on the media from other possible perspectives (see also van Zoonen 1994).

In addition, feminist analyses can make a broader contribution than have previously been

made to an understanding of the world of politics. This is because increasing numbers of women are going into politics and running for office, which sends out a message that women can make extraordinary contributions within politics, and that they are no longer secondary to men. The definition of politics in this study is drawn from Lovenduski's concept that defines politics as "the personnel, processes, relationships, institutions and procedures that make authoritative public decisions"; it does not only refer to politics which "conjure[s] images of politicians, assemblies, governments and elections often framed as gladiatorial competitions or races by [the] media that is a necessary part of the process" (2005:12-13). This research project is sympathetic to liberal feminist thinking and theories, because the approach of liberal feminism shows a way to identify key areas of Assembly governance in a gender-balanced Assembly and the Welsh Government, and it also gives directions for empirical and conceptual analysis of Welsh politics in relation to gender studies (see detailed discussions in the following section).

After a careful examination of the different feminist approaches, it will become clear that liberal feminist thought is highly relevant to this research in terms of parity in the world of politics. The liberal feminist approach was applied to this study, also because of the importance of its seminal thinking about women politicians and women who work in politics in general (Whitworth 1994); many women politicians practise this feminist approach in their everyday lives (see hooks 2000; Ye 2007; and later discussions of the interviews with AMs in the result chapters).

Before moving on to discussing different forms of feminism, it is important to define what patriarchy means, because this concept always associates with the key arguments within feminist studies and feminist media studies, especially radical and socialist feminist theories. Literally, patriarchy refers to a society or a system that is dominated by men and that oppresses women; it is one of the important concepts concerning specific aspects of women's subordination (Foord and Gregson 1986; Hollows 2000; Humm 2003; Boles and Hoeveler 2004). Moreover, as Byerly (2012) pointed out, masculine ideology that references patriarchy has seemed to perpetuate itself in cultural products and has manifested itself in cultural products to reinforce longstanding values of men's

superiority over women. In terms of major feminist approaches, liberal feminists accept the public/private dichotomy and do not fundamentally challenge the ways in which power relations operate within society (Humm 2003; see discussion below). However, according to Foord and Gregson (1986), both radical and socialist feminists' work has been influenced by the notion of patriarchy. They also noted:

In particular, women's inequality and gender roles, used in conjunction with analyses of spatial patterns and processes, have been important in establishing both the complex form and continued maintenance of [women's] subordination (1986:186-187).

It is true that inequality, gender roles and patriarchy have led to some partial interpretations of women's position in society. However, they are vital concepts in feminists' work in terms of analysing specific aspects of women's subordination. With regard to the understandings of feminism, Porter (1991: 5) described feminism as "a perspective that seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer because of their sex". Many of the actions or terms in Porter's definition of feminism have been used widely in feminist studies, but the most important element is the goal of eliminating inequality or achieving equality. Evans (1995) has suggested that "equality" means women must have equal opportunity with men; they have to receive "fairness of treatment"; women should strive for "parity" at all existing ranks and levels with men. According to Hollows, feminists are activists who not only try to "challenge the gender-blindness and sexism of existing forms of knowledge, but also often try to produce new forms of knowledge which provides the basis for political action" (2000:19). In addition, Delmar (cited in Beasley 1999: 27-28) also stated:

[A]t the very least a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change ... in the social, economic and political order.

(II) The History and Theories of Feminism

As mentioned above, Delmar suggested a radical change (see Beasley 1999); positive

change is always desirable, where sexual discrimination still exists. Women's movements have, to a certain extent, empowered women to make their voices heard in many fields. According to many researchers, such as Cudd and Andreasen (2005), Jackson and Jones (1998), Beasley (1999) and Pateman (1992), the women's movement in the UK started with the publication of Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, which is considered to be the beginning of the first wave of feminism. Humm (2003) also considered Wollstonecraft's work as the full statement of liberal feminism. It is widely acknowledged that feminism could be divided into three waves. In terms of these three waves or the three changing stages of feminism, Gillis *et al.* (2004:1) noted:

Traditionally, we have understood feminist history in three stages. The first is the nineteenth-century women's movement which was a response to a shared exclusion from political, social and economic life. Objectives were to extend the social contract so that it included political citizenship for women. ... by the second stage in feminist history, a clear, self-defined, feminist movement emerged in the 1960s and the 1970s, reflecting on the gains of the suffragists.

According to a number of researchers, such as Segal (1987), Kaplan (1992), Humm (2003), Boles and Hoeveler (2004), there are several different understandings of feminism; the major types are liberal, socialist, radical feminisms, and post-structural and postmodern feminisms. Other understandings of feminist theories have also been developed as a result of the influence of different origins and societies in the history of the women's movements: namely Black feminism, post-colonial feminism, third-world feminism, multiracial feminism, ecofeminism (Tong 1992; Mirza 1997; Alcoff 1998; Hollows 2000; Humm 2003), cyber feminism and transnational feminism (Grewal and Kaplan 2000; Jamal 2005; Carter 2012) (see detailed discussions of these feminist approaches below). It is worth noting that the different feminist theories may not always be distinctive, but rather overlap and engage in dialogue with each other (Kaplan 1992).

First of all, liberal feminism has to be brought into discussion as it is the basis of this dissertation. Although feminist theories all advocate change, in practice they differ significantly in each case, in terms of the types of change to be achieved and how to achieve them. This can be seen clearly from the discussion in the following examination

of each major type of feminism. In the context of this political and media study, liberal feminist thought appears particularly suitable. Liberal feminism associated with the first-wave feminism, also termed “mainstream feminism”, is based on “traditional political liberalism which accepts a positive view of human nature and the ideals of liberty, equality, justice, dignity, and individual rights” (Boles and Hoeverler 2004:192). Liberal feminists argue for “individual fulfillment free from the strictures of highly defined sex roles” (Humm 2003:151). Kaplan (1992:20) has also noted that liberal feminism appears to be:

...organized, hierarchical, negotiative and coalition-building. It seeks to change public opinion by formal networks and via changes in legislature, working in the belief that progressive reforms will lead to the full equality of women.

Therefore, liberal feminism limits itself to reformism, “seeking to improve the status of women within the system but not fundamentally contesting either the system’s operation or its legitimacy” (Humm 2003:151). Contemporary liberal feminists believe that women should enjoy the same rights and treatments as men, in pursuit of their goals through “conventional political activities of lobbying, litigation and legislation” (Boles and Hoeverler 2004:192). They espouse women’s rights in terms of welfare needs, universal education, health services, and professional treatment (Humm 2003). It appears that issues which concern many female politicians are also of great importance to liberal feminists, such as childcare, child poverty, reproductive and abortion rights, equal employment and payment, political participation, education, sexual and domestic violence against women (hooks 2000).

Apparently, liberal feminism tends to rely on state and political rights to gain equality. It supports affirmative action legislation, requiring employers and educational institutions to make special attempts to include women in the pool of applicants based on the assumption that past and current discrimination may simply overlook many qualified women applicants. Bryson (2003) noted that liberalism may support affirmative action, but the National Organisation for Women does not go so far as to support quotas. However, Klausen and Maier suggested that “in practice liberalism may ultimately prove

flexible enough to allow the use of quotas to promote equality” (Bryson 2003:151). In this research, I would argue that affirmative action taken by both Labour and Plaid Cymru was via reformism within the parties – the policies were achieved by activists from different political parties striving for gender equality in candidature, prior to the first Assembly election in 1999. It was via changes in candidate selection policies that favoured women to a certain extent, not to a very huge extent, that ensured there were as many women candidates as men. As a result, a large number of women AMs were elected in 1999. After the positive discrimination policies were abolished by both parties before the 2011 Assembly election, there were still as many women elected as in 1999. Therefore, this research is also aligned with this perspective of liberal feminism.

Apart from its limitation to reformism, critics of this approach of feminism, such as Firestone (1970), also noted its concentration on the more superficial symptoms of sexism. Moreover, Elshtain (1982) suggested that it reduces human motivation to a utilitarian calculus of self-interest (see also Humm 2003). Most significantly, early liberal feminists argued that women were excluded from many most important fields in society socially, politically and economically. Even though contemporary liberal feminists may be able to identify the extent to which women are under-represented in some fields, such as the world of politics, and to show the ways in which women may overcome obstacles and difficulties to their participation, they appear to be unable to theorise the extent to which these phenomena are “the result of relations of domination and inequality of power” (Whitworth 1994:30). As for media representation, liberal feminists demand more equal portrayals in terms of the air time and coverage that women receive, and they believe that the nature of the media depictions of women needs to be more in line with social changes (Williams 2003).

With regard to change, another influential approach of feminist understanding is socialist feminism which links gender oppression to Marxist theory and thought. Marx (1990) argued that if class oppression were overcome, gender oppression would diminish, and then vanish as well. In terms of the concept of patriarchy, Marxist and socialist feminists try to conflate “capitalism and patriarchy together to explore the relations between class

and gender inequalities” (Hollows 2000:8), but Ramazanoglu (1989) suggested that they have still dealt in “abstract generalities” rather than “the contradictions of historical developments” (see also Hollows 2000). Socialist feminists also believe that gender inequality is “a structural inequality which has its origin in class division and women’s exploitation, and the way in which it occurs and is perpetuated is a consequence of the capitalist mode of production” (Kaplan 1992:20).

Radical feminism, a dynamic contemporary approach created by the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s (Boles and Hoeweler 2004) to a certain extent tends to be rather separate and different from other branches of feminism. According to Humm, what makes this type of feminism radical is that “it focuses on the roots of male domination and claims that all forms of oppression are extensions of male supremacy” (2003:231), so radical feminists’ major concern is the male-controlled hierarchy with which the basic problem is gender over class divisions. Radical feminists declare that patriarchy is the root of women’s oppression which can be overcome only by eliminating and reconstructing the dominant patriarchal social system, such as through lesbianism (Echols 1989).

As noted above, liberal feminism has the most long-term history, dating back to the very beginning of the first-wave feminism, and socialist and radical feminisms were also reinforced and developed during the second stage of feminist movement. According to Gillis *et al.* (2004) and other scholars, the first and second waves of feminism largely focus on women’s equal political and legal rights. The second wave aimed “to radically transform almost every aspect of personal and political life” (Cudd and Andreasen 2005:7). Of course, what Cudd and Andreasen suggested was that the second-wave feminism was not only about equality in public life in terms of political and legal rights, but also culturally. For instance, radical feminists not only emphasise equality of representation, but also women’s power, pleasure, culture (see Gill 2007), identity and so on; socialist feminists place their emphasis on ideology and representation, and make links “between the class-based forms of capitalist societies and women’s subordination” (Gill 2007:26); and liberal feminists focus on the transformation of every small-scale

deprivation of women which has been the result of gender stereotypes and restrictive social roles (Walby 1990; Gill 2007). Liberal feminists believe that because of their gender, women are oppressed, but they do not consider the relations between the sexes as specific power relations. Therefore, liberal feminism differs both theoretically and politically from radical and Marxist and socialist feminist approaches which are directly linked with power relations (see also Ramazanoglu 1989; Humm 2003; Boles and Hoeveler 2004).

It is obvious that liberal and socialist approaches are the early forms of feminism, and new forms of feminist thinking emerged in the 1980s, which formed the third wave of feminism. However, Gillis *et al.* (2004) pointed out that it is difficult to define the third-wave feminism; just as their book title stated *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration*. This has been echoed by Spencer's claim (2004) which suggested that there is no clear argument as to what the third-wave feminism is about. Despite this, Cudd and Andreasen (2005) believed that the third wave of feminism began in the late 1980s when feminists defined women in more diverse categories, because women from different social backgrounds and racial groups experience different types of oppression. This has also been pointed out by Jackson and Jones (1998), who noted that feminist theory itself was "becoming more diverse and more inclined to focus on [the] particular, rather than attempting to capture the generality of women's situation" (1998:6) in the last few decades. Beasley stressed that feminist theories influenced by "postmodernist thinking stress[ing] plurality rather than unity" (1999:81), especially refusing notions of women as a "homogeneous category".

Although the third wave of feminism is widely discussed and accepted by many academics, some researchers, such as Rosenfelt and Stacey (1987), Coppock and Richter (1995), Gill (2007), elaborated the notion of post-feminism. As Boles and Hoeveler (2004) put it, the term is linked with postmodernism, post-structuralism and multicultural analysis, and it is often viewed as a new stage of feminism by some feminists. The approach of post-structural and postmodern feminisms is usually associated with postmodern and post-structuralist theories and thought, such as deconstruction, using the

writings of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and others (Boles and Hoeveler 2004). One of the major feminist theorists of post-structuralism is Judith Butler (1990) who argued that gender, as a performative category, is constructed through language. Subsequently, Hall and Rodriguez identified four post-feminist characteristics in great detail (2003:879):

- (1) Support for the women's movement has decreased over the 1980-90 period.
- (2) Antifeminism has increased among "pockets" of young women, women of color, and full-time homemakers.
- (3) Feminism has lost support because it has become irrelevant. For women who were feminists when younger, the movement failed to achieve gender equality; for young women in the current era, the success of the movement means it is no longer needed.
- (4) A "no, but ..." ⁷ version of feminism has developed, in which women are "reluctant to define themselves with the feminist label, but they approve of and indeed demand equal pay, economic independence, sexual freedom, and reproductive choice" (Ouellette 1992: 119; cited in Hall and Rodriguez 2003:879).

According to these four claims, it is obvious that post-feminism gives the impression that feminism is no longer relevant in contemporary society. Due to the impact of post-feminist thought on an increasing number of women who grew up in the 1980s, it seems that feminism is irrelevant to many. Apparently, post-feminism has influenced support for the women's movements and feminism. Just as Hall and Rodriguez acknowledged (2003: 878):

Some articles declare that feminism is already dead (Ebeling 1990) or is suffering an "identity crisis" (Kaminer 1993) that indicates its impending demise; others frame the issue as the "fear of feminism" (Hogeland 1994) or a "new feminist mystique" (Friedan 1991).

The notion of post-feminism ⁸ also emerged repeatedly in each of the chapters of Gill's book *Gender and the Media* (2007); in the concluding chapter, she briefly discussed

⁷ "I'm not a feminist, but ..." is the common expression, but the shorter "no, but ..." version also appears in popular media (Ouellette 1992; Wallis 1989; cited in Hall and Rodriguez 2003:879).

⁸ Gill (2007:250) noted, "the different positions are sometimes marked by differences in the way that 'post' is written – with or without a hyphen, capitalized or in lower case, and in some cases (following Derrida) with the word scored through."

postfeminism as an epistemological break within feminism, a historical shift as well as a backlash against feminist achievements and goals (Faludi 1992). Furthermore, she outlined an alternative understanding of postfeminism – “conceived of as a sensibility”, such as femininity as a bodily property, the shift from objectification to subjectification, the dominance of a makeover paradigm, and so on. Perhaps, it is not surprising that women today are still facing many challenges in terms of recognising their social, sexual, economic, intellectual and political identities even by themselves against different and often complicated social backgrounds. Furthermore, women’s intellectual traditions have existed over the last three centuries (Spender 1983), and it seems that women are continuing to confront their changing identities in society, such as activists who are concerned about “parity” with men. For the purposes of this research project, therefore, it is useful to discuss different theories of feminism; it deepens the understanding of the research field as well as this study itself.

As mentioned earlier, there are other understandings of feminist ideologies, for example, multiracial feminism and Black feminism provide some insight into the lives and experiences of women of colour (Maxine and Dill 2002). Black feminists in particular have argued that sexual and racial discriminations and class oppression against Black women are bound together, and that Black women have experienced a different and even more intense kind of oppression from that of other women, especially white women (A Black Feminist Statement 1977; Collins 1990a; 1990b; Nestle and MacNevin 2006). For instance, Patricia Hill Collins is best known for her idea of intersectionality which is a particular way of understanding society in terms of crisscross systems of oppression; she argued that “systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women’s experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women” (Collins 2000: 299). Obviously, ecofeminism links ecology with feminism, while postcolonial and third-world feminisms have far less connection to this study, so they are not discussed here in as great detail as other types of feminist theories.

In the field of politics, Lovenduski has suggested that feminist theory illuminates the

“gendered nature of political representation”; the term political representation is noted as meaning “the presence of members of the group in the formal institutions of politics” (2005:14). Lovenduski (2005) noted that issues of female representation are both “illuminated” and “obscured” by debates about the nature of representation in terms of limited participation and imperfect democracy. Pitkin, who clarified the complexity of the concept, also noted that “representation, taken generally, means the making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present, literally or in fact” (1967:8-9; cited in Lovenduski 2005:16). As Lovenduski claimed, women’s political representation is normally understood from two contradictory perspectives in feminist thought, namely “equality” and “difference” feminism (2005:2):

Equality feminism (sometimes termed ‘equity’ or ‘liberal’ feminism) stresses women’s entitlements to be in politics on the same terms and in the same numbers as men. Difference feminism (sometimes termed ‘maternal’ or ‘social’ feminism) stresses that women have particular characteristics or interests and perspectives that may be represented only by women.

Most importantly, as Lovenduski has pointed out, both critics and supporters of women’s political representation often “elide” the “equality” and “difference” perspectives (2005:2-3):

The tendency to elide equality and difference arguments is intertwined with misunderstandings of the nature of political institutions and is especially evident in commentary on recent British politics. On the one hand, women politicians are criticized for their failure to transform centuries-old male-designed traditions of politics. On the other hand, women MPs are expected to represent a particular model of womanhood – they are frequently either credited with bringing significant changes in policy that are supportive of women’s traditional family roles, or blamed for not doing so.

As a matter of fact, more than a few women politicians face this dilemma; it has become quite a common phenomenon which is reflected in the following discussions (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Burrell 1994; Darcy *et al.* 1994; Witt *et al.* 1994; Thomas 1994; Norris 1997; Watson *et al.* 2005). Even though women have officially been recognised in the world of politics, it seems that they still are expected to act differently from their male

colleagues and that they are often judged against the traditional standards and values of being a good woman first, not as a professional politician in the first place (Ross 2002b).

To have a better understanding of feminism in a modern and post-modern society and the images of contemporary women, it is essential to examine the literature on how women are portrayed in the news media. As van Zoonen (1994:11) pointed out, “the media have always been at the centre of feminist critique”; for instance, she gave illustrative examples ranging from women’s magazines to the tabloid press in which topless pin-up girls were displayed. In addition, Bathla (1998) suggested that the media play an important role in the process of democracy and a formal political sphere represented through democracy. It seems true that both the media and democracy are a part of the public sphere and they depend on one another closely in today’s society. Subsequently, the following section examines the literature around women and the media.

Cultural Perspective: Women and the Media

Carter and Steiner noted that the media are “instrumental in the processes of gaining public consent” (2004:2). Whether or not media messages convey “truth” or mirror “reality” is another question altogether, but they do reflect dominant ideologies in society (Tuchman 1978b; Lacey 1998; Carter and Steiner 2004; Carter 2012). Before moving on to examine how the news media portray women in general, it is useful to identify some crucial concepts around this area. First of all, it is of great importance to answer the question: what is the nature of representation? In this context, representation is different from political representation as discussed previously. According to Stuart Hall, representation is “the production of meaning of the concepts in our minds through language” (1997:17), by which he not only referred to the written and spoken forms of a particular language, but he also meant visual images, facial expressions, music and so on, in a much broader sense. In his words, a language is “any sound, word, image or object which functions as a sign, and is organized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning” (1997:19). He noted that in representation, people use signs “organized into languages of different kinds” (1997:28) in order to

communicate “meaningfully” with others. Hall also stated that “if meaning is the result, not of something fixed out there, in nature, but of our social, cultural and linguistic convention, then meaning can never be fixed” (1997:23). Therefore, he argued that the world is not accurately or otherwise reflected in the mirror of language; meaning is generated within language and is constructed through various representational systems. It is obvious that visual signs and images are central parts of the language. In terms of mass media, especially the print media, written texts combined with photographs and images are a common means of conveying the media’s message. Usually, this combination has a more effective impact among their audiences or readers than mere written or oral texts.

What is more, it is useful to clarify the distinction between sex and gender. Carter (2012) summarised the ideas of poststructuralist feminists Judith Butler (1990) and Teresa de Lauretis (1987), whose notions of the construction of gender and the distinction of “sex” and “gender” are particularly important, and which provide a better understanding of gendered stereotypical representations of women in today’s media. According to Carter (2012:368), de Lauretis’ (1987) work and her idea of “technologies of gender” have been particularly pertinent to feminist media researchers. By “technologies of gender”, de Lauretis (1987) meant through media forms, narratives and theories, gender is constructed. Similarly, Butler (1990) considered that “sex” is biological and “gender” is constructed by cultural meanings (see also Carter and Steiner 2004). Moreover, gender is a “performance”, which is something “we do or act out over and over again, everyday of our lives” (Carter 2012:368). Similarly, Alison Jaggar (1983) noted, gender is nurtured and not “human nature”, and masculinity and femininity are “a set of social expectations, created and maintained in a patriarchal society” (Craig 1992:2; see also Carter 2012:370). The mass media have played a part in the formation of the gender differences – masculinity and femininity (Mendes and Carter 2008; Carter and Mendes 2008; Carter 2012).

About a decade before these two poststructuralist feminists, Gaye Tuchman argued (1978b; 1981) that women were trivialised and marginalised, subjected to “symbolic annihilation” as the media have concentrated overwhelmingly on the activities of men in

the public sphere (see also Gill 2007; Byerly 2012; Carter 2012; Dan and Iorgoveanu 2013; Wahl-Jorgensen and Ye 2014). Carter (2012:374) argued that media messages are constructed by “the ideological frameworks of media institutions which, for the most part, conform to the dominant power structures in society”. Obviously, the Western media are dominated by men, as Tuchman (1978b) noted the mass media reflect or represent dominant values and attitudes in society (see also Carter 2012:367).

Richard Dyer (cited in Lacey 1998:131) claimed that “representation consists essentially of media language, the conventions which are used to represent the world to the audience.” Indeed, stereotypes are often used to represent different social groups to the world, because types are characters who are defined by what they represent rather than being genuine individuals (Lacey 1998). People who belong to the same culture share some behaviours and have many similar viewpoints. What is more, stereotypes offer a shorthand about characters and people in the real world (Lacey 1998). On the other hand, although the media have a remarkably strong influence on the dissemination of stereotypes, it is also true that stereotypes were not created by the media; they are concepts which arguably exist in everyday life (Lacey 1998).

According to Lacey (1998), stereotypes have their basis in the material conditions and social practices of society, so it may be no surprise that stereotypes are an expression of the dominant ideology. Despite the fact that women in the European Union, for instance, have gained access to their nation state’s political, legal and bureaucratic arenas (Elman 1996; Garcia-Ramon and Monk 1996), from Lacey’s viewpoint, Western society is still dominated, politically and economically, by white middle-aged men. Therefore, it is highly likely that the producers of cultural meanings naturally reflect the interests of the dominant group, thus helping create the conditions for hegemony. He noted (1998:139):

Stereotypes serve to naturalize the power relationships in society; they have a hegemonic function, so the fact that women are often stereotyped as subservient to men ... legitimiz[ing] their inferior position. ... Stereotypes are not true or false, but reflect a particular set of ideological values.

Similarly, Goodman (1992) has also argued that stereotypical images of women are not uncommon in literature, nor in cultural representations of any kind. Accordingly, the media seem likely to employ sex stereotypes when covering women, which consciously and subconsciously reflect the dominant patriarchal ideology in society (Tuchman 1978b).

Macdonald (1995) invited the reader to discover the field of gender representation in the Western media. As the author has noted, the term “myth” defined by French cultural critic Roland Barthes refers to ways of conceptualising a subject that are widely accepted within a specific culture and a certain historical period, in spite of having little necessary connection to reality. Macdonald (1995), who mainly analysed the production and reproduction of myths of femininity or “the feminine” by the media, only considered to what extent women were able to articulate their own perspectives and viewpoints through the media, and investigated how women represented themselves. Bonner *et al.* (1992) also looked at how women were portrayed, how they represented themselves, and what they did as audiences or what they did with the depictions they encountered. Examining the history of representation of women in the media, Macdonald argued that “interpretation processes have undergone at least as radical a shift as forms of representation” (1995:55) in the course of the 20th century. Although stereotypes exist at all times, she argued that women now have access to a wider variety of representations of themselves than ever before.

This claim has been echoed by Ross and Byerly (2004) who have suggested that feminist and other activist scholars from a diversity of classes, ethnic and national backgrounds have challenged dominant intellectual paradigms since the 1960s, thus introducing the public to critical, feminist, cultural and postcolonial studies. Indeed, women in contemporary times have been facing some inevitable changes since the second-wave feminism emerged in the 1960s. It can be seen from the above-mentioned researchers’ analyses that, to a large extent, images and representations of today’s women in the media have undergone some changes, but not enough concerning equity of all existing perspectives and levels with men, such as equal opportunity and fairness of treatment.

Ross and Carter (2011) noted that over a 15-year period, there have been some positive improvements in women's representation as news actors, sources and journalists in the British and Irish news media since the first monitoring day of the Global Media Monitoring Project in 1995, but news organisations still consider women's voices, experiences and expertise less important than those of men (see also Carter 2012; WACC 2010).

This is often true when women working in fields such as science, engineering and technology (SET) are portrayed by the media. Kitzinger and Chimba (2008) indicated that the mass media might have a great impact on either emphasising or challenging "gender segregation and inequalities". More boys or men intend to study science, engineering and technology at college or university and they are more likely to work as professionals in SET fields than are women (Rees 2001; Roberts 2002). It seems that the media help to define people's perceptions (Eldridge *et al.*1997) and their messages usually are an important source for young people when it comes to what "role models" should look like as scientists (Phillips and Imhoff 1997). It is apparent that a lack of media coverage may "amount to a form of symbolic annihilation" (Kitzinger and Chimba 2008:1; Tuchman 1978a; 1978b; Lafky 1995; Macdonald 1995). Kitzinger and Chimba (2008) have suggested that the media have "traditionally marginalized" women in SET: they rarely represented women scientists in the past; if they did, it often turned out to be "problematic" in terms of being subjected to gendered stereotypes and essentialising femininity (see discussions below).

LaFollette (1988) carried out a study on mass circulation American magazines from the early 20th century. One of the important findings of her research was that the magazine articles on successful women scientists consistently represented them as good mothers or in other typically feminine ways. Her study also suggested that the magazines often sent a signal to the readers that scientific fields require certain "masculine" attributes. Another study by Nelkin (1995) examined magazine and press coverage from the 1960s to the 1980s and also indicated that female scientists were often described or introduced as good mothers and their "feminine" characteristics were noticeably highlighted (Kitzinger and

Chimba 2008:2). More recent studies have confirmed this pattern (Shachar 2000; Haran *et al.* 2008a; 2008b; Whitelegg *et al.* 2008); these studies highlighted that how the media defined “respectable” and “deviant” science was refracted through norms of “good” and “bad” femininity (Kitzinger and Chimba 2008). However, media reporting on women scientists has somewhat changed in recent years. Kitzinger and Chimba’s research on newspaper coverage of women in SET in the UK suggested that gendered representations of women scientists in the UK media still exist. Their research showed that male scientists are still portrayed as the norm by the media, whereas women scientists are somehow considered to be exceptional. Nevertheless, female scientists may no longer be judged by their domestic housekeeping abilities or their parenting skills, as they were by the press in the 1920s or even the 1980s, but they may now be judged on their beauty, fashion sense and sexiness (Kitzinger and Chimba 2008). Of course, change may not always be simply positive or negative. The changing representation from a focus on domesticity to sexuality suggests that women scientists may be sexualised by the media to “sex up” the male dominated SET fields. According to Gill (2007:26), domains such as engineering and computing are dominated by men. Similar to how male scientists appear in the media, male politicians are also represented as the norm in the media. Most significantly, the media often concentrate on female politicians’ appearance and their personal relationships. It seems to be a common phenomenon that women politicians are often subjected to stereotypical depictions by the news media worldwide as the following sections will demonstrate.

Representing Women Politicians in the News Media

According to Karen Ross (2002b), much of the existing literature on women politicians and the media has a strong North American orientation, which can be explained by the fact that a great number of researchers focusing on this broad area are based in the United States. A large amount of research demonstrates that the media coverage of female politicians and female electoral candidates differs from that of their male counterparts, in terms of either quantitative or qualitative research, or applying both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; Kahn 1991;1992; 1993; 1994a;

1994b; Ross 1995; Braden 1996; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Bystrom *et al.*, 2001; Devitt 2002; Gidengil and Everitt, 2003; Ye 2007; Adcock, 2010; Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012; Ibroscheva and Stover 2012; Bucciferro 2012; Ross and Comrie 2012; Ross *et al.* 2013; Dan and Iorgoveanu 2013).

For example, female gubernatorial candidates were often more likely to be reported on their personal traits, private lives, personality or appearance, whereas male candidates were more likely to receive coverage of their policy stands; differences in coverage were as a result of news articles produced by male reporters who covered gubernatorial campaigns (Devitt 2002, see also Wahl-Jorgensen and Ye 2014). Similarly, Roman (2001) studied the role of professional norms in the media coverage of Romanian female politicians; she noted that biased coverage resulted from a patriarchal journalistic profession and “the socialization of reporters into the predominantly misogynist ideology of the newsroom” (Ibroscheva and Stover 2012:37). A large number of studies suggested that female candidates often received less (issue) coverage than their male counterparts (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; Kahn 1991; 1992; 1994a; 1994b; Braden 1996; Fox 1997; Aday and Devitt 2001; Bystrom *et al.* 2001; Devitt 2002; Ross 2002b; Banwart *et al.* 2003; Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Heldman *et al.* 2005; Bystrom 2006; Ye 2007; Adcock 2010; Ross and Comrie 2012).

Much of the work suggests that the Western media routinely marginalise or trivialise the voices of female politicians in today’s world. For instance, Pippa Norris explored whether the news media depicted world leaders through a gender-relevant or gender-neutral perspective, since these few women world leaders have “stood out as a splash of colour against the grey suits” (1997:153). However, the number of women world leaders is small compared to that of male world leaders. According to a UN report, in 1994, membership in the exclusive club of Presidents and Prime Minister included 180 men, and 9 women (United Nations 1995). Another study (Watson *et al.* 2005) shows that 52 was the total number of all elected world leaders who happened to be female in the modern era (post-WWII). Since 2005, more than 50 other women joined this exclusive club, which included those who have been elected or appointed either heads of state or government

(WEAHSO 2013).

Due to the relevance to my own research project, it is vital to examine the main findings of Norris' research. First, the results drawn from the reviewed stories confirmed that "women leaders are less visible in the news, as existing studies have found, although the difference in the amount of coverage is not that great" (Norris 1997: 164). Second, the research found little evidence that journalists employed simple sex stereotypes while covering the emergence of new women world leaders. Finally, it concluded, "women leaders are widely portrayed as agents of change, symbolizing a break with politics" (Norris 1997: 164). It is certain that women world leaders have made "extraordinary contributions" (Watson *et al.* 2005). In spite of this, Watson *et al.* (2005) pointed out that women have faced many challenges on account of their sex, suggesting that if a woman politician wants to be as successful as a male politician, she might have to make greater efforts and personal sacrifices than her male colleagues. This claim is supported by a number of other studies (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Thomas 1994; Burrell 1994; Darcy *et al.* 1994; Witt *et al.* 1994; van Zoonen 2000; Ye 2007).

In terms of media representations of female politicians in non-Anglo-American contexts, recently Ibroscheva and Stover (2012) employed qualitative textual analysis to examine the Bulgarian press coverage of their women parliamentarians, applying a historical lens to compare the coverage during the communist and post-communist periods. They pointed out that the discourse of gender equality becomes nothing more than "a token of ironic symbolism" that reflects the patriarchal values. The coverage was heavily focused on gendered stereotypical depictions of women politicians who were judged by the extent to which "they do or do not conform to sex-based assumptions about appropriate behavior" (Ross 2012:xxii). There is a similar study – Bucciferro's (2012) research of the ways in which women and women's issues were reported in the Chilean media, with a starting point of Chile's first female President, Michelle Bachelet, elected in early 2006. This study suggests that the media treated their first female President differently because of her gender; the coverage was often critical in terms of her personality and her "feminine" style of engaging in politics. According to Byerly (2012:8), these two studies

(Ibroscheva and Stover 2012; Bucciferro 2012) clearly demonstrate that media coverage still conforms to “a deeply engrained patriarchal ideology of women in both elective office and within the broader public sphere”.

In another study, Dan and Iorgoveanu (2013) examined the Romanian media coverage of the male and female candidates from Romania running for European office, during a four-week period, leading up to the 2009 election. They conducted verbal- and visual-framing analyses, concentrating on the visibility of the candidates, their viability (horse-race frame), and the balance between issue-related coverage (issue frame) and gendered coverage (trivialisation frame). They found a gendered bias in favour of male candidates: women dominated the tabloids whereas men were featured prominently in the broadsheets; the trivialisation and the issue frames appeared more often for females; and women were often regarded unable to deal with the issues they were linked to. These findings echo the claims shown in other research: female candidates are portrayed in a way that undermines their authority (Ross and Sreberny 2000; Cowley and Childs 2003; Wilson 2004).

In terms of female politicians’ own perceptions of their careers and the drawbacks of being in politics, Shirley Chisholm (1975) set forth a proposition that is explained by her essay’s title – *I’d Rather Be Black than Female*. In the face of both racial and sexual discriminations, she attained national prominence in 1968 when she was elected a member of the US House of Representatives from her home state of New York. Therefore, being the first black woman elected to Congress made her a phenomenon. There were nine other blacks in Congress at that time; there were ten other women. She was the first to overcome both barriers at once. Of the two barriers, she noted that being black was much less of a drawback than being female. Indeed, problems on account of gender do not only challenge those women world leaders, but female politicians or women public officials more generally. In the last few decades, many researchers have devoted considerable attention to understanding the barriers that women politicians come across in their political careers and the differences women have made in politics (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Thomas 1994; Burrell 1994; Darcy *et al.* 1994; Witt *et al.* 1994; Watson *et*

al. 2005; Ye 2007; Chaney *et al.* 2007).

Whatever the fact may be, in terms of media coverage, prejudice against women politicians seems to continue to prevail. Carroll and Schreiber (1997) examined the newspaper coverage of women politicians in the 103rd US Congress. Their main argument is straightforward: women in the 103rd Congress received biased attention from the press, which treated them less seriously than it treated their male counterparts. For instance, stories about the Congresswomen were relegated to the style or women's sections of newspapers instead of being placed in more news focused sections of the newspapers. The major findings of the study strongly supported this argument. For instance, women in the 103rd Congress did receive more attention from the press than ever before. However, another finding indicated that most of the coverage of women in Congress gave the readers a positive view, but most reporting was on issues related to women's health or on women in general. This suggests that women politicians may emphasise certain issues because of their gender, but it also indicates that once they are covered by the media, the type of coverage is often stereotyped. Furthermore, some accusations of bias and trivialisation were voiced against the media by women in politics and their supporters (Carroll and Schreiber 1997). The two researchers also noted that what was missing from general press coverage of women in Congress was any sense that Congresswomen were important "players" in making legislation other than on women's issues.

Kahn and Gordon's (1997) assessments of news coverage also supported arguments made by previous researchers. They found that women US Senate candidates complained publicly about press preference for style over substance, because journalists were less responsive to the issues and "trait agendas" of female candidates compared to their male counterparts. After the majority female Spanish Cabinet under the socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero was appointed, following the 2008 election, Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen (2012) applied a combination of qualitative thematic analysis and quantitative content analysis in their study to examine the construction of women politicians' images in the major newspapers across different European nations. Their

research explores “the values and ideal roles” the media assign to female politicians. The personal attributes of the female Ministers were given the most attention by the studied newspapers. For instance, Carme Chacón was the first woman appointed to be in charge of the Ministry of Defence, but she was described by the media as petite, young and attractive. Much of the coverage was focused on how exceptional this appointment was and her then heavily pregnant situation. Their study noted that “while certain discourses celebrate women ministers for their (symbolic) emancipatory value, others judge them by their physical appearance or their performance as wives, mothers, and mothers-to-be”. After a careful, multilayered analysis of print and broadcast news of the 2008 New Zealand general election, Ross and Comrie (2012) concluded that coverage of the Labour party leader Helen Clark and John Key of the National party demonstrates clear bias against the long-serving (older female) incumbent in favour of the (younger male) challenger for the top job, in terms of visibility in the media, and indicating the disadvantages of sex and age of Helen Clark.

To this point, the discussion has focused on news coverage of women politicians in general, and the ways in which they are represented mostly from a non-UK orientation. Here, it may be useful to discuss female politicians in the UK in order to gain a better understanding of British politics. In addition, it is helpful to review the positive discriminations in favour of women that political parties have undertaken regarding candidate selection for elections, and the role of women politicians in the UK governments.

Women Politicians in the UK

As Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000) have stated, the official adoption of a gender-mainstreaming approach since 1996 has increased equal political opportunities in the European Commission. Furthermore, their study has noted that the Commission has successfully introduced a gender perspective across a broad range of issue-areas. Squires (2005) analysed the implementation and consequences of electoral gender quotas in the UK. Her survey pointed out that the numbers of women in the Westminster Parliament,

the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly have increased since 1993, as a consequence of “party-based gender quotas for candidate selection” (Squires 2005). There were an equal number of men and women elected to the second Welsh Assembly in the May 2003 election (Chapman 2006), although Wales only had four women MPs in 1997. In a by-election on 29th June, 2006, Trish Law was elected and took the seat of Blaenau Gwent in the Welsh Assembly which had been held by her late husband Peter Law, before his death. After this by-election, women outnumbered men in the second Assembly, holding 31 seats out of 60. The May 2007 Assembly election produced 28 female Assembly Members and 23 of them had been re-elected. It was the second time that women held almost half of the seats in the Assembly and within the Welsh Government. Once again they achieved an almost equal level of political representation of men and women in the third National Assembly for Wales. Similarly, women are still a significant part of the fourth Assembly, because 25 women were elected into the 2011 Assembly.

It seems that due to their gender, women politicians practice politics in a different style from their male colleagues. For example, in a study by Childs (2002), widespread support was found for the claim that women representatives best articulate women’s concerns in Westminster. This is echoed in *Women Representatives Acting for Women: Sex and the Signing of Early Day Motions in the 1997 British Parliament* as the title stated (Childs and Withey 2004). This claim is also supported by Bird’s assertion – more women MPs “use parliamentary questions to address gender-related concerns” (2005:353). Childs (2004) also argued that many female Labour MPs believed that women politicians practice politics in a more “feminine” way. Similarly, Mackey’s study (2001) on Scottish councilors suggested that elected women politicians believed that they have a responsibility to act for women by raising issues related to women in policy debates. This is partly because women are believed to have introduced “a kinder, gentler politics”; one important aspect being “characterised by co-operation rather than conflict, collaboration rather than hierarchy, honesty rather than sleaze” (Norris 1996:93; also cited in Childs 2004). Meanwhile, Norris stated that British female party candidates were viewed as being “more caring, practical, approachable, honest, principled, and hardworking”

(1996:100). In addition, Mackey *et al.* (2002) revealed that female politicians have an enormous impact on shaping and defining the agenda of the new institutions in the devolved Assemblies and Parliament in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Their findings demonstrate that the access of women to the post-devolved governments benefits women in general, and it also enables women politicians to raise fundamental issues about the nature of democracy (see also Lovenduski 2005). All of these studies demonstrate that most British female politicians tend to act as women in a more “feminine and traditional” way, so it seems logical that the news coverage of women politicians is more likely to be about “soft” issues or issues related to women. This is more likely to be a problem in the news coverage. That is because if the media cover issue-areas more broadly while reporting on women politicians, the coverage may be more objective and comprehensive. Women politicians are in fact active on a wide range of other types of legislation, rather than solely on women’s issues or issues perceived more related to women – such as abortion, childcare, violence against women, women’s health and equal opportunity (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Ye 2007).

All of this is clear evidence that women have made a mark in the political sphere. A large body of research has shown that if there is a significant number of women in a political institution, the ability of female politicians to “determine the agenda [is] correspondingly more effective”, such as the Welsh context (Chaney 2002:5; see also Ward 2000; Chaney and Fevre 2002; Ye 2007). Therefore, women bring change to politics. Other researchers, such as Lovenduski (2005), also suggested that if women politicians had gradually become a normal part of political institutions, then gender-balanced governments would eventually become widely acknowledged and accepted. Therefore, this process of normalisation is associated with the phenomenon of an increase in the number⁹ of women involved in the political process. However, it is extremely difficult to assess how a specific political decision is made as a result of an individual’s contribution, as Lovenduski (2005) noted that many of the effects of increased female representation are embedded in the political process. In the concluding chapter of the book, *Feminizing*

⁹ Perhaps, in the first place, it is just a question of numbers, more women in the political institutions. But then, when a reasonable gender balance has been achieved, the question of the different types of politicians no longer matters so much or it will be gradually solved within the transformation process.

Politics, the writer argued that (2005:180):

... quite a lot of changes accompany women's growing presence in politics. Although no proof so far offered is scientifically conclusive, study after study finds differences in attitudes between women and men politicians, especially in attitudes to sex equality. If no direct, irrefutable, causal relationship between women's presence and the pursuit of women's interests has been discovered, a substantial amount of circumstantial evidence nevertheless connects women's presence to policies that address women's concerns.

In short, female politicians seem to practise politics in a noticeably different way from their male colleagues. Most significantly, the studies examined in this section suggest that women have made a difference in politics and that they have brought change to today's politics in the UK. However, as previously mentioned, the ways in which female politicians are represented in the news media in general are, to a certain degree, problematic. It seems that the situation in the UK is no exception.

Representations of Women Politicians in the UK Media

Unfortunately, few studies concentrate on images and representations of British women politicians in the media, even though much has been written on the subject of women and politics. Many studies have been completed on the position of women in the British Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, on their relationship with political parties, on their contributions and frustrations as women politicians (Childs 2002; Edwards and McAllister 2002; Ward 2002; Ross 2002c; Chaney *et al.* 2007), and most of these studies have focused on the UK as a whole.

Some researchers have paid attention to the news coverage of women politicians in the UK. Ross and Sreberny's study (2000) on media representation of British women MPs is a typical case. The main aims of their research were: to discuss whether the media marginalised women politicians; whether women in the House actually speak out; whether the media emphasised style over substance; whether there was sexism in the House; whether the media considered a female politician as a woman first; and whether there was a gendered news agenda (Ross and Sreberny 2000). Their interviews with 22

women MPs gave many unique insights into the interviewees' political careers and experiences with the media; a set of thematic analyses of interview transcripts supported the researchers' argument that "the media construct women politicians in ways that belittle their status" (2000:80).

However, it could be argued that this study gave too much attention to the negative side of media coverage and did not really investigate positive media coverage of women politicians. What is more, no systematic content analysis was applied in this study. By contrast, Carroll and Schreiber (1997) utilised a quantitative research approach to analyse newspaper coverage of women in the US Congress. For example, their research included a consideration of the frequency with which women in Congress were covered, when they received the attention, and where the articles were located (Carroll and Schreiber 1997); content analysis of a set of newspaper articles provided the readers with straightforward answers to those questions. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that this study was based primarily on a quantitative content analysis research method.

Most recently, the study of Ross *et al.* (2013) is based on monitored articles published in the four weeks leading up to the 2010 British general election across twelve newspapers, comprising a mix of dailies and weeklies, broadsheets and tabloids. This study which applied both quantitative and qualitative research methods suggested that press coverage of the 2010 UK general election was more male oriented than ever. The researchers found women candidates were much less likely to feature in news stories than their male counterparts; women were much more likely to be mentioned or quoted in feature articles, which focused explicitly on gender issues, "made interesting because of their sex and couture rather than their political abilities and experience" (Ross *et al.* 2013:3). In the face of continuing negative portrayals, it seems that women in politics and female politicians have fought for a better depiction of themselves in the male dominated media. Their endeavors have been somewhat seen in the formulation of some newspapers' changing attitudes towards reporting on women politicians. This is supported by studies on the experiences of women in the Welsh Assembly (Chapman 2001; Ye 2007).

Welsh Perspective

Little attention has been paid to systematically studying how the media in Wales represent Welsh women politicians. The existing body of literature is more about the relationship between Welsh women politicians and constitutional change (Chaney 2004; 2006; Chaney and Fevre 2002; Russell *et al.* 2002; Chaney *et al.* 2007), and their efforts to “shape a distinctive equality of opportunity agenda” (Chaney 2002) in post-devolution Wales. A systematic study of the ways in which Welsh women politicians are constructed in the media is needed.

In my Masters dissertation, I asked similar research questions to previous researchers (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000), but the area of investigation was more geographically focused and it was also a distinctive new context where gender equality is an emphasis (Chaney *et al.* 2007). The study suggested that the coverage of the Assembly and its AMs in the Welsh national press was not extensive, which reflects Thomas’s finding (2006:56) that “local government reporting and politics receive minimal focus” in the Welsh press. As Thomas (2006:53) pointed out, 10 per cent of the news articles he studied were devoted to politics and the majority of stories had “a marked human-interest angle” (cited in Delp 2008). The fact is that a large number of stories in my MA project were very brief. Consequently, the press coverage of the Assembly Members was fairly weak. The study also demonstrated that there were significant differences in the press coverage between male and female AMs. Furthermore, it found that the main coverage of the Assembly and Welsh politics was heavily focused on the four political party leaders, who all happened to be men in 2007¹⁰. However, excluding the four leaders, women AMs were still less visible than were their male counterparts in the Welsh national press. This indicated that press coverage of female AMs was especially lacking. What is more, the three examined newspapers (the *Western Mail*, *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday*) tended to focus on controversies irrespective of gender, and they tended to pay more attention to women AMs who could

¹⁰ This situation has changed, because Kirsty Williams was elected as the leader of the Welsh Lib Dems in December 2008. She became the first female to head a political party in the Assembly. In March 2012, Plaid Cymru AM Leanne Wood became the second female Assembly party leader.

present themselves in a “masculine” style. This also suggested that women in the Assembly could make their voices heard. If they receive less press coverage, it may not be a matter of sexual discrimination against women politicians, but about the way in which they present themselves and the issues that they focus on and the stand which they take towards certain issues.

Nevertheless, the most important aspect of my MA research project was that it provided only a preliminary analysis of the three Welsh national newspapers’ coverage of the female AMs. Further research would be able to establish whether the *Daily Post*, another Welsh national daily newspaper, is in the same position in terms of covering the Assembly and Welsh politics as the *Western Mail*; whether the female AMs receive more positive and significant coverage than their male colleagues in the Welsh local press as some AMs claimed during interviews; whether there are any differences between routine reporting and election coverage; whether the coverage of political party leaders has changed since Kirsty Williams was elected as the first female leader in the Assembly in December 2008; and a more detailed, focused and comprehensive analysis of the ways in which Assembly women are portrayed in the Welsh press is required to fill the gap in the examined research area. The present study of the Welsh Assembly may give us insights into a gender-balanced jurisdiction and may serve as a mirror or an example to other political institutions which have similar achievements regarding the level of female representation, as well as those that lack women representatives.

Conclusion

In summary, this literature review demonstrates the research field, important issues and some neglected areas around the research topic. It suggests that there is a need for a systematic study of the representations of women politicians in the Welsh press and a want of comparative study of the media representations of male and female politicians. The high level of women’s representation in the Welsh Assembly has many positive implications for Welsh politics and the media in Wales, ranging from creating a women-friendly institution to depicting women politicians in fairer perspectives.

This review has examined the history of feminism, important concepts and theories of feminism. To audit the history of women's movements and different feminist approaches is to understand better the changing images of women today. The most useful point of departure for this research is the liberal feminist approach which advocates reformism and supports change for the better, despite the fact that it does not completely contest the patriarchal operation system within society. Although liberal feminists acknowledge the positive changes in media portrayal of women during last few decades, they call for more equal gender depictions which need to be kept up with social changes. Most importantly, liberal feminism supports limited positive discrimination legislation. In the Welsh Assembly, for example, two parties taking affirmative action, over a short period, ensured more women were elected in the first three Assembly elections. Through this limited initial action, the election and participation of women AMs has been normalised in the institution over the long term. In this case, it seems that the political culture has shifted in terms of how media report women politicians, politicians' perception of the role of gender in the political process, and the attitudes of the public towards women politicians because women continue to be elected despite the withdrawal of the positive discrimination policies in favour of women.

Subsequently, Stuart Hall's notion of representation was introduced which is different from the concept of political representation defined by Lovenduski (2005). According to Lacey (1998), stereotypes which are used to represent different social groups to the world are a reflection of the dominant ideology in society. This is possibly a reason why stereotypical images and representations of women are common in contemporary Western media, even though media depictions of women have undergone some changes.

In addition, current studies on how women politicians are represented in the media are audited; the fact is that the existing research does show a bias towards male politicians in the media across the world. This makes this research project a unique case study of a gender-balanced political institution. A large number of women in the Assembly since its creation have gradually effected the Welsh media's perception of women politicians in general and have changed the ways in which women AMs were depicted in the Welsh

media. A significant number of researchers and scholars (such as Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Mackey 2001; Mackey *et al.* 2002; Childs 2002; 2004; Childs and Withey 2004; Bird 2005; Lovenduski 2005; Ye 2007) suggest that female politicians are often viewed as practising politics in a more “feminine and traditional” way, on the basis of gendered experiences. Furthermore, it seems that female politicians fit with previous descriptions of women’s representations in the media in general; they are covered due to their gender in the first place, not on the basis of their profession. For instance, sexist and negative coverage of female politicians is not uncommon in the contemporary media, in spite of the fact that there have been somewhat positive changes recorded in studies in recent years.

In order to understand both membership and the media portrayal of British women politicians better, this chapter has also examined the role of female politicians in the UK. Surprisingly, there is not much literature on images and representations of women politicians in the UK national media. My MA research project was merely a preliminary analysis of how a limited number of Welsh national newspapers covered female AMs during one election period. Systematic studies on how the Welsh newspapers, especially the local press, represent Welsh women politicians are much needed but evidently lacking. This suggests that a comprehensive study of images and representations of female politicians in Wales, Assembly women in particular, is urgently needed in order to make an important contribution to the existing academic literature on women, politics and the media.

It will become clearer in the following result chapters that the gender-balanced Assembly has positive effects on both policy-making in Wales and the Welsh media’s perceptions of female politicians. The Welsh model is the one that is suitable to be extended to other political and social jurisdictions, and it could greatly benefit the current male-dominated industries of Britain, China and elsewhere. Before moving on, it is worth mentioning that the following Methodology Chapter describes in great detail research methods underpinning this project.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

As noted in the previous chapters, this study focuses on the representations of women AMs in the Welsh press, and it discusses how a wide range of Welsh newspapers portray the Assembly and its AMs, especially the female Members. The main research questions are listed below:

- (1) How do the media cover the Assembly and its AMs in general?
- (2) Does the Welsh press pay similar attention to female AMs as males when the general gender parity has been achieved in the Assembly?
- (3) How are Assembly women portrayed in the Welsh press?
- (4) What are the differences in the press coverage of the AMs in terms of gender?
- (5) What are the differences in the press coverage of the male and female AMs in terms of the national press compared to the local press?
- (6) What are the differences between routine and election coverage of the Assembly and its AMs in the Welsh press?

In order to answer these raised questions, both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been applied to this research project, because each of them has strengths in its own right. The three main methods used are content and discourse analyses of both newspaper texts and the images which were displayed alongside the texts, and interviewing. In this study, content analysis is considered as a quantitative research method as discussions demonstrate below. In short, to triangulate quantitative and qualitative research methods is to combat some of the methods' limitations. This research associates with liberal feminism because of its support for affirmative action, but the methods applied to analyse the newspaper texts and images do not necessarily take a liberal feminist stand.

Because of a structured approach to data collection, quantitative research often provides

hard data that sometimes needs to be tested using a qualitative research strategy (Bryman 2001). Therefore, to measure the more subtle portrayal of gender-stereotyping of Assembly women, this study has adopted discourse analysis and in-depth interviewing combined with content analysis. Silverman argued that “the quality of qualitative research cannot be determined by following prescribed formulas. Rather its quality lies in the power of its language to display a picture of the world in which we discover something about ourselves and our common humanity” (1997:19).

Consequently, two major sections of this chapter explain the need for content and discourse analyses of the texts and images in the selected Welsh newspapers, whereas the last section provides extensive details about the method of semi-structured one-to-one in-depth interviewing. This chapter concludes with in-depth interviews with 28 Assembly Members from the current National Assembly for Wales and one interview with the Caerphilly Labour AM, Jeff Cuthbert’s personal assistant, Katie O’Brien.

Before discussing the three major research methods applied, the following section focuses on the studied Welsh newspapers in more detail in order to provide an overview of the examined press, and to provide a better understanding of the nature and ownership of each newspaper. This provides the research project with a context by which to assess how the Assembly activities and AMs are depicted in each type of press. This section also explains a data collecting process involving 3065 news items from various libraries.

12 Welsh English-language Newspapers and the Research Sample

The *Western Mail* is considered to be a national newspaper of Wales. In fact, its circulation is remarkably small in North Wales where the *Daily Post*, another widely acknowledged Welsh national daily newspaper, is more widely read. The circulation of the *Western Mail* is primarily concentrated in South Wales (Williams 1997; Barlow 2005). *Wales on Sunday* which is a weekly tabloid newspaper¹¹ is also sold nationwide

¹¹ Wales on Sunday (2008) “British Newspapers Online” [WWW]
<URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/wales-on-sunday/>> [Accessed 13th November, 2008]

throughout Wales (Wales on Sunday 13th November, 2008). It is worth noting that the *Western Mail* shifted from broadsheet to tabloid format in 2004 (Thomas 2006).

Another important newspaper in Wales is the *South Wales Echo*, an evening newspaper, which covers Cardiff and the South Wales valleys¹² (Thomas 2006; BBC News 13th November, 2008). In this study, the *South Wales Echo* is considered to be a national newspaper, because it is similar to the *Western Mail* in several aspects. First, both newspapers are owned by the same company. Second, they share the same website, WalesOnline.co.uk, and many journalists, which suggest that their content and presentation may be similar. Third, they cover similar areas. As noted earlier, even though the *Western Mail* branded itself as a national newspaper, its main circulation is in South Wales.

All four of these newspapers are owned by Trinity Mirror (Thomas 2006), an extremely important “Welsh division of British newspaper publishing giants”¹³ (British Newspapers Online 13th November, 2008). In Wales, it owns 27 newspapers, including the four Welsh national newspapers, accounting for 42 per cent of its total circulation (Barlow *et al.* 2005; Thomas 2006; Delp 2008). This might probably fit in with Street’s observation (2001) that the ownership of the printing publications has gradually become “centralised” or clustered. Briefly, Delp summarised other researchers’ claims and findings (2008:15):

... the decline in overall readership of the regional press is overshadowed by the fact that the regional titles in the United Kingdom are highly lucrative, highly trusted and in the hands of a few major publishing chains.

Trinity Mirror has been split into Media Wales for South Wales and Trinity Mirror for North Wales. Williams and Franklin noted that the reduction rate of editorial and

¹² BBC News (2007) “Editor to quit South Wales Echo” [WWW] <URL: http://news.bbc.co.uk/nolpda/ifs_news/hi/newsid_7050000/7050961.stm> [Accessed 13th November, 2008]

¹³ a) British Newspapers Online (2008) “All about the United Kingdom’s national, regional and local press” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/>> [Accessed 13th November, 2008]

b) Average circulation for the first half of 2010, the *South Wales Echo* was 35,389; the *Daily Post* was 32,414; the *Western Mail* was 29,567. (BBC News 28th August, 2010)

production staff at Media Wales had reached by 31 per cent in 2005 since 1995, but Western Mail and Echo Ltd. (part of Media Wales) had a 38.21 per cent profit margin in the same year and became “the 7th most profitable company of any kind in the principality” (2005:29; see also Delp 2008). Therefore, Williams and Franklin argued, this was “a clear indicator of how seriously it takes the news product it offers the public” (2005:33; cited in Delp 2008:19). It is highly likely that ownership and staffing, to a large extent, have affected the quality of the end product of any newspaper.

In contrast to the above-mentioned four Welsh national newspapers, there are a variety of other community newspapers “serving a more geographically identifiable and narrower regional community” (Thomas 2006:50) in Wales, such as the *South Wales Argus*, *South Wales Evening Post*, *Evening Leader*, *Western Telegraph*, *Cambrian News*, *North Wales Pioneer*, *Penarth Times* and *Llanelli Star*. As Jackson has pointed out, the local press is “predominantly local in its content; its front page news may suggest a degree of non-localness that is not corroborated elsewhere in the newspaper” (1971:272). Nevertheless, it is useful to discuss the locations and ownership of these community newspapers in Wales.

First of all, the *South Wales Evening Post* is taken into consideration in that it overtook the dominant Welsh evening newspaper, the *South Wales Echo*, and became the largest selling evening newspaper¹⁴ (*South Wales Evening Post* 13th November, 2008) in Wales in March 2006. The *Evening Post* is a tabloid newspaper based in Swansea, South West Wales (Thomas 2006). It is published by South West Wales Publications, part of the Northcliffe Media group. It is the company’s main title for the region. Second, the *South Wales Argus*, which is another tabloid evening newspaper published in Newport (Thomas 2006), is serving the county of Gwent and some of the surrounding districts in South East Wales. It is currently owned by Newsquest, a large and important publisher of regional and local newspapers in the UK. Third, in North Wales, the *Evening Leader* is an evening

¹⁴ a) *South Wales Evening Post* (2008) “British Newspapers Online” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/south-wales-evening-post/>> [Accessed 13th November, 2008]

b) Average circulation for the first half of 2010, the *South Wales Evening Post* was 42,619; the *South Wales Argus* was 24,679; the *Evening Leader* was 18,443. (BBC News 28th August, 2010)

tabloid newspaper for the North Welsh city of Wrexham (Thomas 2006). It has close relations with two other evening newspapers in the area: the *Chester Evening Leader* and *Flintshire Evening Leader*¹⁵ (Evening Leader 13th November, 2008). All three titles are owned by North Wales Newspapers Ltd. in North East Wales. The three examined newspapers, the *South Wales Argus*, *South Wales Evening Post* and *Evening Leader*, are evening newspapers. All of them are published in a tabloid format.

The fourth newspaper, the *Western Telegraph*, reports news in Pembrokeshire and its surrounding areas in West Wales; it is the largest weekly tabloid newspaper in Wales. The weekly bills itself as “the newspaper that fights for Pembrokeshire”¹⁶, which suggests that this weekly may be a campaigning newspaper for its local patch (*Western Telegraph* 13th November, 2008). It is published on Wednesdays and owned by Newsquest Media Group and published as a member of the West Wales Publications family¹⁷ (*Western Telegraph* 13th November, 2008). The *Cambrian News* is another weekly newspaper based in Aberystwyth for mid-Wales and North Wales, but published in several locations including Bala, Criccieth, Dolgellau, Machynlleth, Porthmadog, Pwllheli and Tywyn¹⁸ (*Cambrian News* 13th November, 2008). It is produced on Thursdays and published by the Tindle Newspaper Group. Sixth, the *Penarth Times* is another local newspaper appearing on Thursdays. It is a weekly tabloid newspaper owned by the Newsquest Media Group for Penarth and the Vale of Glamorgan area¹⁹ (*Penarth Times* 13th November, 2008). Another weekly tabloid newspaper is the *North Wales Pioneer*, published on Wednesdays in Colwyn Bay and Llandudno area, North Wales. It is owned by an independent family-owned company, North Wales Newspapers Ltd. which has a history of close to

¹⁵ Wrexham Evening Leader (2008) “British Newspapers Online” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/wrexham-evening-leader/>> and Evening Leader (2008) “Wrexham Evening Leader” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.eveningleader.co.uk/>> [Accessed 13th November, 2008]

¹⁶ Western Telegraph (2008) “British Newspapers Online” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/western-telegraph/>> [Accessed 13th November, 2008]

¹⁷ Western Telegraph (2008) “Subscribe” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.westerntelegraph.co.uk/>> [Accessed November 2008]

¹⁸ Cambrian News (2008) “British Newspapers Online” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/cambrian-news/>> [Accessed 13th November, 2008]

¹⁹ Penarth Times (2008) “Subscribe” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.penarthtimes.co.uk/subscribe/>> [Accessed November 2008]

two centuries, based in Mold near Wrexham²⁰ (*North Wales Pioneer* 13th November, 2008). Finally, the *Llanelli Star* is a Thursday tabloid newspaper, sold in Llanelli and the county of Carmarthenshire. It shares a website with the *South Wales Evening Post*. It is also owned by Swansea-based South West Wales Media Ltd.²¹ (*Llanelli Star* 15th July, 2011). Again, all these five weeklies are produced in a tabloid format.

Thomas *et al.* (2004a; 2004b) have noted a difference between the Welsh dailies and weeklies in terms of their reporting on the 2003 Welsh Assembly election and the 2004 local government election. The daily press lacked “overall prominence but was quite extensive, nonpartisan and concentrated on constituency profiles and the general campaign process” (Thomas 2006:54), while the weeklies struggled to gain much prominence even on the inside pages, let alone front pages.

After a careful examination of all the eight above-mentioned local newspapers, it is obvious that they can all be described as “tabloid” which can have a narrower implied meaning – “sensationalist content” (Hallin 2000). As Sparks stated, tabloid journalism involves “a shift in the priorities ... away from news and information toward an emphasis on entertainment” (2000:11). Moreover, a number of journalistic commentators are “condemnatory of the tabloid and of tabloidization as a threat to democracy and civilization” (Sparks 2000:2). Franklin *et al.* (2005:259) also pointed out that with regard to tabloid journalism, the news media become part of the entertainment industry rather than being a forum for informed debate about important issues of public concerns; stories to interest the public instead of stories in the public interest (see also Franklin 1997:4). Therefore, the journalistic output of the involved newspapers might not be serious in tone or content; the newspapers might devote considerable attention to sports, scandals and celebrities, and relatively little to economics, social problems and politics (Sparks 2000). Furthermore, Savigny noted that one of the key functions of the media is to “remain responsive and accountable to their shareholders”, and this indicates that maximum profit

²⁰ North Wales Pioneer (2008) “North Wales Newspapers Ltd.” [WWW]
<URL: <http://www.northwalespioneer.co.uk/>> [Accessed November 2008]

²¹ Llanelli Star (2011) “British Newspapers Online” [WWW]
<URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/llanelli-star/>> [Accessed 15th July, 2011]

is the primary motivation which is “achieved by entertaining and not necessarily informing the public” (2004:230).

What is more, according to Franklin and Murphy, local newspapers are often understood as “insignificant, harmless distractions, reporting little more than uncritical celebrations of local culture in tandem with eulogies of local personalities – a curious if not perverse forum for collective introspection” (1991:2). However, political news in particular is a vital component in the local press as well as in the more general setting of the wider press in the UK, as they noted (Franklin and Murphy 1991:6):

Local newspapers, because of their monopoly, are highly influential in defining news for their readers and are likely to be the single most important source of news, especially political news, within their area.

As Franklin and Richardson (2002:35) stated, “local journalists’ commitments to reporting the election remain strong”, in spite of the fact that certain aspects of election coverage in local press have been declined. Jackson also pointed out that the local press normally attaches great importance to its community leaders’ opinion, as they “exercise a decisive influence on local newspaper content and its presentation” (1971:43). Therefore, Assembly Members might have a somewhat greater influence on the local press in their constituencies than on those national newspapers, such as the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post*. Cushion and Morgan’s findings (2003) suggested that Assembly Members rated their local newspapers as the most significant medium to be counted in terms of covering politics, because they provide columns for local politicians (see also Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). Not surprisingly, Harrison (2006:178) also indicated that “local authorities are becoming more strategic, more focused, more professional in the development of their relations with the local media” (cited in Delp 2008:17). This probably gives an insight into what impact local authorities and politicians might have on the regional news reporting and local newspapers. However, whether or not the local newspapers in practice really pay a great amount of attention to Welsh politics and elections, it is a matter of their editorial choices.

As mentioned above, this research has looked in-depth at a wide range of Welsh national and local newspapers including four national newspapers: the *Western Mail*, *Daily Post*, *Wales on Sunday*, *South Wales Echo* and eight local newspapers: the *South Wales Argus*, *South Wales Evening Post*, *Evening Leader*, *Western Telegraph*, *Llanelli Star*, *Cambrian News*, *North Wales Pioneer* and *Penarth Times*. Six of them are daily and evening newspapers while the other six are weeklies. Due to the design of this study, such as the examinations of newspaper layout, size and position of news articles' text, and the nature of the images printed alongside these articles, the actual copies of the newspapers were needed to be examined from cover to cover. Therefore, with regard to the data collecting process, there have been a few research trips²² involved, as listed below:

- I. (March – May 2009) Newspaper article collecting: Bute Library and Cardiff Central Library
- II. (June 2009) Two research trips:
 - (1) British Newspaper Library in London: One week – Up-to-date six titles of concerned Welsh local newspapers were not found here.
 - (2) The Welsh National Library in Aberystwyth: Three days

²² Bute Library at Cardiff University retains a number of newspaper titles for a period of one year, and from within its newspaper collection, three titles were needed for my project, the *Western Mail*, *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday*. Therefore, all the articles for the routine coverage period from the mentioned three newspapers were photographed from Bute Library. Similarly, Cardiff Central Library has a collection of newspaper titles, especially the Welsh newspapers. However, it only keeps these newspapers for a period of six months. For example, they only had up-to-date versions of the *Daily Post*, *Cambrian News* and *Western Telegraph*, but they did not have their issues of the 2007 Assembly election period. Because Cardiff Central Library did not have the majority of the 2007 Welsh newspaper issues needed for this research, I decided to travel to the British Newspaper Library at Colindale in London. Unfortunately, they did not have the up-to-date versions of six titles that I needed, namely the *South Wales Argus*, *South Wales Evening Post*, *Western Telegraph*, *Cambrian News*, *Penarth Times* and *North Wales Pioneer*. So, it left me with no choice but to undertake a trip to the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth. Due to copy right issues, I was advised by a librarian at the Welsh National Library to contact editors who were in charge of those newspapers from which I wanted to make copies. Therefore, I had to return to Cardiff, send out several emails to the editors, and await their replies. Before returning to Aberystwyth, I paid several visits to Newport Central Library and Swansea Central Library in October 2009, because the *South Wales Argus* is based in Newport and the *South Wales Evening Post* is a Swansea-based newspaper, and both cities are close to my residence in Cardiff. Both libraries did keep on file their most important local newspapers. Newport Central Library even had the 2007 election period issues of the *South Wales Argus* in hard copies, while Swansea Central Library kept the issues of the *South Wales Evening Post* in microfilm as the British Newspaper Library does. In short, this made my last trip to the Welsh National Library in November 2009 much briefer and more efficient. Because I provided the editors' letters that the library required, the second trip to Aberystwyth was far more efficient than was the first visit. Finally, the newspaper article collecting process was completed after a year's hard work.

III. (October 2009) Newport Central Library and Swansea Central Library

IV. (November 2009) Travelled to Aberystwyth again and spent a week at the Welsh National Library. At last, the newspaper article collecting process was completed.

The total number of the involved newspaper copies is roughly 1000, and 3065 news items were collected altogether. Except for the *Evening Leader* which publishes five issues a week, the other five daily and evening newspapers produce six issues a week each. Six months' coverage is examined in this research. If we consider there are four weeks in a month, then there are approximately 840 daily and evening issues. As for weekly newspapers, each publishes about four issues a month. In a period of six months, six weeklies produced about 144 issues. By adding up the two final figures, approximately 984 copies of newspapers were looked through in total in this research project. The total number in fact is greater than 984, since there were more than four weeks in most of the six selected months.

In this project, analysis is based on a data set consisting of any news item in the above-mentioned 12 newspapers that have mentioned any AM who was from the first (1999), second (2003), and third (2007) Welsh Assemblies, in the months between March and May 2007 and the period between December 2008 and February 2009. Analysis is also drawn from all images displayed alongside these articles. The first research period was chosen, as the third Welsh Assembly election was on the 3rd of May 2007. The second three-month period was selected not only because the research would carry out a comparative study of election coverage versus routine coverage, but also because Jenny Randerson and Kirsty Williams had been running for leadership of the Welsh Liberal Democrats since September 2008. Kirsty Williams was elected leader of the Welsh Lib Dems on 8th December, 2008. My MA research suggests that the main coverage of 2007 election was heavily focused on the four political party leaders in the Assembly. What is more, the former Labour leader, then First Minister Rhodri Morgan, received far more significant coverage than the other three Opposition party leaders, and the then three Opposition party leaders received similar press attention. Leaders are usually considered as political parties' representatives or spokespeople for the ideas their parties have,

because sometimes they are used to express views about their party's policies and the directions that their policies are taking. In the Assembly, until the election of Kirsty Williams as the Lib Dem leader, all leaders of political parties were men. The situation has changed; the leader of the Welsh Lib Dems is a woman, so this study also attempts to examine whether the coverage of the party leaders²³ has changed as a consequence.

Content Analysis of the Newspaper Texts and Images

In terms of research methods, there are many definitions of content analysis. As mentioned earlier, the term content analysis in this study is defined from its quantitative perspective (see Neuendorf 2002), so it is considered as a quantitative research method. Bryman referred to content analysis as an approach “to the analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner” (2001:180). According to Wimmer and Dominick, Kerlinger's definition is fairly typical: “Content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables” (cited in Wimmer and Dominick 2006:152; Riffe *et al.* 1998:19). Based on previous definitions, Riffe *et al.* reached a more complete description of content analysis (1998:20):

Quantitative content analysis is the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, in order to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption.

It is apparent that this definition gives a more detailed explanation of content analysis, and it focuses more on its utility and its process.

The method of content analysis was chosen in this project, because it can provide straightforward answers to the questions about frequency. For instance, how frequently

²³ Although Leanne Wood is the current Plaid Cymru leader in the Assembly, she was not elected until 12th March, 2012. Therefore, Ms. Wood was not the leader during the two periods studied.

AMs were reported in terms of gender by either the Welsh national newspapers or the locals; how many times male/female AMs were mentioned or as the main focus of the articles; how often the photos of male AMs were published compared to those of female AMs and so on. The advantages of content analysis are numerous. For instance, as Bryman (2001) noted, it is a transparent research method; it allows a certain amount of longitudinal analysis with relative ease; it is an unobtrusive, “uncreative” measurement technique (see also Riffe *et al.* 1998) which is easily replicable. It can be applied to a wide range of different kinds of unstructured information and it enables researchers to generate data on social groups that are difficult to gain access to (Riffe *et al.* 1998; Bryman 2001). Certainly, like other research techniques, this research method also has certain limitations. As Wimmer and Dominick (2006; 154) observed, “the findings of a particular content analysis are limited to the framework of categories and the definitions used in that analysis.” In addition, it is a time-consuming process. Bryman (2001) suggested that it is difficult to ascertain the answers to “why” questions through content analysis. As a result, in this research project, discourse analysis was adopted in order to answer the “why” question. Bryman (2001) also noted that particular questions are likely to arise when the aim is to impute latent rather than manifest content, because sometimes the potential for an invalid conjecture being made is magnified. Meanwhile, Bryman (2001) pointed out that sometimes content analysis is accused of being atheoretical, because it can easily be focused on what is measurable rather than what is theoretically significant or important. Content analysis for this study is based on the collected 3065 news items, their accompanying images and newspaper layout.

Analysis of the articles’ position in the newspapers and analysis of images and newspaper layout have been put forward. For instance, the location of newspaper articles and images of Assembly women indicates the seriousness with which the Welsh press considers this group and this sends a message to the reader: if women AMs were covered frequently and often on the front pages, this might suggest that women were “significant and important political players” (Carroll and Schreiber 1997); if they received little coverage and were often relegated to the style section, this might suggest that the presence of women in the Assembly was unimportant and their contributions were regarded to be marginal by the

press.

It is true that written texts are the significant part of the print media, especially newspapers. However, as Kress and van Leeuwen (1998) suggested, in the print media the visual context fulfills a “prosodic” part of highlighting significant points and strengthening structural connections. At the same time, they noted that “[newspaper] layout simultaneously involves three signifying systems” – information value, salience and framing – “all serving to structure the text, to bring the various elements of the page (e.g. photographs, headlines, blocks of text) together into a coherent and meaningful whole”(1998:188). Therefore, the analysis of images and newspaper layout is important to this study in order to analyse the attention that the Welsh press has paid to the Welsh Assembly and its individual AMs.

According to Lister and Wells (2001), images are considered as part of the cycle of production, circulation and consumption through which their meanings are accumulated and transformed. Images are understood as representations – outcomes of processes of attaching ideas to and giving meaning to our experience of the world – understanding images is a “language-like activity” as images are part of conventional systems which convey meaning “within a sign using community” (Lister and Wells 2001). As mentioned in the Literature Review Chapter, Stuart Hall (1997) considered images an element of “language”, which is part of the basis of media discourse (see discussion of “discourse” concept in the following section).

Lister and Wells pointed out that everyday life in the 21st century has become a “visual culture” as a result of an “explosion of imaging and visualizing technologies (digitization, satellite imaging, new forms of medical imaging, virtual reality, etc.)” (2001:62) and of an acceleration and accumulation of a longer history involving “photography, film, television and video”. They suggested that the study of visual images is only a part of the study of visual culture which should include the “centrality of vision” in daily life and the “production of meaning”. As Rogoff stated (1998:16):

In the arena of visual culture the scrap of an image connects with a sequence of film and with the corner of a billboard or the window display of a shop we have passed by, to produce a new narrative formed out of both our experienced journey and our unconscious. Images do not stay within discrete disciplinary fields such as “documentary film” or “Renaissance painting”, since neither the eye nor the psyche operates alone or recognizes such divisions (also cited in Lister and Wells 2001:63).

As discussed above, this research project has mainly taken account of the newspaper layout and the photographs and images displayed alongside the news articles that appear in the aforementioned Welsh newspapers during the two selected periods. In terms of content analysis of the images, Bell pointed out that it is (2001:14):

... a systematic, observational method used for testing hypotheses about the ways in which the media represent people, events, situations, and so on. It allows quantification of samples of observable content classified into distinct categories. It does not analyse individual images or individual ‘visual texts’... Instead, it allows description of fields of visual representation by describing the constituents of one or more defined areas of representation, periods or types of images.

In practice, in order to do a comparative study of gender, this study examined how many images or photographs of the AMs were used in the Welsh press in terms of gender and leadership; where the images were located in the newspapers; what the sizes of the images were; how often they made front page; what backgrounds the images were against; how the camera lenses were focused on the AMs; where the AMs were photographed, and so on.

One of the important research aims is to examine the ways in which the AMs, especially the female AMs, were portrayed in the eight Welsh local newspapers during the two periods studied. The four Welsh national newspapers are taken into consideration, because a comparative analysis of the ways in which the national and local press reports on female AMs is of great importance to this research project. First, the Welsh national and local newspapers interest different audiences, so their content is designed accordingly. The regional and local newspapers are interested in their local events rather than the national news. Second, AMs consider their local newspapers as an essential means to

convey their opinions to the local people and to demonstrate the work they have done. According to some female AMs, their local newspapers gave them more positive coverage than the national ones (Ye 2007), so to analyse the actual content is to find the evidence whether those AMs' claim has really been the case. Therefore, questions have been raised, such as how much the AMs were covered in the national press as a whole; how much the AMs were covered in the local press as a whole. For comparison, the research also analysed how many mentions male and female AMs received; when they received the attention; how many images or photographs of male and female AMs were used separately in the press; where the articles were located, how often they made the front page, and so on. These questions are directly addressed in the coding sheet designed for this research (see **Appendix I**).

In June 2010, a total of 50 news articles were selected from the six weekly newspapers and the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post* to form a pilot study. Between December 2009 and July 2010, I revised the coding sheet to try to complete a code book, categorise and undertake a basic analysis of the 3065 collected news items. Instead of printing out a coding sheet for each news story, the collected news items were in hard copy and were numbered. Some parts of the articles were highlighted, such as the name(s) of the AM(s), subject matter of the story. SPSS was the main software used to do the coding; tables and numbers were generated by SPSS automatically according to the selected variables.

Furthermore, the concept of intercoder reliability is important to content analysis (Holsti 1969). As mentioned above, content analysis needs to be systematic and objective (Wimmer and Dominick 2006), so its measures and procedures have to be reliable. According to Holsti (1969), intercoder reliability can be calculated by the formula: $\text{Reliability} = 2M/(N1+N2)$, where M is the coding number agreed by two coders, and N1 and N2 are the total sample that both coders have coded. To ensure reliability, at an early stage of the coding process, a second coder helped me to double check approximately 10 per cent of all news items: 320 articles altogether from the 12 examined newspapers. My second coder, Cheng Yingzhe, has done a great deal of social research work himself. All these 320 stories were done in printed coding sheets in order to calculate the intercoder

reliability rates. It can be seen from the coding sheet (**Appendix I**), 44 variables were created. The Holsti's formula was employed to derive the intercoder reliability percentage values for the data obtained in this study: $\text{Reliability} = 2M/(320+320)$. Table 3.1 shows that the intercoder reliability was high, as evidenced by the percentages against each variable listed below.

Table 3.1 Intercoder Reliability

Variable No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Percentage	100	100	100	100	98.4	100	99.1	100	100	100	100
Variable No.	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Percentage	96.3	100	99.4	100	100	100	100	100	99.7	100	97.2
Variable No.	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33
Percentage	93.4	100	92.3	96.9	96.3	99.1	100	100	100	96.9	96.9
Variable No.	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44
Percentage	100	100	100	100	97.5	97.8	100	100	99.7	100	99.1

Discourse Analysis of the Newspaper Texts and Images

As stated previously, quantitative content analysis has its limitations. However, some disadvantages to content analysis can be overcome by qualitative discourse analysis, because quantitative analysis can often be complemented by more intensive and detailed qualitative discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003). It is worth noting that the concept of discourse analysis in this study is understood as a general term for a number of approaches to analyse written, vocal and visual language. Discourse analysis provides rich data to answer the “why” questions in a more in-depth way than content analysis, which to a certain extent simply presents numbers. Therefore, the constellation of different research methods minimises the problems of the shortcomings of each, and the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative research methods has its merits.

Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) pointed out that discourse includes not only “written and spoken language” but also “visual images”. Kelsey (2010) noted that definitions of “discourse” sometimes vary dramatically from one scholarly approach to another, while in this research it is defined by Stuart Hall, who stated (1997:6):

Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or *formation*) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society.

Discourse analysis aims to “map out the processes in which we struggle about the way in which the meaning of signs is to be fixed, and the processes by which some fixations of meaning become so conventionalized that we think of them as natural” (Phillips and Jorgensen 2002:25). From this point of view, this method possesses certain weaknesses. As Bryman (2001) pointed out, discourse analysis research is often problematic to generalise findings; it is usually difficult to replicate; sometimes, it is lacking transparency; and it is subjective (see also Widdowson 1995; 1996; 1998; Blommaert 2005). However, as Fairclough (2003) suggested, there is no such thing as an objective research method for analysing media discourse, because one’s ability to know “what is there” in the discourse is inevitably “limited and partial”. Despite all these disadvantages, in this research, discourse analysis of both newspaper texts and images on male and female AMs in the mentioned newspapers has been carried out.

This study does not apply concrete and comprehensive tools of discourse analysis. In terms of newspaper texts, this research draws on Fairclough’s (1992; 1995a; 1995b; 1998; 2003) critical discourse approach. The core of Fairclough’s approach (1992; 1995a; 1995b) has three layers (Garrett and Bell 1998; Phillips and Jorgensen 2002):

- (1) Analysis of texts (spoken, written, or involving a combination of semiotic modalities, e.g. televisual texts);
- (2) Analysis of discourse practices of text production, distribution and consumption;
- (3) Analysis of social and cultural practices which frame discourse practices and texts (Fairclough 1998:144).

This study concentrates mainly on the first layer, analysing textual/linguistic features in texts, and relating them back to the construction of femininity and gender bias. According to van Dijk, critical discourse analysis intends to figure out “what

structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role” in different “modes” of reproduction; the reproduction process involves “discourse – power relations as the more or less direct or overt support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance” (2003:300). He equates “dominance” with “the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality”(2003:300). However, this study does not conduct ideology analysis in terms of power relations; as mentioned above, it mainly focuses on analysing texts.

With regard to qualitative research methods of the images, the very concept of semiotics needs to be clarified. According to Tomaselli, semiotics is (1996:29)

... a study of how meaning occurs in language, pictures, performance, and other forms of expression. The method incorporates not only how things come to mean, but how prevailing meanings are the outcomes of encounters between individuals, groups and classes and their respective cosmologies and conditions of existence.

Visual semiotic analysis is a qualitative approach, and it normally focuses on individual “visual texts”, such as paragraphs, framed images, pages and news photographs (Bell 2001). When it comes to discourse analysis of the images, this study mainly applies Roland Barthes’s approach to the visual – Barthian visual semiotics (1973; 1977; van Leeuwen 2001). Barthian approach primarily asks two fundamental questions (van Leeuwen 2001:92):

- (1) Representation – what do images represent and how?
- (2) The “hidden meanings” of images – what ideas and values do the people, places and things represented in images stand for?

As van Leeuwen (2001:94) put it, the core concept of Barthian visual semiotics lies in the two layers of meaning – denotation, of “what, or who, is being depicted?” and connotation, of “what ideas and values are expressed through what is represented, and

through the way in which it is represented?” Tomaselli (1996) argued that in photography, the denoted meaning is conveyed merely through “the mechanical action of image reproduction”, for instance, a tree is a tree, whereas connotation is the result of “human intervention” – camera, angle, focus, colour, filters, lighting, depth-of-field, special effects, exposure and tonal range (Barthes 1977; Peters 1977; Tomaselli 1996) and the ways of perceiving these technologically created signs (Tomaselli 1996). Nonetheless, van Leeuwen also noted (2001:92):

Barthian visual semiotics studies only the image itself, and treats cultural meanings as a given currency which is shared by everyone who is at all acculturated to contemporary popular culture, and which can then be activated by the style and content of the image.

When it came into operation, this research examined the background and camera angle of some photos of AMs, and studied the settings of AMs’ offices which appeared in the photos of women AMs, and the subject matter’s facial expression, gesture and body posture.

This study asks similar research questions²⁴ to those posed by previous researchers, such as Norris (1997), Carroll and Schreiber (1997) and Ross and Sreberny (2000), but the research area is more geographically focused and the examined political institution is a new context where gender equality is given special importance. In terms of the question of how women AMs were portrayed, this study analysed whether the Welsh national or local press marginalised or trivialised women AMs even when gender equality was achieved in the Assembly and within the Assembly Government; whether women AMs spoke in the Assembly debating Chamber and in the media; whether they were seen to do so; whether there was sexism in the press coverage; and whether there was a gendered news agenda in the local press. For a comparison, some news articles on male AMs have also been examined in order to distinguish the different press treatment that men and women AMs received on a daily basis and during the election period and during the routine coverage period.

²⁴ See detailed discussions of these questions in the following chapters.

Two major research methods have been discussed in detail above. The following section lays out another important research method applied in this study, which is semi-structured one-to-one interviewing. This research considered in-depth interviews as an important way to investigate AMs' viewpoints with regard to their personal experiences with the media. Some interview questions were generated by the press coverage of particular AMs, so they depended on an individual AM's own background and political experiences. Therefore, I decided to carry out the interviews after the analysis of the newspaper coverage.

In-depth Interviews

There are a number of different theoretical perspectives on in-depth interviewing. According to Bryman (2001), in a semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of questions or specific topics to be covered, but the interviewee has a great deal of freedom in how to reply. Bryman also stated that "the kind of interview with which qualitative research is associated allows many of the goals of feminist research to be realized" (2001:325). There are also other strengths to this research method. As Wimmer and Dominic (2006) noted, it provides rich and deep data, and it also provides more accurate responses on sensitive issues. It is certain that flaws exist. For example, it is impossible to make "sound" generalisations; the technique is especially sensitive to interviewer bias; and the analysis of the transcription can be subjective and time-consuming.

In practice, email interview invitations were sent out to all 60 sitting AMs in the current Assembly. In the end, the interview analysis for this PhD thesis was drawn mainly from face-to-face interviews with 28 AMs, who were from the four political parties in the fourth Assembly:

- (1) Labour AMs: Christine Chapman; Julie James; Julie Morgan; Jenny Rathbone; Leighton Andrews; Mick Antoniw; Jeff Cuthbert; Keith Davies; Mark Drakeford; Vaughan Gething.

- (2) Conservative AMs: Suzy Davies; Janet Finch-Saunders; Antoinette Sandbach; Andrew RT Davies; Byron Davies; Paul Davies; Mark Isherwood; David Melding.
- (3) Plaid Cymru AMs: Bethan Jenkins; Elin Jones; Leanne Wood; Dafydd Elis-Thomas; Lindsay Whittle; Alun Ffred Jones.
- (4) Liberal Democrat AMs: Kirsty Williams; Eluned Parrott; William Powell; Aled Roberts.

In October 2011, all 60 AMs in the newly elected fourth Assembly were first contacted by emails in order to inform them about this research project and investigate their interests and degrees of co-operation. Subsequently, some of them were contacted by telephone calls in order to set up interview appointments. The actual interviews were carried out between November 2011 and January 2012. They were scheduled to be 45-minute interviews, but in fact they took between 30 and 55 minutes. Most of them were conducted at the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff Bay.

The interviewees, as listed above, account for a large proportion of the AMs from the four main political parties, and there are a significant number of women representatives from each party. Moreover, age of the interviewees ranges from early 30s to the 60s. Therefore, it was possible to obtain a diversity of opinions and experiences both in terms of parties, genders and ages. Katie O'Brien²⁵ is the PA to the Caerphilly Labour AM, Jeff Cuthbert. She kindly offered her point of view during email contacts while I was trying to set up the interview with her AM, Mr. Cuthbert. So, 29 in-depth interviews have been conducted. All 29 interviews were conducted face-to-face, and all were in Cardiff Bay, except for two: one with Mick Antoniw and one with Prof. Mark Drakeford. I met with Mr. Antoniw at his Pontypridd office; and Prof. Drakeford at Cardiff University while he attended a conference. It is also worth mentioning that during my interview with the Swansea West AM, Julie James, her press officer Neil Ronconi-Woollard was present as well. Therefore, during that interview, there were three people involved, and Mr. Ronconi-Woollard said he was happy to be quoted if some of his thoughts were useful to my study. Consequently,

²⁵ Ms. O'Brien was PA for the current Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler, from January 2009 to October 2009. She has been researcher and senior researcher for Labour AM Jeff Cuthbert since October 2009.

Mr. Ronconi-Woollard signed an interview consent form for me as each of the other 29 interview participants did.

All interviews were recorded, using an MP3 recorder. I began the interviews by introducing myself and the research topic. The recorder started to record when the AMs' personal information and political experiences were asked. There were three major interview sections (see detailed interview questions in **Appendix III**):

I. Personal Information

- (1) Why did you become a politician?
- (2) Do you have any role models? Was there anyone who inspired you to get involved in politics?

II. The 2007 and 2011 Welsh Assembly Elections

- (1) Do you think it makes any difference to politics when women are the majority in a political institution? If so what difference does it make?
- (2) Do you agree with the *Western Mail*'s exercise of marking all AMs out of 10 before this May's election? Do you remember the marking coverage before the 2007 Assembly election?

III. Relations with the Welsh Press

- (1) What do you think about the media coverage of the AMs and Assembly activities in general in the UK national media? What do you think about the Welsh press?
- (2) Have you noticed any differences in the coverage of male and female AMs?
- (3) Could you talk a bit about the coverage you got during this May's election? How did you feel about it?

The first set of questions about AMs' personal information was used to break the ice; the data generated by them were not actually used for analysis. The other two sets of questions were often inspired by the examined press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs. Some questions were flexibly modified during the interviews, depending on the AMs' responses. Most were accompanied by one or two follow-up questions. The interview participants normally were asked to give specific examples. Some questions to

the AMs were generated by eye-catching press coverage of themselves. For example, as mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, just several days before the 2007 Assembly election, the *Western Mail* scored 10 AMs each day out of 10 marks, and each of them was assessed on their four-year performance in the second Assembly. Usually it was the women who were given the lowest marks and the most negative remarks. Before the 2011 Assembly election, the *Western Mail* did the marking exercise once again.

In addition, all interviews were transcribed in order to prepare data for analysis. Seale suggested that compiling transcriptions is one of the “major chores of qualitative interviewing” (1999:207), but the transcribing process of the interviews for this study often inspired me to create new ideas on ways to analyse and interpret the interviews. For instance, different themes were identified to group interview data together; and various perspectives emerged through the eyes’ of the AMs who belonged to different political parties. This provided me insights into the Assembly and political coverage in the media, especially the Welsh media, from the AMs’ point of view. Therefore, the time-consuming transcription process was an important part of this research project. It is worth noting that the interview data were analysed according to thematic analysis.

Conclusion

In summary, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was presented in this chapter. In order to answer the research questions, it demonstrates the need for content and discourse analyses of the news articles and their accompanying images in the aforementioned 12 Welsh English-language newspapers, along with face-to-face interviewing.

This chapter was divided into four sections. The first section examined the nature and ownership of the studied newspapers and revealed the data collecting process of the newspaper items for this study. Despite the difficulties that occurred during the various research trips to collect the existing 3065 news items, and technical problems encountered, the journey through this project has been fruitful.

Second, the key concepts around content analysis were audited, which defined content analysis from its quantitative aspect. What Riffe *et al.* (1998) offered us was a thorough understanding of content analysis. Despite many flaws that content analysis possesses, it is still likely to provide scientific facts or hard data that cannot be obtained by discourse analysis. Specific attention was paid to how to analyse the newspaper texts, layout and the images that were published alongside the news stories.

In the third section of this chapter, the concept of discourse was introduced, and in this research it was drawn from Stuart Hall's understanding of discourse. After the advantages and disadvantages of discourse analysis were carefully examined, it shows that discourse analysis which is able to answer the "why" questions is complementary to quantitative content analysis.

Finally, this chapter gave a detailed description of one-to-one in-depth interviews and existing concerns over the interviewing research method in the fourth section. It also reflected on the interview-conducting process and the data transcription process.

The following chapters will present the findings and reflections of this study during the entire research process, and contrast them to the existing literature and research, leading to my conclusions in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Overview of the Welsh Press Coverage of the Assembly Members

Introduction

This chapter provides an overall picture of the Welsh press coverage of the Assembly and its male and female AMs. It is useful to have the broad picture before discussing the press representation of women AMs against this backdrop. This chapter explores and brings insights into the Welsh newspaper coverage of Assembly politics and the AMs.

This leads to a series of questions. For instance, how extensive is the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs; what are the differences between the Welsh national press coverage of the Assembly and coverage by the Welsh local press; what are the differences between the election coverage and routine coverage; how does the press portray the AMs; and what are the differences in coverage in terms of gender? It argues that the Welsh press coverage of the National Assembly and its AMs was limited during the two selected periods²⁶; the national newspapers paid no more substantial attention to the Assembly and its AMs than did the local newspapers, but the dailies gave more coverage to the AMs than did the weeklies; and the election coverage was only somewhat greater than was the routine coverage. Why is the coverage limited? Where do these observations come from?

According to previous studies (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; Jeffery 2004; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007), the media coverage of the Welsh Assembly was not substantial, but they did not describe exactly how limited the Welsh press coverage was. Thus, in this chapter, the press coverage of the Assembly Members will be examined and analysed in great detail to demonstrate its exact nature and extent. It is important to understand the extent of the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs, since the public normally judges the relative importance of an issue based on the amount of the coverage of that issue to which it is exposed (Dearing and Rogers 1996). In terms of agenda setting theory, numerous

²⁶ The election period refers to the third Assembly election period from March to May 2007, and the routine press coverage period means the period between December 2008 and February 2009.

other researchers (Lippmann 1922; Cohen 1963; McCombs and Shaw 1972; McCombs 2004; McCombs 2005; Harrison 2006; Franklin *et al.* 2009; Coleman *et al.* 2009) also noted the issues emphasised by the media become the issues that the public believes to be important.

This chapter demonstrates and confirms in detail that the Welsh press pays little attention to the National Assembly, as previous studies have found (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; Jeffery 2004; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). This may help to explain, in part, why a high percentage of the Welsh population is not interested in politics. The big question raised is: does the lack of newspaper coverage of the Assembly and Welsh politics contribute to the Welsh general public's political apathy and if so, how? According to Martin Shipton's 2011 book, *Poor Man's Parliament: Ten Years of the Welsh Assembly*, about 60 per cent of Welsh voters did not know which parties formed the Assembly Government after a decade of devolution. Is the lack of coverage generally an example of a "chicken and egg" situation? The newspapers do not cover politics extensively and intensively because their readers are not interested in political coverage. Or else, the lack of reporting on politics contributes to ignorance and to political apathy: people are not interested in politics because the press does not give them information and does not print political stories for them to follow. Or people might just feel disenfranchised by politics and the political system.

Before answering the questions that have been raised above, it is first necessary to examine the overall scope of this research project.

Research Scale

As discussed in the Methodology Chapter, this study is based on any news item²⁷ that mentioned any AM who was from the first, second and third Assemblies during the third Assembly election period between March and May 2007, as well as during a three-month routine coverage period from December 2008 to February 2009. In total, 12 Welsh

²⁷ See entry No. 1 in the Code Book, **Appendix II**.

English-language newspapers comprised the sample for this research as described in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Number of Articles Featuring AMs Published in Each Newspaper

		Number of Articles	% of Articles
Dailies	Western Mail (N)	656	21.4
	South Wales Echo (N)	257	8.4
	Daily Post (N)	529	17.3
	South Wales Argus (L)	288	9.4
	South Wales Evening Post (L)	502	16.4
	Evening Leader (L)	293	9.6
Weeklies	Wales on Sunday (N)	58	1.9
	Western Telegraph (L)	129	4.2
	Cambrian News (L)	130	4.2
	Llanelli Star (L)	115	3.8
	North Wales Pioneer (L)	42	1.4
	Penarth Times (L)	66	2.2
Total in a 6-month Period		3065	100.0

Notes: 1) N stands for National; 2) L stands for Local.

The first six are daily and evening newspapers, and the other six are weeklies. The two time periods are displayed in Table 4.2. The *Western Mail* and *Daily Post* published the most news items in the two chosen periods in this study, with the number of stories in both newspapers exceeding 500 (Tables 4.1 and 4.3). The number of articles published in the *Western Mail* was 656, and the *Daily Post* printed 529 articles. They represented 21.4 per cent and 17.3 per cent, respectively, of the 3065 total news items collected. Another newspaper which produced more than 500 articles was the *South Wales Evening Post*. This newspaper also proved to be an important local newspaper for this research project.

Table 4.2 Number of Articles that Appeared in Different Months

		Number of Articles	% of Articles
Election Period	March 2007	516	16.8
	April 2007	455	14.8
	May 2007	494	16.1
Routine Coverage Period	December 2008	454	14.8
	January 2009	604	19.7
	February 2009	542	17.7
Total		3065	100.0

From Tables 4.1 and 4.3, it can be seen that the *North Wales Pioneer* (a weekly) published the fewest news articles (42) about the Assembly and its AMs. There was only one article in December 2008, and it produced only two related articles in January 2009. Moreover, *Wales on Sunday* and *Penarth Times* published far fewer articles than the other three weeklies, *Western Telegraph*, *Cambrian News* and *Llanelli Stars* (see Table 4.1). This shows that the volume of Assembly coverage varies in different type of newspapers. This may depend on the newspaper's circulation, readership and ownership (see detailed discussions inside this chapter). Before examining the differences in the quantitative and qualitative coverage of the Assembly and its AMs by the national and local newspapers, the following section will provide an examination of the overall Welsh press coverage of the Assembly and a general assessment of the press representations of the AMs.

Table 4.3 Number of Articles that Appeared in Each Newspaper by Month

		Election Period			Routine Coverage Period			Total
		March 2007	April 2007	May 2007	December 2008	January 2009	February 2009	
Name of the Newspaper	Western Mail	83	89	146	79	152	107	656
	South Wales Echo	30	40	48	41	53	45	257
	Daily Post	101	85	57	93	98	95	529
	South Wales Argus	54	34	41	52	61	46	288
	South Wales Evening Post	87	86	72	67	93	97	502
	Evening Leader	51	34	41	40	66	61	293
	Wales on Sunday	14	9	11	11	8	5	58
	Western Telegraph	18	21	24	26	17	23	129
	Cambrian News	25	26	16	23	22	18	130
	Llanelli Star	30	10	17	12	23	23	115
	North Wales Pioneer	5	15	10	1	2	9	42
	Penarth Times	18	6	11	9	9	13	66
Total		516	455	494	454	604	542	3065

How extensive is the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs?

I. Welsh Public's Interest in Politics

The actual press coverage of the National Assembly and Welsh politics will be discussed

in great detail later. But, it is essential to first examine the attitude of the Welsh people towards politics and their reaction towards the Assembly elections. As McNair has noted, “the histories of journalism and democracy are closely linked” (2009:237). Denver has suggested that most people would agree that “it is the existence of free, competitive elections which distinguishes political systems” (2003:5) that are more democratic than others; elections, therefore, are seen as “central to democracy”. Undoubtedly, it is through elections that citizens participate in political processes and determine their governments’ personnel and policies which govern and lead their countries (Denver 2003). If the majority of the Welsh population was indifferent to politics and national elections, then this would affect the establishment of a new Assembly Government and harm democracy. As Lewis *et al.* stated, “the widespread concern about declining turnouts and political disengagement comes from a commonly held view that broad participation is pivotal to democracy” (2005:6). What is more, Savigny and Wring pointed out that in the UK, “what is often characterized as a growing democratic malaise is most obviously witnessed in declining levels of electoral participation” (2013:143).

Again, the question is how much does the Welsh public care about the Assembly elections? Two public opinion studies around the 2003 and 2007 Welsh national elections suggest that a large proportion of the population in Wales did not take an interest in the political process. One election opinion poll for the second Assembly, which was carried out in the immediate aftermath of the election, found that 57 per cent of participants were interested in politics, but only 44 per cent were interested in election news (NOP 2003; Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004c). The other post-election poll for the third Assembly showed that 46 per cent of respondents claimed that they were not particularly interested in politics – this included one-fifth (19 per cent) that had no interest at all (NOP 2007).

What is more, an ICM/BBC Wales poll, which was conducted about two months before the 3rd May 2007 Assembly election, found that only half of the population was aware of the election; furthermore, only 43 per cent of voters could name the then First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, leader of the Welsh Labour party; only seven per cent of the Welsh population recognised Ieuan Wyn Jones, leader of Plaid Cymru, with the then Liberal

Democrat leader Mike German and then Welsh Conservative leader Nick Bourne scoring six per cent recognition each (*Western Mail* 1st March, 2007; 22nd May, 2007; *South Wales Echo* 1st March, 2007; *Daily Post* 1st March, 2007; *Western Telegraph* 7th March, 2007; Shipton 2011).

Several newspaper articles also show that only about 50 per cent of the people in Wales knew about the 2007 Welsh national election (*Daily Post* 1st March, 2007; *Evening Leader* 1st March, 2007; *Western Telegraph* 7th March, 2007; *Western Mail* 1st March, 2007). The headline of the *Daily Post*'s article read: "Only half of voters know Assembly poll is due" (1st March, 2007:6). A news article in the *South Wales Echo* was headlined: "Poll Blow to Party Leaders – Election? Er, what election is that, then?" (1st March, 2007:3). Another striking figure is from an *Evening Leader* street survey, where an eye-catching front-page story suggests that "a staggering 72 per cent of people" in Wrexham were not aware of the third Assembly election (5th March, 2007:1-2). All this demonstrates a newspaper discourse suggesting that people in Wales generally are not very interested in Welsh politics and have limited knowledge about their national election.

Although elections give sovereignty or ultimate power to the citizens (Denver 2003) in a democracy, these Welsh newspaper reports and the two previous public opinion polls indicate that the Welsh public is not interested in realising and claiming the full extent of its political power.

Denver has also noted that modern election campaigns, in large part, are media campaigns (2003:131-132):

Since the national campaign and media coverage of the national campaign are all but indistinguishable, examining the impact of the campaign on voters effectively means examining the extent to which they are influenced by what they read, hear and see in the mass media.

This suggests that it is crucial to examine the media content itself in order to understand

what influences the public. The intent of this project is not to examine reader reaction *per se*, but to examine the Welsh press coverage of Assembly election campaigns and the AMs and thereby better understand how the press content impacts voter selection of the Assembly Government. As a result, the analysis of the extent of the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs is of great importance.

Even though people may obtain their political news from sources other than newspapers, such as radio, television or the Internet, Welsh newspapers are still vital to local politicians and AMs in terms of political information (Cushion and Morgan 2003; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). The type of Welsh political stories that the newspapers print appeal to a certain age range of people, not generally young people, since it is young people who mostly use online news media. Half of the Welsh population read newspapers regularly in 2003, with a concentration among older age groups (Thomas *et al.* 2004b; Thomas 2006). Thus, the newspapers are one of the best sources of news for the very people likely to be interested in local Welsh political stories. The newspapers are also to a certain extent influential in the ways their websites, online versions and the broadcasters cover politics (Hall 2008; Meech 2008; Berte and Bens 2009). Therefore, if the newspaper political coverage is limited, then the public receives even less information about Welsh politics. This is because not all the media messages about elections and politics are effectively conveyed to the entire public. Unsurprisingly, an anonymous male Labour AM said to me in our meeting:

I suppose you could say it all comes down to resources in the end, we would like more coverage. And the fact that less than 50 per cent of people turn out to vote suggests that it's still not in people's minds, the importance of the election. And to a degree, that comes down to media coverage.

Anderson has pointed out that high-quality and independent media play a vital role in democratic societies, because they provide “accurate and thoughtful information and analysis about current events [which] is crucial to the creation of an enlightened citizenry that is able to participate meaningfully in society and politics” (2007:65; see also McNair 2009:239). Therefore, the press, as one of the most important media, plays a significant

part in shaping people's understanding of citizenship and their participation in the political processes in a democracy. If politics and elections are extensively and intensively covered, then this has the potential to affect people's interest in political coverage. Thus, it is highly important to examine the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs in the Welsh context.

II. Welsh Press Coverage of the National Assembly

It has been argued that the public perceives the world through the eyes of the media (Lippmann 1922; McCombs 2005; Harrison 2006), just as McCombs and Shaw (1972; see also Franklin *et al.* 2009) have pointed out that the way that the media cover particular events and issues influences and helps to shape both public opinion and public debate. A number of scholars have also asserted that in traditional agenda setting theory, it is suggested that the media do not tell the public what to think, but they tell it what to think about (Cohen 1963; Dearing and Rogers 1996; McCombs 2004; McCombs 2005; Franklin *et al.* 2009).

Dearing and Rogers (1996) have noted that the agenda setting process includes the media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda, as well as the interrelationships among all three. In this research, scrutiny will primarily be focused on the media and public agendas. According to Coleman *et al.*, agenda setting is "the process of the media presenting certain issues frequently and prominently with the result that large segments of the public come to perceive those issues as more important than others" (2009:147). Dearing and Rogers have also asserted that (1996:18):

The media agenda is usually indexed by a content analysis of the news media to determine the number of news stories about an issue or issues of study (e.g. the War on Drugs). The number of news stories measures the relative salience of an issue of study on the media agenda. Audience individuals presumably judge the relative importance of an issue on the basis of the number of media messages about the issue to which they are exposed.

As discussed earlier, the total amount of media coverage of the Welsh Assembly is not

significant (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; Jeffery 2004; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). But, how much attention exactly do the Welsh media pay to the Assembly activities and the AMs? To what extent did the Welsh newspapers give space to Assembly politics in the two chosen periods? These questions will be answered in the following discussions.

1). Number of Articles in Each Issue

First of all, to examine the number of articles that feature AMs in each newspaper copy is to have a sense of the exact extent of the press coverage of the AMs. As calculated in the Methodology Chapter, the total number of the newspaper issues was roughly 1000, and the number of collected news items from these issues altogether was 3065. Thus, it can be concluded that on average, each issue published approximately three articles concerning AMs and the Assembly²⁸. It may be a fact that articles on Assembly politics are distributed unevenly across different time periods. But three stories in each issue is a small number, because the National Assembly, after all, is the most important political institution for the people in Wales; it makes decisions that affect everyday lives of the Welsh population (Shipton 2011; Tonge 2011). What is more, politics is often regarded as an important topic in every serious mass medium. For instance, Watts has stated that the media have “a role of fundamental importance in imparting an array of information and thereby helping to increase the understanding of the electorate” (1997:199). Furthermore, Bathla (1998) has emphasised the “watchdog” function of the press on political institutions, and several other scholars have also noted that within the development of a democracy the media play an important role (Lichtenberg 1990; Keane 1991; Kelley and Donway 1990).

The number of the articles in each issue confirms the findings of other studies that the Welsh press has given very little attention to the AMs (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; Jeffery 2004; Ye 2007). The press certainly gives far less coverage to politics in comparison to other topics, such as sports, crime and celebrities. This is evidenced by the

²⁸ It is worth mentioning that there were other types of political stories, such as coverage of local council activities and MPs. But those stories were excluded in this research, because this study is about the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs.

number of sports reports in the Welsh national press (Ye 2007) and the chosen newspapers. For example, a copy of any of the 12 newspapers mentioned would show that sports are intensively and extensively reported topics. If sports events are not on the front page, they must have designated pages of coverage inside the newspaper. Taking the *Western Mail*, for instance, there are always a considerable number of pages devoted to sports in each issue. What is more, leisure and entertainment coverage may not help the public to become active citizens, as Lewis *et al.* have claimed that “an emphasis on crime stories and celebrity culture at the expense of significant social, political or economic developments does little to encourage active citizenship” (2005:7).

2). Space Accounted for by the Articles

Second, it is of great importance to discuss the space that the 3065 news items occupy within the pages of the newspapers. If the press pays a great deal of attention to the Assembly, then the coverage tends to be extensive and detailed. As a result, individual news items may take up significant proportions of space within the newspapers. However, as Table 4.4 below describes, a substantial percentage of the items are news briefs²⁹, at 17.8 per cent.

Table 4.4 Number of Articles by Newspaper Locations

Newspaper Locations	Number of Articles	% of Articles
News	1919	62.6
News Brief	546	17.8
Letters	183	6.0
Opinion Piece/Editorial	172	5.6
Front Page	118	3.8
Business Section	76	2.5
Political Advertising	29	.9
Feature Article	16	.5
Review	2	.1
Leisure & Entertainment	4	.1
Total	3065	100.0

²⁹ See the Code Book, entries No. 1 and 4 which provide explanation of what makes a news item news brief in this research project.

From Table 4.5³⁰, it can be seen that an even larger proportion of the articles take up a fairly small space on each page. Inside-page news briefs comprise 22.7 per cent of all articles, while 19.7 per cent of the sample which are also inside-page articles share less than one-fifth of the space on each page. Together, these two categories account for 42.4 per cent of all collected stories. This means that more than two-fifths of all articles are short, and hence unlikely to provide detailed reports on the Assembly and Welsh politics.

Table 4.5 Number of Articles by Newspaper Space that the Article and its Accompanied Image Occupied

Space Occupied	Number of Articles	% of Articles
IP, 2	7	.2
IP, 3/2 or More	39	1.3
IP, 5/4	43	1.4
IP, Full or 1	71	2.3
IP, 3/4-4/5	129	4.2
IP, 3/5-2/3	164	5.4
IP, 1/2	247	8.1
IP, 2/5	129	4.2
IP, 1/3	307	10.0
IP, 1/4	340	11.1
IP, 1/5	170	5.5
IP, Less than 1/5	605	19.7
IP, Notice/In Brief	696	22.7
FP, 1/2-2/3	25	.8
FP, 1/3	14	.5
FP, 1/4	11	.4
FP, 1/5	5	.2
FP, Notice/In Brief	15	.5
FP, Less than 1/5	6	.2
FP+IP, Full or more	14	.5
FP+IP, 2/3	11	.4
FP+IP, 1/2	11	.4
FP+IP, 1/3	4	.1
FP+IP, 1/4	2	.1
Total	3065	100.0

Notes: 1) FP stands for Front Page.

2) IP stands for Inside Page which means any page of a newspaper but front page.

3) Newspaper Space includes text and any image that was printed alongside the text.

³⁰ See the Code Book, entry No. 6 which is about the variable: Space the Story Takes up on a Page, Plus Visuals.

Articles along with any accompanying images that take up one-fourth and one-third of the space on a page, account for 11.1 per cent and 10.0 per cent, respectively (see Table 4.5). They are two moderate proportions compared to those of the short news items mentioned earlier.

Table 4.6 shows that only 5.2 per cent of all articles, or 160 inside-page articles in total, cover more than one page. From Table 4.5, it can be seen that this includes 71 full-page reports. That is to say, detailed reports on AMs and the Assembly are few and far between. All this evidence demonstrates a lack of importance of political coverage.

Table 4.6 Number of Articles by Placement

Placement in Newspaper	Number of Articles	% of Articles
FP, Middle	70	2.3
FP, Middle Edge	25	.8
FP, Top Corner	11	.4
FP, Top	10	.3
FP, Bottom	1	.0
FP, Bottom Comer	1	.0
IP, Top	845	27.6
IP, Top Corner	608	19.8
IP, Middle	449	14.6
IP, Bottom	367	12.0
IP, Bottom Comer	267	8.7
IP, Middle Edge	251	8.2
IP, 1 or More	160	5.2
Total	3065	100.0

Notes: 1) FP stands for Front Page.

2) IP stands for Inside Page which means any page of a newspaper but front page.

3). Article Length

Another feature that is used to measure relative coverage of news items is the length of the item (Carter 1998). One measure of the length of a story is the word count. Table 4.7 illustrates that the *Western Telegraph*, *South Wales Echo* and *Evening Leader* all contain a high portion of news items that contain fewer than 100 words. They represent more than 16 per cent of all news articles that each of them published. Only 2.4 per cent of the articles in the *Western Mail* contain less than 100 words. This suggests that the *Western*

Mail gave more attention to the Assembly and Welsh politics than the other newspapers in this study.

According to Table 4.7, there are 278 articles in total with less than 100 words. That represents 9.1 per cent of all news stories. The majority of these news items appear in the news brief sections of the newspapers. A notable number of the short notices are just advertisements for the sitting AMs' constituency surgeries. For example, a random choice of four of these advertisements which appeared in news brief in the *Western Telegraph* were all less than 50 words in length, with a heading – Surgery/AM's surgery/Advice surgery (3rd December, 2008:7; 3rd December, 2008:10; 11th February, 2009:4; 11th February, 2009:18).

Table 4.7 Number of Articles by Word Count in Each Newspaper

		Length of Article in Words				Total
		0-100	% within paper	More than 100 Words	% within Paper	
Name of the Newspaper	Western Mail	16	2.4	640	97.6	656
	South Wales Echo	42	16.3	215	83.7	257
	Daily Post	22	4.2	507	95.8	529
	South Wales Argus	35	12.2	253	87.8	288
	South Wales Evening Post	53	10.6	449	89.4	502
	Evening Leader	47	16.0	246	84.0	293
	Wales on Sunday	4	6.9	54	93.1	58
	Western Telegraph	23	17.8	106	82.2	129
	Cambrian News	6	4.6	124	95.4	130
	Llanelli Star	17	14.8	98	85.2	115
	North Wales Pioneer	4	9.5	38	90.5	42
	Penarth Times	9	13.6	57	86.4	66
Total		278	9.1	2787	90.9	3065

Another measure of the length of a story is the number of paragraphs³¹, that it contains. Table 4.8 reveals that articles which have more than 13 paragraphs make up 41.3 per cent

³¹ It is common that paragraphs in news articles are rather short; sometimes they only contain one or two sentences. Due to the large news sample, this study did not consider the question of how long paragraphs exactly are in different papers. For the same reason, there are only two measurements for word count.

of the sample; articles which have less than six paragraphs comprise 25.8 per cent (this includes the 3.9 per cent of the items that are less than two paragraphs in length). This means that a high number of the stories may be remarkably short in length, and confirms previous findings that press coverage of the Welsh Assembly and its AMs is very limited.

Table 4.8 Number of Articles by Paragraph Length

Number of Paragraphs	Number of Articles	% of Articles
1-2	120	3.9
3-6	672	21.9
7-12	1006	32.8
13+	1267	41.3
Total	3065	100.0

According to Table 4.9, the *South Wales Evening Post* and *Evening Leader* each include a significant number of short-paragraph (<6) stories at 160 and 109 articles, respectively. This suggests that the *Evening Post* publishes the largest number of short stories. Table 4.9 also illustrates that there are substantial differences among newspapers that routinely cover the Assembly.

Table 4.9 Number of Articles by Paragraph Length in Each Newspaper

Name of the Newspaper	Length of Article in Paragraphs				Total
	1-2	3-6	7-12	13+	
Western Mail	6	90	170	390	656
South Wales Echo	13	73	55	116	257
Daily Post	10	84	195	240	529
South Wales Argus	14	64	128	82	288
South Wales Evening Post	15	145	138	204	502
Evening Leader	26	83	117	67	293
Wales on Sunday	0	13	15	30	58
Western Telegraph	18	27	55	29	129
Cambrian News	5	39	49	37	130
Llanelli Star	4	25	41	45	115
North Wales Pioneer	3	13	14	12	42
Penarth Times	6	16	29	15	66
Total	120	672	1006	1267	3065

In summary, it is not difficult to conclude that coverage of the National Assembly in the Welsh press was rather thin in terms of average number of related articles that each newspaper issue printed and the large number of short articles that each issue contained. The differences in national and local press coverage will be discussed in more detail in a later section. In the following section, other aspects of how the Welsh press treats the AMs and Assembly activities will be examined.

How important is Assembly politics within the press?

I. The Position of the Story in the Press

Kress and van Leeuwen (1998) have suggested that in the print media the visual context fulfills a “prosodic” part of highlighting significant points and strengthening structural connections. Meanwhile they have pointed out that written texts are not only structured by linguistic means, but also by the use of visuals, “through layout, through the spatial arrangement of blocks of text, of pictures and the graphic elements on the page” (1998:187). An article’s position on a page illustrates the importance of the article in the newspaper. If an article is placed at the top or in the middle of a page, it implies that the item is essential to the whole page or that it is irreplaceable by other articles around it. If it is put at the bottom or in a corner of a page, it suggests that the article is less salient. For example, a coalition government needed to be formed by the end of May 2007, because none of the main parties had achieved a majority of the seats in the third Assembly. An article titled “Clock’s ticking for Rhodri to negotiate deal” was published in the middle of the second page in the *Daily Post* a week after the election (12th May, 2007:2). The literal meaning of the headline gives a sense of urgency, and the position of the story in the newspaper shows a sense of importance. Coalition talks were the core discussions in the Assembly at the time, so the media inevitably reported on them while covering the Assembly. Consequently, the article was published in the middle of the page and it was on page two of the newspaper. If the story had been placed in another location on the page, it might not indicate the same level of importance.

Table 4.4 above displays the position of each news item from the 12 examined

newspapers. The majority of the articles are categorised as news, and these account for 62.6 per cent of all stories collected. As stated earlier, one important finding is that 546 (17.8 per cent) of the total 3065 items are news briefs (see Table 4.4). Front-page stories account for 3.8 per cent of the sample, or 118 news items. Compared to the time scale and the total number of the newspapers concerned, 118 front-page stories do not appear to be an excessive number. There may be more front-page stories about the National Assembly and Welsh politics, but there are definitely not many front-page articles about AMs in the newspapers that were examined. Furthermore, there was a national election going on during the first selected period. Even if it were true that the Welsh press paid little attention to the Assembly, the press, as watchdog over the government, still had a duty to keep the public informed (Lichtenberg 1990; Keane 1991; Kelley and Donway 1990; Bathla 1998; Franklin *et al.* 2009; McNair 2009). Watts has noted that the press has “an essential role in checking despotism and inefficient rule” (1997:202), because without its information and exposures, elections could not be a genuine expression of what the majority of the public really thinks. McQuail has also suggested that the role of the press is “to give a representative picture of constituent groups in society and goals and values of society” (1994:124), while Bathla has summarised some other researchers’ claims (1998:14):

The press...ensures the best possible participation of interested parties, helps people to choose between real alternatives by providing information on them, encourages debates on issues taken up by various parties and performs the ‘watchdog’ function of protecting against the tendency of the state to abuse the rights of its citizens (see also Lichtenberg 1990; Keane 1991; Kelley and Donway 1990).

This is to say that particularly during election periods, the press has a duty to provide the public with comprehensive analyses of the contesting political parties’ key issues and policies in order to help the public to choose a party which reflects and represents their best interests. In everyday life, the press may also need to serve as a forum for the public to discuss their opinions, to exchange their thoughts, and to voice their criticisms towards their government and politicians.

In addition, in terms of the position of the story in the Welsh press, one has also to look at the placement of each story, which is another way to identify a news article's position in a newspaper. The placement suggests a sense of importance of the layout of the article in the newspaper. According to Table 4.6 which shows the placements of the articles, the highest proportion of the articles were placed at the top of the newspapers (except for front pages), accounting for 27.6 per cent of all news items. This is followed by 19.8 per cent inside-page articles which appeared at the top corner of a page. As for other inside-page articles, those appeared on the middle edge and at the bottom corner of a page each represented a considerable proportion of the total at 8.2 per cent and 8.7 per cent, respectively. What is more, 12.0 per cent of the stories were placed at the bottom inside of the newspapers. Therefore, adding these three figures together, 28.9 percent of the 3065 items were published in less prominent parts of the newspapers. This reveals that the Welsh newspapers did not give significant coverage to the AMs and the National Assembly in terms of volume. However, when they are covered, the reports were often placed in considerably important and eye-catching positions of a newspaper. This also somewhat reveals a sense of seriousness of political coverage.

On the other hand, in terms of front-page stories, the majority of these articles appeared in the middle of a front-page which accounts for 2.3 per cent of the sample (see Table 4.6). From Table 4.5, it can be seen that 14 front-page stories cover more than one page. These stories started on the front page and extended to one or more inner pages of the newspapers. Interestingly, if the articles about the AMs and the Assembly were put on front pages, it was also rare for them to be placed at the bottom of the page. There are two such articles (see Table 4.6). One of them was placed at the bottom corner of a front page in the *South Wales Argus*. It is just a notice, about 30 words in length (10th February, 2009). It guides the reader to read the full story inside the newspaper, although the full story on page five is still roughly only 200 words. The second article was published on the next day of the 2007 Assembly election. The headline is "All change in Wrexham while BNP picks up votes – MAREK OUT, LABOUR IN" (*Evening Leader* 4th May, 2007:1). However, it only takes up about one-fourth of the front page. The article which takes the most space on the front page in that issue is a sports report, placed above the

election story. The report is about a football match in the region, accompanied by a massive photograph. The whole article and image involved more than a half of the front page. Compared to this, the article on election was given less prominence. This also backs the previous claim that the press gives more attention to sports and other entertaining events than it does to politics.

After examining the locations and placements of the articles, it is obvious that the press coverage of the AMs was less than substantial. The press often chose entertainment over politics. It indicates that the Welsh press might not fulfill its obligations as a watchdog to provide intensive and extensive election coverage in order to assist the people in Wales to choose between different political parties during the election period. The next section will continue to explore details of the news coverage of the Assembly, and to find out more about how much prominence the Assembly coverage was given by the Welsh press.

II. The Nature of the Articles

In order to understand the “serious treatment” of political stories by the press, it is vital to discuss news values and the concept of newsworthiness. According to Harcup and O’Neill, criteria of selecting occurrences or events to become news “may not be written down or codified by news organization, but they exist in daily practice and in knowledge gained on the job” (2001:261; cited also in Franklin *et al.* 2009:173; see also Harrison 2006; O’Neill and Harcup 2009; Allan 2004). They referred to an understanding of news values as a “somewhat mythical” concept (O’Neill and Harcup 2009; Franklin *et al.* 2009). Allan (2004), Zelizer (2004), O’Neill and Harcup (2009) have also claimed that definitions of news are not fixed; news values can change over time, from place to place, and can be inflected differently from one news organisation to another. However, there is a certain list which shows common ground rules or criteria which makes some events more newsworthy than other occurrences (Allan 2004; Brighton and Foy 2007; Franklin *et al.* 2009; O’Neill and Harcup 2009). An updated list of ten news values produced by O’Neill and Harcup is perhaps a good summary of the content of contemporary newspapers according to Franklin *et al.* (2009). The list is presented as follows (Franklin

et al. 2009:174):

reference to the power elite (individuals, organizations and nations); reference to celebrity; entertainment (e.g. sex, human interest, drama); surprise; good news (e.g. rescues, personal triumph); bad news (e.g. tragedy, accident); magnitude; relevance (cultural proximity, political importance); follow-up stories; and newspaper agenda (both politically and relating to the structure of the genre) (see also O'Neill and Harcup 2009:168; Brighton and Foy 2007:8-9; Harcup and O'Neill 2001).

It is obvious that politicians can be considered as elites because they are individuals elected by their constituents, regardless of their gender. Their decisions certainly affect the people they represent, so political decisions are highly relevant to the public. Therefore, political coverage is expected to be important in the press. As Franklin *et al.* (2005:97) summarised the concept of hard news, it is “information of importance” to the audience and it has “a material impact on people’s lives”. According to Tuchman (1973:176, see also Berkowitz 1997; Franklin *et al.* 2005), hard news concerns events potentially available to analysis or interpretation and consists of “factual presentations” of events deemed newsworthy. Compared to hard news, soft news can be stories that do not have a direct impact upon people’s lives in the way that a tax increase or a change of government does (Franklin *et al.* 2005); it can be seen as something amusing or “interesting because it deals with the life of human beings” (Mott 1952:58, cited in Tuchman 1978a:48) or it concerns human foibles. Stories which are concerning “sex, show business, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines” were categorised as entertainment by O'Neill and Harcup (2009:168). It is also apparent that celebrity culture is newsworthy according to the news values list, but whether it is in the public interest is totally another question. Celebrity and entertainment coverage may simply interest the public, even when it is not in the public interest. Franklin (1997:4) has noted that:

Tabloid journalism describes the changing journalistic mood which has seen the news media become part of the entertainment industry rather than being a forum for informed debate about important issues of public concerns; stories to interest the public instead of stories in the public interest (see also Franklin *et al.* 2005:259).

As detailed in the Methodology Chapter, all examined newspapers are in a tabloid format, including the *Western Mail*. It is well understood that tabloids have “sensationalist content” (Hallin 2000) which is more likely to be entertaining. This is backed by Sparks’s claim that tabloid journalism involves “a shift in the priorities... away from news and information toward an emphasis on entertainment” (2000:11).

For the sake of knowing what the central discussions of the press coverage of the Assembly are, it is of great importance to examine the nature of the articles. For instance, whether the news items mainly focus on AMs; what the subjects of the stories are; and who covers the Assembly. If the AMs are the main focus of the majority of the stories, it does not only mean that the Welsh press takes the Assembly seriously, but also that the AMs are important players in the press. If the subjects of these stories are primarily on leisure events and entertainment, then it suggests that Assembly politics is not treated sufficiently and seriously by the press because of its entertaining purpose and orientation. Similarly, if many of the journalists who cover the Assembly specialise in leisure and entertainment reporting, then it implies a lack of seriousness and importance (see detailed discussions below).

1). Focus of the Articles

With regard to the focus of the stories, it is equally crucial to discuss the headlines. Table 4.10 clearly shows that 19.8 per cent of the articles’ headlines mentioned an AM’s name or title, and that 8.7 per cent mentioned only the phrase Assembly Member or its abbreviation – AM. The vast majority – 71.5 per cent – of the articles’ headlines did not mention AMs. This does not mean that those articles whose headlines mentioned AMs’ names or titles are definitely concentrated on the AMs. Therefore, it is useful to know how many news stories are primarily focused on the AMs.

Table 4.10 Number of Articles by Headline Types

Headline Types	Number of Articles	% of Articles
AM Mentioned by Name/Title	607	19.8
AM Mentioned	268	8.7
AM Not Mentioned	2190	71.5
Total	3065	100.0

In accordance with Table 4.11, 1296 articles out of 3065 (42.3 per cent) are primarily focused on AMs, but an even larger proportion – 57.7 per cent of all articles are not mainly focused on AMs³². There are in total about 1000 newspaper issues examined, so every issue published roughly 1.3 articles in which AMs are the main focus. Along with the previous figures on headlines, it is easy to conclude that the press coverage of the AMs was not extensive during the two selected periods.

Table 4.11 Article Primarily Focuses on AM(s)

	Number of Articles	% of Articles
Yes	1296	42.3
No	1769	57.7
Total	3065	100.0

Furthermore, the articles which primarily focus on the AMs are generally based on personalisation, controversies, and their political positions in the Assembly. For example, in the regional and local press, it depends on whether the AMs were the sitting AMs of the local constituencies. The eight local newspapers paid far more attention to their then local AMs than the then four main political party leaders in the Assembly. As for the national newspapers, they gave more coverage to the party leaders and major Ministers, such as Health Minister, Enterprise Minister, Education Minister and Minister for Environment (see detailed discussions in the next chapter). Evidence to support this interpretation is also provided by Franklin and Murphy; they have noted (1991:60):

³² See entries No. 8 and 9 in the Code Book, the definition of the main focus AM in this study and how to define a news item which primarily focuses on AM.

In general the larger the area of circulation and the more frequently the paper appears, the more the local paper includes national and regional as well as local news; the less frequently the paper appears and the smaller its circulation area, the more extensively its news coverage is strictly local.

In terms of controversies, there is no clear evidence that the national daily and evening press tended to cover them more than the local evening press. For example, the AMs' expenses report was officially published by the Assembly on 12th December, 2008, and the Welsh newspapers were critical of some AMs' office expenses, especially the *Western Mail*. The then Welsh Conservative leader Nick Bourne particularly came under fire, after it emerged that he and his fellow AM Alun Cairns claimed their iPods on their office expenses. Although the national daily and evening press did not cover the iPod controversy and AMs' expenses more than the local evening press, there was little coverage in the weeklies (more discussions in another section of this chapter and the next chapter). However, the *Western Mail* was an exception.

Six out of the eight Conservative AMs I interviewed were asked about their thoughts on the AMs' expenses scandal in December 2008 in the Welsh press, especially the *Western Mail's* coverage. Two of them considered that the coverage of the expenses was not justified. With regard to the ex-Conservative leader, Nick Bourne's iPod claim on his office expenses, the current Conservative Assembly leader, Andrew RT Davies suggested:

I think that was more of political vendetta by the newspaper, to be honest with you, on the back of what was going on in Westminster. Every penny and every pound counts, but I don't think it could be compared, you know 190-pound iPod could be compared to MPs, for example, as we now know, claiming 20 or 30 or 40, 000 pounds for dry rot in their house, "flipping" their houses, so that they could claim tax advantages etc. So, I can vaguely remember the event back in December '08, I think you said it was. But, it did seem a little peculiar at the time that 190-pound iPod was at the centre of the storm. That was really whipped up by one newspaper.

Similarly, the South Wales West Conservative AM, Byron Davies, said to me in our meeting:

I think they paid an awful lot of attention, didn't they? ... But, I remember speaking to lots of people in sort of areas, in Gower area, Swansea area, I don't think they regarded it as the most important thing in the world frankly ... If it is something which helps them in their work, it is within the rules as they say, and then how can I argue against it? How can anybody argue against it? If it is allowed in the expenses, it is the end of the matter. If an MP3 or whatever allows them to do their job better, they are allowed to claim for it, then it's not for me to comment on.

However, another two strongly disagreed with their then Assembly leader, Mr. Bourne's conduct. The other South Wales West regional Conservative AM, Suzy Davies noted, "It serves him right, that's all I've got to say on that. I mean I feel it quite closely, because I've always been kind of parsimonious about how you spend other people's money." In a similar response, an anonymous Conservative AM noted:

I was disappointed when I thought people were buying cameras... I wouldn't do my claim on an iPod whether I could or not. Whether it is allowed or not, I'd choose "wouldn't". I think your expenses and allowances are there to ensure that you are not left out of the pocket through being an AM... I think it's a wild thing to buy an iPod.

Nevertheless, none of the interviewed Conservative AMs believed that Mr. Bourne was not re-elected into the 2011 Assembly had anything to do with the *Western Mail's* negative coverage of him over the expenses row. For instance, the present leader of the Conservatives, Mr. Davies asserted:

Nick was a victim of his own success in that we achieved an excellent result in three constituencies in his region, which meant that obviously on the proportional system we've got, we lost the regional Member, who in this case was Nick. So, really, it was not the case of that story; it was more of the case of a success, which perversely actually knocked Nick out the Assembly.

This is supported by Professor Jonathan Tonge's comment: ironically, Nick Bourne lost his seat "partly due to the improved performance of his party at constituency level" (2011:8). Whether the press' AM expenses row had any impact on its readers or not is beyond the scope of this study. However, the AMs' views on this matter mirrored two opposite reactions towards the former Conservative leader' iPod claim: against the action

or not being critical. It also seems true, as the interviewees noted, controversies were often more likely to be placed in the spotlight by the press.

In terms of the focus of the articles, Table 4.12 illustrates another interesting fact, that among short news stories a much greater percentage of the stories are focused on AMs than among longer stories. 57.6 per cent of the 278 articles which are less than 100 words are concentrated on AMs, while only 40.8 per cent of the longer stories are focused on AMs. It is fair to say that many long articles tend to focus on AMs less, while a great number of the short ones which concentrate on AMs more, tend to be in news brief sections. This also somewhat confirms the previous finding that the press coverage of the AMs was not extensive. To test the claim, a number of articles are analysed below.

Table 4.12 Number of Articles that Primarily Focus on AM(s) by Word Count

	Length of Article in Words				Total
	0-100	% of 278	More than 100 Words	% of 2787	
Article Primarily Focuses on AM(s) Yes	160	57.6	1136	40.8	1296
No	118	42.4	1651	59.2	1769
Total	278	100	2787	100	3065

It is a common phenomenon that AMs are just one of the many sources that were quoted in a long article. In this case, the AMs are normally not the focus of the story. For instance, there are a series of articles about public reactions to a closing Newport primary school in the *South Wales Argus*. One of them is headlined: “Tears after school closure shock” (4th April, 2007:9), which is a story taking up almost a full page and featuring many tearful children and their furious parents. The then Assembly Education Minister Jane Davidson was only quoted as mentioning the main reason why the school was needed to be shut, and one of the two local AMs, Rosemary Butler, was given a brief mention in reference to her disappointment in the closure. Another example is from the *South Wales Evening Post*. The headline for the original article is “Crime maps cop a mixed reaction” (19th December 2008:4), which explains what the report is mainly concentrated on. This article takes up about three-fourths of the space on the page and it

has 33 paragraphs. The Liberal Democrat AM Peter Black was one of many who gave their opinions or raised questions on the concerned crime-mapping matter. His quotation is just about 60 words in length and it is not longer than any other sources that were quoted in the article. News stories like these are not uncommon in the selected sample. This, to a certain extent, explains why a smaller percentage of longer articles focus on the AMs than short articles.

Turning now to short stories, a few of the shortest ones from the *South Wales Echo* and *Llanelli Star* provide interesting examples of news stories that focus on AMs. All these articles are less than 100 words in length. One article has a headline: “Rhodri opens legal firm’s new offices” (*South Wales Echo* 9th March, 2007:21), and another is about an AM’s personal interests, with the headline: “AM Davidson is a big fan of the Clash (a music group)” (*South Wales Echo* 14th March, 2007:25). Another two, where an AM is also mentioned in the headlines, were both placed in less important locations in the newspaper: one was placed on the middle edge of the page, and the other was printed at the bottom corner. The first one focuses on Helen Mary Jones who was urging people to buy Welsh and buy local to help the economy (*Llanelli Star* 5th February, 2009:16), while the other one is about Nick Bourne’s support for a cancer charity campaign (*Llanelli Star* 8th March, 2007:24). Similarly, an additional two are also focused on the AMs, headlined as “Skills are key recovery” (*South Wales Echo* 15th January, 2009:6) and “Conservatives make Bristol Airport plea” (*South Wales Echo* 23rd January, 2009:9). When these short stories are closely examined, it is not difficult to notice that these articles are frequently precise and straightforward reports of an action the AM(s) did or an idea the AM(s) had.

It is true that these stories reference the power elites and they are almost all relevant to the local people in the sense of localities, but not all of them directly affect the public. Furthermore, it seems that they are not entertaining and interesting for readers, compared to sports events or celebrity gossip. In short, political events seem not to interest the public very much. That is because they do not “provoke a reaction in the audience” as entertaining news does which makes the audience “go ‘Aah’ or ‘Wow’” (Franklin *et al.* 2005:247). As a result, journalists seem to conclude that reporting simple facts or

covering AMs' routine activities does not need many words. On the other hand, through presenting only brief coverage, the idea that the AMs' activities are not that interesting is reinforced in the public eye by the journalists. Nevertheless, the events were reported, which means that they do have a certain intrinsic news value.

2). Subject of the Articles

The subject of the stories³³ is also an important feature to measure whether the stories concentrate on significant social and political occurrences; whether they simply feature celebrity gossip; or whether they just focus on controversial stories which entertain, but are not in the public's best interest. If the subjects of most of the examined articles are leisure and entertainment, then it would signal a message that Assembly politics is not treated seriously and it is not considered important by the press.

It is notable from Table 4.13 that the most significant subject in the sample is health, NHS and hospital matters, consisting of 13.0 per cent of all selected articles. Even the 4.7 per cent of the total sample (145 articles) that are primarily focused on or related to leisure and entertainment have a political angle (see Table 4.13). This includes articles such as an AM opening a gallery; an AM presenting an award; or an AM being criticised because of a tasteless joke and so forth. One of these articles is headlined – “Rhodri: No regrets over Paisley joke” – Mr. Morgan joked that Northern Ireland politician Mr. Paisley converted to Catholicism on his deathbed because he thought it was “better to lose a Catholic than a Protestant” (*Daily Post* 3rd March, 2007:8). This article is also about Mr. Morgan's official visit to the United States; he encouraged American tourists not to think of Britain as an expensive country due to the cost of visiting London, saying “we have to tell people the UK is not just London, and Wales isn't over priced” (*Daily Post* 3rd March, 2007:8). Therefore, not all news articles placed under leisure and entertainment were about entertaining aspects of the AMs' personal lives. There was an element of seriousness based on their work-related activities.

³³ See detailed explanation in entry No. 11 in the Code Book.

Table 4.13 **Number of Articles by Subject**

Subject	Number of Articles	% of Articles
NHS & Hospital Matters/Health	397	13.0
General Election	325	10.6
Economic Development	201	6.6
Crime/Social Justice/Policing	181	5.9
Coalition Talks	167	5.4
Leisure & Entertainment	145	4.7
Education	138	4.5
Transportation	129	4.2
Employment & Unemployment	112	3.7
Credit Crunch & Economy Crisis	114	3.7
Comments on People	104	3.4
Climate Change & Environmental Issues	98	3.2
Welsh Language & Heritage	91	3.0
Communication & Information Services	80	2.6
The Welsh Assembly	78	2.5
Public Construction & Housing	72	2.3
Energy & Resources	64	2.1
Labour's Policies	63	2.1
Constituency Surgery	56	1.8
Plaid's Policies	54	1.8
Voluntary Work & Charity	42	1.4
Equality	41	1.3
Office Expenses	38	1.2
Public Reaction	32	1.0
Tory's Policies	31	1.0
iPod Gate	29	.9
Lib Dem's Policies	27	.9
Individual Healthcare	26	.8
Lib Dem Leadership Election	22	.7
Devolution	21	.7
Election/Opinion Poll	20	.7
Childcare	19	.6
City Planning	19	.6
Labour Leadership Election	11	.4
First Minister Stepping Down	10	.3
Poverty & Child Abuse	8	.3
Total	3065	100.0

According to Table 4.13, a considerable proportion of the news stories are focused on economic development, social justice, education, employment, credit crunch, et cetera. Therefore, the majority of the selected articles deal with important and serious issues. Thus, it is fair to say that politics was treated seriously by the Welsh press once it was covered, in spite of the fact that it did not generally receive significant coverage. Although the *Western Mail* does have a serious news agenda, it joined the other Welsh daily newspapers by shifting from broadsheet to tabloid format (Thomas 2006). As mentioned above, tabloids are often associated with “sensationalist and entertaining content”, which tends to be not serious (Franklin 1997; Hallin 2000; Sparks 2000; Franklin *et al.* 2005). However, a format does not necessarily dictate a newspaper’s orientation in the 21st century. For instance, the *Western Mail* bills itself as the national newspaper of Wales, and its political content has been serious, regardless of which political slant its editorial team takes.

From Table 4.13, it is also worth noting that it appears only 10.6 per cent of the articles concern general matters surrounding the May 2007 Assembly election. In fact, a much greater percentage of the articles prominently feature the Welsh national election. This is because election coverage also includes articles featuring party policies, coalition talks, election polls and sometimes articles concentrating on public reactions and the Assembly. It can be seen in Table 4.13, these aspects of election coverage are singled out and counted under the subjects mentioned. For example, the four main political parties’ election manifesto coverage, the Welsh Labour party had the largest share – 63 articles by number (2.1 per cent), followed by Plaid Cymru, which had 54 articles altogether (1.8 per cent). The other two parties received relatively less coverage of their policies: the Conservatives had 31, and the Liberal Democrats had 27. The press paid more attention to Labour party and Plaid Cymru, which may also explain why the then Labour party leader, Rhodri Morgan, had better recognition by the public than any of the other three major Opposition party leaders in a poll published about two months before the third Assembly election (*Western Mail* 1st March, 2007; 22nd May, 2007; *South Wales Echo* 1st March, 2007; *Daily Post* 1st March, 2007; *Western Telegraph* 7th March, 2007). That is because political party leaders were treated as party spokespeople, and therefore, they

were often quoted by the press to explain their parties' election manifestos and to express a particular view that the majority of their party members take.

3). Journalists Who Cover Assembly Politics

Another question needed to be answered is who covered the AMs and Assembly activities during the two studied periods. If the majority of the involved journalists are not specialised in political reporting, then it shows that the selected newspapers do not have reporting teams for politics and thus the political coverage may not be of high quality.

Williams and Franklin (2005) have noted that the reduction rate of editorial and production staff at Media Wales had reached more than 30 per cent since 1995, but Western Mail and Echo Ltd. (part of Media Wales) had an almost 40 per cent profit margin in 2005 (see also Delp 2008). Thus, they have argued that it is "a clear indicator of how seriously it takes the news product it offers the public" (2005:33; cited in Delp 2008:19). It is highly likely that more journalists would take responsibilities in other areas rather than their own main specialisation; this may affect the quality of any newspaper.

There is another possibility that the news output may not be serious and critical. Murphy (1976) has suggested that journalists should not bite the hand that feeds them, inasmuch as they rely on their local community leaders to provide sources for news. Moreover, local journalists writing hostile articles about local authorities may result in them offending their future employers and damaging future career opportunities, since more than 40 per cent of public relations officers in UK's local governments have worked as journalists (Franklin 1988; Franklin and Murphy 1991). Therefore, it would be difficult for the journalists to be strongly critical (Murphy 1976; Franklin and Murphy 1991).

Table 4.14 Number of Articles by Journalist's Specialism

	Number of Articles	% of Articles
General Reporter	480	15.7
Chief Reporter	185	6.0
Welsh Affairs Correspondent	170	5.5
Political Reporter	121	3.9
Political Editor	89	2.9
Other Editor	88	2.9
Columnist	53	1.7
Health Reporter	51	1.7
Finance Reporter	39	1.3
Environment Reporter	15	.5
Crime Reporter	12	.4
Feature Writer	8	.3
Education Reporter	7	.2
Leisure & Entertainment Reporter	1	.0
None	1746	57.0
Total	3065	100.0

Notes: 1) Only the journalists' main specialism was counted. If an article is written by two or more people, only the first one's specialism was taken into consideration.

2) None includes those articles published anonymously and those written by member(s) of the public and politicians.

Table 4.14 reveals that, overall, 88 articles which make up 2.9 per cent of the entire sample were produced by editors other than political editors, such as news editors, health editors, rural affairs editors, business editors and magazine editors. Only one article was produced by a journalist called Rin Simpson whose main specialty is in leisure and entertainment. This suggests that when Assembly politics was reported, it was often not associated with entertaining content.

The very story written by the fashion writer Rin Simpson was published in the *Western Mail*, after Prince William broke up with his then girlfriend, now wife, Kate Middleton. The article is titled: "Goodbye Kate, hello to a Welsh bachelorette?" which has a subheading, saying "... Rin Simpson runs the rule over some of the nation's most eligible bachelorettes who might be fit for a (future) king" (17th April, 2007:6-7). Former Conservative AM Laura Anne Jones was presented as one of the perfect future bride

candidates for Prince William among six Welsh bachelorettes. The other five are classical music singers, a harpist and a model. Some might consider this press treatment as complimentary to Ms. Jones. However, would the press have discussed a male politician this way?

A number of researchers have argued that the media routinely trivialise the voices of female politicians in contemporary media. For example, Ross *et al.* (2013) noted that during the 2010 British general election, female candidates were more often placed in feature articles than male candidates by the major UK newspapers. Kahn and Gordon (1997) found that female US Senate candidates had complained publicly about the press preference for style over substance. Meanwhile, Carroll and Schreiber (1997) examined the newspaper coverage of women politicians in the 103rd US Congress; they found that the Congresswomen received perceived biases from the press, and that they were treated less seriously by the press than were their male colleagues.

Moreover, according to Table 4.4, which explains the locations of the stories, only four articles appeared in the leisure and entertainment sections of the studied newspapers; and altogether there are 16 feature articles. This reflects the previous finding that once politics was covered, it was usually treated seriously by the Welsh press during the two selected periods.

From Table 4.14, it is notable that the largest part of the news items (57.0 per cent) were published anonymously or written by members of the public or by politicians. This may be further evidenced by the figures shown in Table 4.15: 45.9 per cent of all the articles do not have a byline. News briefs do not have a byline and almost all of the long and detailed reports do have a byline. This suggests that the Assembly might not be extensively covered by the Welsh press. As discussed in previous section, inside-page notices and news briefs account for 22.7 per cent of the entire sample (see Table 4.5). A large number of these news briefs are less-than-100-word items. Furthermore, the fact that a huge percentage of the articles do not include a byline shows that there might not be many journalists who specialised in reporting on politics in the Welsh press. That is

because most of the news stories produced by editors and chief reporters were credited to them and were accompanied by their bylines. Nevertheless, 148 articles were written by the AMs themselves. This demonstrates that the Welsh newspapers did pay attention to the Assembly and the Welsh Government, because they provided the AMs with newspaper space to voice their concerns and to express their opinions. However, the total articles written by AMs only come second to the articles that were written by the *Daily Post's* Welsh affairs correspondent, Tom Bodden, who produced the greatest number of news stories among all journalists involved – a total of 170 (see Table 4.15). Except for those anonymous articles, the majority of the remaining articles were produced by either political journalists or journalists who are closely related to politics, such as Welsh affairs reporters, health reporters and finance reporters. Although these journalists did not produce the majority of all selected articles, this still suggests that the examined newspapers may have their own reporting teams for politics.

Table 4.15 Journalists Who Produced the Most Coverage

Name	Number of Articles	% of Articles
Tom Bodden	170	5.5
Martin Shipton	127	4.1
David Williamson	71	2.3
Tomos Livingstone	59	1.9
Madeleine Brindley	35	1.1
Liz Perkins	35	1.1
Matt Withers	33	1.1
Phillip Nifield	30	1.0
Chris Davies	30	1.0
Daniel Davies	28	.9
David James	19	.6
Eryl Crump	18	.6
Anonymous	1408	45.9
Other Journalists	640	20.9
Guest Writer(AM)	148	4.8
Guest Writer(Member of the Public)	120	3.9
Two or More Reporters	71	2.3
Guest Writer(Other Politician in General)	23	.8
Total	3065	100.0

What is also notable in Table 4.15 is that, among the 12 journalists who wrote the most articles, only two of them were women – health editor Madeleine Brindley and health reporter Liz Perkins. Chief reporters and political editors were all men. This, to a large extent, supports a claim by previous researchers (Weaver 1997; Mills 1997; Weaver *et al.* 2007) that journalism, like many other professions, has been dominated by male leadership. According to Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig (2003; see also O’Neill and Harcup 2009), male and female editors applied fairly similar criteria to news selection and practice in several Israeli newspapers. However, Mills (1997:50) pointed out that female journalists helped bring women as political candidates into the mainstream of coverage, while Carroll and Schreiber (1997) found that more women journalists than their male counterparts were writing stories about congresswomen. Similarly, Armstrong (2004), Freedman and Fico (2005, see also Berkowitz 2009) found that articles with a woman journalist byline had a greater tendency to quote female sources. The situation may be different in this research because of the lack of female dominant journalists and the limited number of articles produced by women. The first elected female leader in the Assembly, the Brecon and Radnorshire Lib Dem AM Kirsty Williams, also pointed out:

I think that one of the disadvantages is the political culture. And a lot of politics, and a lot of relationships, and a lot of issues happen outside the Chamber and after work and over the pints in the Eli Jenkins. I think that’s quite hard to do, if you are a woman and you need to get back to your house to look after your elderly parents or to look after children. You haven’t got the time to be out, schmoozing in pubs and drinking with journalists and the like. So, I think some of those relationships and some of that networking are more difficult [for women than for men]. And of course we don’t have that many female journalists.

Ms. Williams not only revealed a common phenomenon that today’s female politicians are still likely to emphasise their family responsibilities more than their male counterparts, but also noted that the Welsh media are dominated by men. Indeed, as illustrated by Table 4.15, the majority of the most important political journalists within the studied newspapers were men. It was they who determined the coverage of the Assembly and its AMs. Therefore, it might be more difficult for Assembly women to establish good working relationships with the press than male AMs.

To sum up, this part of the chapter concentrates on the nature of the news articles and who wrote them. Firstly, it discussed how many stories are primarily focused on the AMs, and then it examined the main subjects of the stories. Lastly, it analysed which journalists wrote the most news articles and what they specialise in. The most important finding is that the press coverage of the National Assembly was not substantial, strengthening the claims in previous sections of this chapter. However, once the press gave attention to the AMs and Assembly activities, the coverage as a whole tended to be serious, despite the fact that the coverage was fairly limited during the two chosen periods.

The next part of this chapter will explore the differences of the press coverage between the national and local newspapers, and the differences of the coverage between the dailies and weeklies in further detail.

National versus Local Newspapers

I. Ownership and Staff

As mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, the *Western Mail*, *Daily Post*, *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday* are considered Welsh national newspapers in this study, even though they are more like regional newspapers. The *Western Mail*, which focuses mainly on reporting South Wales, is hardly read in North Wales where the *Daily Post* has a large circulation (Williams 1997; Barlow 2005). *Wales on Sunday* is a weekly tabloid, and the *South Wales Echo* is an evening newspaper which reports Cardiff and the South Wales valleys (Thomas 2006).

All these newspapers are owned by Trinity Mirror group³⁴ (British Newspapers Online 15th July, 2011), which is “one of the UK’s largest newspaper publishers with an award winning portfolio including five national newspapers, over 160 regional newspapers³⁵” (Trinity Mirror plc. 15th July, 2011). Trinity Mirror group has been split into Media Wales

³⁴ British Newspapers Online (2011) “All about the United Kingdom’s national, regional and local press” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/western-mail>> [Accessed 15th July, 2011]

³⁵ Trinity Mirror plc (2011) “Our company – an overview” [WWW] <URL: <http://www.trinitymirror.com/our-company>> [Accessed 15th July, 2011]

for South Wales and Trinity Mirror for North Wales. As Barlow *et al.* (2005) noted, it owned 27 newspapers in Wales, accounting for 42 per cent of total circulation (see also Thomas 2006). Meanwhile, Delp has claimed that the British regional newspapers are “highly lucrative, highly trusted and in the hands of a few major publishing chains” (2008:15). This is backed by Street’s suggestion (2001) that the ownership of the print media had gradually become “centralised” or clustered. It indicates that those newspapers which have the same owners may have a similar political agenda, even if the contents vary. That is because hegemony and monopoly will often be the outcome of the clustered ownership. Murphy argued that “concentration of ownership is seen as a means to control the consciousness of the population” (1998:80; see also Golding and Murdock 1978). He stated that there would be one of two possible consequences: owners may be capable of using their own corporate control to “expand their political influence”; or the resultant newspaper chains may be able to “form the corporate structure which generates and reinforces a hegemonic ideology” (1998:81).

The *Western Mail*, *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday* in fact share the same website, WalesOnline.co.uk (British Newspapers Online 15th July, 2011). Furthermore, they share many journalists as well. For instance, during the two selected periods for this research, the *Western Mail*’s health editor Madeleine Brindley was one of the journalists who produced the most articles (see Table 4.15); she also wrote for the *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday*. The *Western Mail* and *South Wales Echo* also share many other journalists, such as Martin Shipton, David Williamson, David James and Matthew Aplin. Likewise, among the local newspapers, a number of journalists who wrote for the *South Wales Evening Post* produced articles for *Llanelli Star*: Ben Wright, Anthony O’Connell, Arthur Williams, Jason Evans, Mary Vancura, Shaun Greaney, Laura Davies, Geraint Thomas, Helen Keates, Alexis Burns and Emma Jones. As stated in a previous section, Western Mail and Echo Ltd. had a substantial profit margin in 2005, but the staff reduction rate was also significant (Williams and Franklin 2005; Delp 2008). Williams and Franklin (2005) argued that this, to a large extent, might affect the seriousness of the content and the quality of the output of the newspapers. A further implication is that these newspapers may share similar political agendas. According to Denver (2003), most

British national newspapers are politically partisan and have a preference for one party or another and state it clearly.

Watts has noted that newspaper ownership in the UK is concentrated in the hands of a comparatively small number of large corporations which tend to be wealthy and right-wing in their political viewpoint – “a few proprietors have a monopoly of the papers sold” (1997:36). Watts (1997) has also noted that the tendency towards monopolistic ownership is one of the main reasons that the range of viewpoints in newspapers has been reduced; and that concentrated ownership means that left-wing parties often get an unfair treatment. More importantly, Murphy (1998) has suggested that concentration of ownership enables owners to use their power to expand their own political views and influences. For instance, it is widely acknowledged that the Murdoch press has been extensively influenced by Rupert Murdoch’s political principles (Evans 1984; Neil 1997; Watts 1997; Franklin 2004; Franklin *et al.* 2009). In terms of the Welsh press, no strong evidence suggests that the owners influence the newspapers’ content. However, as will be seen in the following chapters, and according to personal experiences of the 28 interviewed AMs from the fourth Welsh Assembly, some of the Welsh newspapers were more sympathetic towards Plaid Cymru than towards the other Welsh political parties. It is worth mentioning that for many people it is a fact that British national newspapers tend to be overwhelmingly anti-Labour, and pro-Conservative views abound (Watts 1997). As well, Ye (2007) noted that one Labour AM pointed out that the *Western Mail* was anti-Labour and was supportive of Plaid Cymru.

II. The Western Mail is exceptional in terms of covering the AMs.

The four mentioned national newspapers in this study have a high percentage of the articles which concentrate on AMs – the *Western Mail* (48.6 per cent), *South Wales Echo* (46.3 per cent), *Daily Post* (44.8 per cent) and *Wales on Sunday* (58.6 per cent) (see Table 4.16). Most significantly, it is clear that the *Western Mail* covered Assembly politics in more detail than the other selected newspapers, which include the *Daily Post*, the national newspaper in North Wales, and the *South Wales Evening Post*, another newspaper that

published a closest number of articles to the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post* (see Tables 4.1 and 4.16).

Table 4.16 Number of Articles that Primarily Focus on AM(s) in Each Newspaper

Name of the Newspaper	Article Primarily Focuses on AM(s)				Total
	Yes	% within paper	No	% within paper	
Western Mail	319	48.6	337	51.4	656
South Wales Echo	119	46.3	138	53.7	257
Daily Post	237	44.8	292	55.2	529
South Wales Argus	95	33.0	193	67.0	288
South Wales Evening Post	169	33.7	333	66.3	502
Evening Leader	151	51.5	142	48.5	293
Wales on Sunday	34	58.6	24	41.4	58
Western Telegraph	51	39.5	78	60.5	129
Cambrian News	41	31.5	89	68.5	130
Llanelli Star	34	29.6	81	70.4	115
North Wales Pioneer	16	38.1	26	61.9	42
Penarth Times	30	45.5	36	54.5	66
Total	1296	42.3	1769	57.7	3065

Firstly, as displayed in Table 4.15, except for Tom Bodden (170 stories in the *Daily Post*), other journalists who each produced a large number of articles were from the *Western Mail* – the chief reporter Martin Shipton (127 stories); the then Senedd correspondent David Williamson (71 stories) (the paper’s political editor at present); and the former political editor Tomos Livingstone (59 stories). This means that the *Western Mail* had its own reporting team for politics, unlike the other dailies or evening newspapers which only had a couple of experienced political journalists.

Secondly, according to Table 4.16, the *Western Mail* produced the largest number of articles which are primarily focused on the AMs: nearly half of its total articles (319). This suggests that the *Western Mail* gave more extensive coverage to the Assembly and its AMs than did the other newspapers. Another newspaper that needs to be mentioned here is the *Evening Leader*. 151 out of its 293 articles are concentrated on the AMs (see

Table 4.16) – at 51.5 per cent; this represents a significant proportion of the paper’s coverage of the AMs. However, the *Evening Leader* only produced approximately half the number of articles that the *Western Mail* did – 293 articles against 656.

Thirdly, as discussed previously, the *Western Mail* has the smallest percentage of short articles which contain less than 100 words (see Table 4.7). This suggests that the paper printed a much larger number of long and detailed articles concerning the Assembly and its AMs than did the other chosen newspapers.

Finally, Table 4.17 depicts how much space all 118 front-page articles take up, and how many were published by each of the 12 newspapers mentioned. The *Western Mail* produced the largest number of front-page stories featuring the Assembly: 57 out of 118. Among the 57 articles, only eight of them account for less than one-fifth of the space on a front-page (the four front-page notices are counted here). It is obvious that the *Western Mail* paid more substantial attention to the Assembly than did other Welsh newspapers during the two periods studied.

Table 4.17 Number of Articles by Space that the Front-page Story and its Accompanied Image Occupied in Each Newspaper

	Name of the Newspaper												Total
	Western Mail	South Wales Echo	Daily Post	South Wales Argus	Evening Post	Evening Leader	Wales on Sunday	Western Telegraph	Cambrian News	Llanelli Star	North Wales Pioneer	Penarth Times	
Space:													
Text plus													
FP, 1/2-2/3	13	0	5	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	3	25
Visuals													
FP, 1/3	2	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	14
FP, 1/4	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	11
FP, 1/5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
FP, Less than 1/5	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
FP, Notice/In Brief	4	1	3	4	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	15
FP+IP, Full or more	7	1	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
FP+IP, 2/3	6	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	11
FP+IP, 1/2	7	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	11
FP+IP, 1/3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
FP+IP, 1/4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	57	6	9	17	2	9	0	4	2	5	2	5	118

Note: Newspaper Space includes text and image, if there is any image accompanied.

This claim is also backed by the majority of the 28 interviewed AMs across the political parties in the present Assembly. Generally speaking, the interview participants believed that the *Western Mail* did a fairly good job of covering Welsh politics and what happened in the Assembly, despite the fact that some of them had reservations about the credibility of certain stories that the paper ran and the way in which it sometimes represented their own parties. For example, the Cardiff West Labour AM Mark Drakeford (a Cardiff University Professor) noted, “The *Western Mail*’s coverage of the election is pretty good. If you took the paper every day, you would be very well informed about the election.” His fellow Labour colleague, Llanelli AM Keith Davies, also said to me during our interview:

I mean we get good coverage in the *Western Mail*... I buy the *Western Mail* daily as I always have, because I am very keen on sport. And since I am an Assembly Member, I am very keen on what they say about the Assembly. And we get good coverage... If you look at the *Western Mail*, there are always about three or four pages that are political.

Apart from the Labour AMs in the Welsh Government, AMs from the Opposition parties also share a positive opinion of the *Western Mail* with regard to its coverage of the Assembly activities. The former Heritage Minister, Plaid Cymru AM Alun Ffred Jones, pointed out, “The *Western Mail* is very good. I mean sometimes they run stories which are not true, but that’s par for the course obviously. But it always has lead stories about the First Minister or Cabinet decisions on the budget.”

An anonymous AM stated, “Truly the only media outlets which have any capacity for analysis are really the *Western Mail*, the BBC and ITV.” It is clear that the *Western Mail* is the pre-eminent voice in the Welsh print media in terms of covering Welsh politics and affairs. The Lib Dem AM, William Powell, also expressed his positive view towards the paper and its political journalists:

I think the *Western Mail* gave a good level of coverage to the Assembly elections. We’ve got some very skilled and dedicated journalists who are very concerned about the effective of government in Wales. I mention particularly Martin Shipton, the chief reporter of the *Western Mail*, who writes as a critical friend.

Similarly, the South Wales West Conservative AM, Byron Davies, said to me in our meeting:

You know whether you agree with what they say is another matter, but the *Western Mail* reports [on the Assembly] well. I mean it has journalists that are permanently based here. So, it has the opportunity to have things first hand.

Another anonymous North Wales Conservative AM pointed out:

The good part of the *Western Mail* is that it is one of the only written media outlets in Wales that actually provides direct coverage of the Assembly. Almost all the others, including virtually all my local papers, have no direct coverage whatsoever. Often you find the local journalists don't understand still how the Assembly works; what it is responsible for; where the decisions are made between London and Cardiff; that the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales are different institutions; and constantly, therefore, make mistakes in their reporting. Virtually all the reporting in my area is based on second hand news, so it's what press releases or the letters the Members themselves send out, not based on editorial or reporting of debates or committee work. So, the *Western Mail* at least tries to do some of that, which is positive. But how it does it, I find it extremely subjective, extremely opinionated and judgemental, often very narrow-minded.

In summary, whether this somewhat critical opinion is true or not, among the interviewed AMs the *Western Mail* is the most recognised Welsh newspaper for giving more substantial coverage to the Assembly and its AMs than other newspapers. Overall, the *Western Mail* has stood out in terms of covering the AMs and Assembly activities: this is evidenced by both the comparative figures presented at the very beginning of this section and the comments of the interviewed AMs. Apparently, it is consistent with the paper's reputation as a widely acknowledged Welsh national newspaper (Williams 1997; Thomas 2006; Barlow 2005; Ye 2007).

The following section will examine the differences in the press coverage of the Assembly in terms of the national versus local newspapers. It will also endeavour to answer the questions of whether the local press does or does not really understand devolution as the

anonymous Conservative AM mentioned above; and whether the local press pays more attention to women AMs as some female AMs claimed in a previous study (Ye 2007). However, these two questions will also be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

III. The Differences between the Nationals and the Locals

When considering the more locally focused regional and community newspapers, Franklin and Murphy have argued that the local press is often understood as “insignificant, harmless distractions, reporting little more than uncritical celebrations of local culture in tandem with eulogies of local personalities” (1991:2). Despite this, they have also suggested that political news plays an important part in the local newspapers. They have stated that the local newspapers are “highly influential in defining news for their readers and [are] likely to be the single most important source of news, especially political news, within their area.”(1991:6). However, after a close examination of the weekly local newspapers, it can be concluded that there was not a significant number of news stories focused on the Assembly in some of the local newspapers. For example, only three articles altogether featured the AMs in a two-month period in the *North Wales Pioneer* (see Table 4.3).

Jackson has suggested that the local press usually attaches great importance to the opinion of community leaders, as they exercise “a decisive influence on local newspaper content and its presentation” (1971:43). Cushion and Morgan (2003) have also noted that AMs rate their local newspapers as the most significant medium to be counted in terms of covering politics, because they provide columns for local politicians (see also Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). Therefore, it is expected that the AMs might have a greater influence on the local press in their constituencies or regions than on the national newspapers.

A majority of the 28 interviewed AMs in this study believed that their local newspapers are more interested in reporting issues related to their own constituencies rather than national issues. In order to link the stories in the Assembly to the locality, the local AMs,

therefore, are given more coverage than the others. Three out of the 28 interviewees³⁶ mentioned that AMs write columns in their local newspapers; they considered those AM columns are important in a sense of providing an avenue for them to communicate with their constituents. About one-third of the AMs stated that their local press treats them fairly and even gives them greater coverage than the Welsh national press. The following comments were made by four female AMs from different political parties, who all commented on their local press' coverage of the Assembly and AMs:

The local papers are interested in local angle, so they are not interested in so many wider political debates. They want to know about how the decisions that have been made here are going to affect local people. And they are much more interested in Assembly Members who are involved in local events rather than necessarily what or how the Assembly Members are voting. It's more about local issues rather than you know national political debates. They are not so interested in covering that. (Kirsty Williams, Lib Dem, AM)

I suppose I had an advantage living for a long time in Mid Wales as well, where there are seven newspapers. They are all weeklies. There is a daily, called the *Shropshire Star*³⁷ ... The local press' Assembly coverage in sort of very general ways tends to be virtually non-existent ... If some Assembly Member sends them a press release, they'll just put that in obviously. But they are better on their local Assembly Members in their local activities. So, for example, if you had an Assembly Member from Montgomeryshire, they would actually give reasonable coverage about what that individual was doing on the very local patch. They wouldn't be terribly interested in what that Assembly Member had to say generally about health services, generally about education, so that kind of reporting is completely different I think. (Suzy Davies, Conservative, AM)

The local papers give more coverage to me than the national press, just more coverage. And of course I focus on it a bit more as well, because I know that far more of my constituents read the local press than read the *Western Mail*. So, a lot of my activity ... is relevant to the local press, because maybe something like 60 – 70 per cent of people will read some of that paper³⁸ during that week. And the *Western Mail* is read by a very low percentage of the people in my area. (Elin Jones, Plaid Cymru, AM)

³⁶ Whether this is of any significance or not, all these three AMs are female. They are Plaid Cymru leader Leanne Wood, one anonymous Labour AM and one anonymous Conservative AM.

³⁷ Although this is one of the best-selling English regional evening newspapers, it covers Shropshire and some other parts of England as well as Mid Wales.

³⁸ She was talking about her major local paper, the *Cambrian News*.

I usually get something every week. I said I write a column. I did write one in the first Assembly, and I wrote constantly for four years, so that helped. Nobody knew me in '99, and I had a lot of catching up to do, so I think it certainly helped. I think my profile was very high in my constituency, and the paper had a lot to do with that, to be fair. I mean I haven't had as much in the *Western Mail*. In some respect, it has been negative in some cases. Being a chair of a committee, sometimes you get something on that. And the *Echo* is not being great... I think with the local one, most things I put in, they will actually print, whereas if I send something to the *Western Mail*, unless it was controversial or something, they just ignore it. (Anonymous Female Labour AM)

Regarding the claim that female AMs were given more substantial coverage in their local press, the possible explanation is that the female AM happened to be one of the local authoritative voices. Even though the local press is highly likely to cover their local authorities, such as their local MPs, local councillors and local AMs, the Assembly is the most important political institution that makes decisions which directly affect all the Welsh public. Therefore, the AMs are expected to be of greater relevance or importance to their local press, regardless of their gender. Several male AMs also stated that their local press gives them more attention than does the national press. For example, the Assembly Conservative leader, Andrew RT Davies, noted:

The local papers rely a lot on their local Members to obviously promote the Assembly, via the actions and work they've undertaken as local Members, whether it would be health, education, the economy, rural affairs etc... They are quite happy to take the local AM story, because that's local news.

The following statement is also a typical comment by an anonymous North Wales Conservative AM:

I get significantly greater coverage in my region than the *Western Mail*, which tends not to cover individual Members, unless there is a scandal or a sensational story or an interview with Government Minister. So the positive side is that far more coverage of the individual Members is outside the *Western Mail*.

The question is whether, apart from the interviewed AMs' own experiences, similar results can be found in this research compared to the previous studies (Jackson 1971; Cushion and Morgan 2003; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). In reality, despite the fact that

individual AMs might receive more substantial coverage from their local newspapers, it seems that the percentages of the articles which concentrate on the AMs in the local newspapers are even lower than those of the national newspapers (see Table 4.16). This suggests that the local newspapers are not particularly interested in the AMs themselves; they are more interested in what their local AMs have done for their local communities. As mentioned previously, news items primarily focused on AMs were those that are a description of the AM's profile, personal interests, contributions, and so on; articles which just mentioned or quoted AMs, and stories that focus on comments of an AM on Assembly or constituency matters do not belong to this category. Therefore, AMs may receive more substantial coverage from their local newspapers than the national ones, but in terms of content and quality of the coverage, it varies from newspaper to newspaper³⁹. It is also essential to examine the length of the articles and the space they take up in every single newspaper.

As shown in Table 4.7, all the four national newspapers have a low proportion of shortest stories, except for the *South Wales Echo*. The *Echo* published a large proportion of articles which are less than 100 words (16.3 per cent). There was no front-page news about the Assembly on *Wales on Sunday* during the two selected periods (see Table 4.17). But as discussed above, this Sunday tabloid does have the highest percentage of the stories which are focused on AMs (58.6 per cent) (see Table 4.16). It is apparent from Table 4.17 that the other weeklies did not give much front-page coverage to the Assembly either. As for the local daily and evening press, the *South Wales Argus* produced 17 front-page articles. The *South Wales Evening Post* only printed two stories on its front pages, while the *Evening Leader* published nine. This indicates that the national press paid more intensive attention to the Assembly than did the local press.

With regard to the inside-page news stories, as illustrated in Table 4.18, the national daily and evening press in general did not particularly give more prominent coverage to the Assembly than did the local evening press. However, what is notable is that the *Western Mail* is outstanding in that it produced 26 one-page sized articles and 45 stories which are

³⁹ See more detailed discussions in the following chapters.

more than a page (this includes two news articles which account for two pages). It is obvious that this is complementary to the previous findings of the *Western Mail's* coverage of the Assembly.

Table 4.18 Number of Articles by Space that the Inside-page Article and its Accompanied Image Occupied in Dailies

	Name of the Newspaper						Total
	Western Mail	South Wales Echo	Daily Post	South Wales Argus	South Wales Evening Post	Evening Leader	
Space:							
Text plus IP, 2	2	0	1	1	0	0	4
Visuals							
IP, 3/2 or More	18	3	3	4	3	2	33
IP, 5/4	25	9	2	0	1	1	38
IP, Full or 1	26	3	5	10	9	3	56
IP, 3/4-4/5	52	16	12	19	18	4	121
IP, 3/5-2/3	47	30	32	24	17	2	152
IP, 1/2	54	15	59	22	38	15	203
IP, 2/5	33	30	46	0	0	1	110
IP, 1/3	42	26	59	44	74	29	274
IP, 1/4	77	9	53	33	47	52	271
IP, 1/5	15	3	22	15	17	45	117
IP, Less than 1/5	126	21	107	56	100	68	478
IP, Notice/In Brief	82	86	119	43	176	62	568
Total	599	251	520	271	500	284	2425

Note: Newspaper Space includes text and image, if there is any image accompanied.

As discussed above, the most obvious difference between the nationals and the locals is that the national press focuses more on national issues, whereas the local press concentrates generally on locally based news. Another significant difference is that the national press does sometimes offer political analysis, whereas the local press more often just turns press releases into articles without providing any in-depth analysis. This claim is backed by an anonymous North Wales Conservative AM, who stated:

At least the *Daily Post* will write an article about an issue, and pull out a quote

from the press release, whereas the *Evening Leader* will just read that press release and turn that into an article. So, it's useful from my perspective that I have an article that I've virtually written. It's not journalism; it's just cross-cutting, I suppose.

Similarly, the Plaid Cymru leader in the Assembly, Leanne Wood, also noted:

I think several local papers have had big cutbacks in recent times. They look to me, anyway, as if they are relying more and more on press releases generated by politicians. So, you'll get a story in the local press, if an Assembly Member sends something in, to say what's happened. A number of us have a local weekly column, so you know the information gets out in our way. But I don't see much proactive coverage in small newspapers, to find out what's happening.

Ms. Wood's claim is backed by a Cardiff University study on the use of press releases, suggesting that over 60 per cent of home news stories in the UK's national broadsheet newspapers came primarily from PR sources (Davies 2008; 2009).

Most significantly, several AMs suggested that their local press simply ignores the Assembly or is even anti-Assembly. For instance, the South Wales East Plaid AM, Lindsay Whittle, asserted, "In my constituency, the local press tended to totally ignore the Assembly. Totally ignored it!" Similarly, the North Wales Lib Dem AM, Aled Roberts, said to me in our meeting:

The local press has historically been quite anti the Welsh Assembly. It sees the Assembly being very South Wales biased, with little or no sympathy really for issues affecting North Wales. That means that there is a challenge for the new politicians, who now represent North Wales, to actually convince the people in North Wales that the Assembly is for the whole of Wales.

Although the anonymous Conservative AM, who was quoted in last section of this chapter, stated that local journalists do not really understand how the Assembly works, he also suggested:

I think a lot of journalists would prefer to have a little more freedom to be a little bit more investigative, but they are not permitted. There aren't enough resources. They haven't got time to be going out into town.

In addition, more AMs showed their understanding of the difficulties that political journalists face in Wales, especially the local journalists. For instance, the Cardiff Central Labour AM, Jenny Rathbone, pointed out:

I think the journalists rarely have the time to actually go out and talk to ordinary people, and the most of the coverage is driven by press releases and hanging around here in the Assembly.

An anonymous female Labour AM mentioned that lots of experienced journalists in her local newspaper had gone, and the new journalists did not know the area. As a result, the quality of the local newspaper is likely to suffer, and so does the coverage of Welsh politics. The Conservative AM, Suzy Davies, also noted:

Glamorgan Gazette and the whole range of local newspapers that spread the West of my area, they've all contracted... I think the journalists' lives have been made a lot more difficult. What's worse, there is no opportunity any more for local journalists to stay in positions long enough to build a long, long relationship with the community they work in. So, they may be there every two or three years, and then all the contacts they've made are lost to whoever comes in next. I think that is actually quite a damaging fact to journalism, full stop.

These AMs' concern is echoed by Williams and Franklin's claim, which noted that the reduction rate of editorial and production staff at Media Wales had reached by 31 per cent since 1995, but its *Western Mail and Echo Ltd.* had a 38.21 per cent profit margin in 2005 and became "the 7th most profitable company of any kind in the principality" (2005:29; see also Delp 2008). Consequently, they argued that staff reduction clearly affects the output of the news product (Williams and Franklin 2005; see also Delp 2008).

Apart from the differences in the coverage between the nationals and the locals, in Table 4.18, it can also be seen that each of the three newspapers (the *Western Mail*, *Daily Post* and *South Wales Evening Post*) published more than 500 articles, and more than 200 articles in these three newspapers occupy less than one-fifth of the space on a page – 208, 226 and 276 respectively. As well as being evidenced by early findings, it is certain that the Welsh press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs was not of great significance in

terms of volume. What is more, the local newspapers did not give more intensive coverage to the AMs than did the Welsh national newspapers⁴⁰.

The next questions are: how does the Welsh press cover the Assembly elections; are there any differences between the 2007 Welsh national election coverage and the coverage of general day-to-day running of the Assembly?

IV. Election versus Routine Coverage

Table 4.19 reveals that a similar number of articles were produced each month over the three-month election period and the later three-month routine coverage period (see also Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Fewer articles were published in April 2007 than the other months, while January 2009 had the largest number of articles among all the six months. However, this does not show the Welsh press covered the Assembly and its AMs more extensively in January 2009 than the other months. In fact, if the occupied newspaper space is taken into consideration, April 2007 is probably the most important month, due to election campaigns for the third Assembly.

Table 4.19 clearly shows that the Welsh press printed the largest number of short stories in January 2009: 151 articles were in news brief sections and 108 articles only accounted for less than one-fifth of the space on a page. By contrast, in April 2007, the press produced more front-page stories than in January 2009 – 20 against 14. In May 2007, there were 41 front-page stories which was the largest number among the selected six months. This is to be expected, as the third Assembly election was on the 3rd of May and coalition talks lasted almost till the end of May.

⁴⁰ However, whether individual AMs received more positive press attention from their local newspapers than the nationals and how they were reported by their local press, these questions will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Table 4.19 Number of Articles by Space that the Story and its Accompanied Image Occupied in Different Months

	Election Period			Routine Coverage Period			Total
	March 2007	April 2007	May 2007	December 2008	January 2009	February 2009	
Space:							
Text plus Visuals							
FP, 1/2-2/3	2	4	11	3	2	3	25
FP, 1/3	2	0	8	0	1	3	14
FP, 1/4	0	3	4	2	1	1	11
FP, 1/5	0	0	2	2	1	0	5
FP, Less than 1/5	3	0	1	2	0	0	6
FP, Notice/In Brief	1	4	6	3	0	1	15
FP+IP, Full or more	3	1	4	2	1	3	14
FP+IP, 2/3	1	3	0	1	4	2	11
FP+IP, 1/2	1	3	2	1	4	0	11
FP+IP, 1/3	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
FP+IP, 1/4	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
IP, 2	1	2	2	1	1	0	7
IP, 3/2 or More	4	8	5	6	12	4	39
IP, 5/4	2	7	14	6	9	5	43
IP, Full or 1	9	18	15	9	13	7	71
IP, 3/4-4/5	16	23	23	16	35	16	129
IP, 3/5-2/3	22	40	27	16	30	29	164
IP, 1/2	42	45	41	43	41	35	247
IP, 2/5	27	24	17	17	26	18	129
IP, 1/3	48	39	54	49	66	51	307
IP, 1/4	55	31	55	61	66	72	340
IP, 1/5	25	19	19	31	32	44	170
IP, Less than 1/5	109	87	102	86	108	113	605
IP, Notice/In Brief	142	92	79	97	151	135	696
Total	516	455	494	454	604	542	3065

Note: Newspaper Space includes text and image, if there is any image accompanied.

It is worth mentioning that April 2007 had almost the same total number of articles as December 2008, and a similar number of front-page articles. 20 front-page stories were printed in April 2007, and 16 appeared in December 2008. However, there was a notable difference in the coverage inside the newspaper: the press obviously produced more long

and detailed articles featuring the AMs and Assembly in April 2007 than December 2008 (see Table 4.19). It is clear that the Welsh newspapers paid more attention to the Assembly during the national election period when number of articles and space were considered. But it must be borne in mind that a Liberal Democrat party leadership election was held in early December 2008, and the first female party leader in the Assembly was elected in a contest between Kirsty Williams and Jenny Randerson. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, there was widespread criticism of some AMs' office expenses claims after the publication of AMs' expenses in December 2008. Therefore, it is possible that December 2008 could have had more substantial press coverage of the AMs than during regular months outside election period.

However, the coverage of the Lib Dem leadership election was surprisingly limited, especially in the local weeklies. For instance, there was no mention of the event at all in four weeklies, the *Western Telegraph*, *Llanelli Star*, *North Wales Pioneer* and *Penarth Times*. There was only one brief notice in the *Cambrian News* to congratulate Ms. Williams upon her being elected (18th December, 2008:11). Similarly, *Wales on Sunday* published only one news story on the leadership election which was written by the columnist and political reporter Matt Withers, titled "Kirsty faces a testing time in politics" (14th December, 2008:25). But, this article was more detailed and entertaining than the one in the *Cambrian News*; it was an almost whole-page coverage story which compared Ms. Williams to Barack Obama (see detailed discussion of the daily and evening press coverage of the Lib Dem leadership election in Chapter 8).

In terms of the AMs' expenses coverage, only one article in the *Western Telegraph* concentrated on its two local sitting AMs, Angela Burns' and Paul Davies' office expenses (17th December, 2008:6). The article simply listed what the two AMs had claimed. The *Cambrian News* and *Wales on Sunday* published three and five articles respectively on AMs' expenses and iPod Gate. The remaining three weeklies, the *Llanelli Star*, *North Wales Pioneer* and *Penarth Times* did not participate in the discussions and did not publish anything related to the AMs' expenses and the iPod controversy. In total, 22 articles among the whole sample featured the Welsh Lib Dem leadership election; 29

were focused on iPod Gate; and 38 covered AMs' office expenses in general (see Table 4.13). Consequently, it can be concluded that the Welsh daily and evening newspapers paid more attention to the Assembly than did the weeklies during the routine coverage period.

However, a few interviewed AMs noted that the Welsh newspapers in general do not routinely pay substantial attention to politics and the AMs. For instance, an anonymous female AM believed that the Welsh press does not routinely focus on the Assembly unless the Assembly is doing something which is newsworthy. The Plaid Cymru AM, Lindsay Whittle, stated that the routine coverage in the Welsh press is highly anticipated:

It's too predictable. They concentrate too much on party leaders⁴¹. It's not all about four people; it's about 60 people. You know, the Welsh party leaders are important – they are important, so are all the other Members of the National Assembly for Wales, as are indeed our Members of Parliament and our Members of the European Parliament as well. They tend to be ignored a little.

In terms of election coverage, Thomas *et al.* (2004a; 2004b) suggested that there was a distinction between the Welsh dailies and weeklies while covering the 2003 Welsh Assembly election and the 2004 local government election. They (2004a; 2004b) also noted that the daily press coverage lacked “overall prominence but was quite extensive, largely nonpartisan and concentrated on constituency profiles and the general campaign process” (Thomas 2006:54), while the weekly press coverage failed to gain prominence even on the inside pages, let alone the front pages. This was still the case when the Welsh press coverage of the 2007 Assembly election was analysed. As stated earlier, this study found that the Welsh national newspapers gave relatively more frequent attention to the Assembly and its AMs than did the more locally focused newspapers. The situation was the same during the 2007 Welsh national election period. This is also supported by the interviewed AMs' comments. The expressions of “very little”, “very limited”, “quite poor”, “very thin” are not uncommon when the local press coverage of the Assembly elections was being referred to. The Pontypridd Labour AM, Mick Antoniw, provided an interesting example:

⁴¹ More detailed discussions on press coverage of party leaders will be presented in the next chapter.

As the local paper, the *Pontypridd Observer* had very little election coverage in it. In fact, the best they came to locally was asking questions about whether I had a pet or not. I wish I wasn't so sure this had any relevance, I suppose, until someone told me they were going to vote for me because I was the one who did have a pet. So, I think the coverage in the *Pontypridd Observer* here was absolutely dismal.

What is more, the former Heritage Minister, Plaid Cymru AM Alun Ffred Jones noted:

I don't know about other people. But the fact is that our local papers just disregarded the election. There was only one article about the election in the local papers... the local press don't do politics. It is a terrible and awful thing to say. But if you look at the papers in my constituency, there was one article which covered all the candidates as if we were all the same. And we were all allowed 200 words or something to say something about ourselves, so the election was not covered, not locally.

Similarly, according to the Cardiff West Labour AM, Mark Drakeford, the election coverage in the Welsh local press is extremely limited:

The local papers in Wales often seem to take the view that they will not report the Assembly election, because this draws attention to partisan politics, which I've never understood, because it seems to me perfectly possible to present their readers with the basic sorts of information about an election, what's going on without in any way taking up their pro or against a particular political party. But there are lots and lots of local newspapers that just won't report it, as though somehow it would be to compromise their position in the minds of their readers, which is a great shame because we know that the local papers in Wales tend to get read far more than the *Western Mail*.

However, Professor Drakeford summed up a number of interviewed AMs' concerns towards the Welsh press:

I wish it was better. I wish there was a more plural, more vibrant, better distributed Welsh press. I wish that the Welsh media again was slightly more diverse voices. But there it is, it isn't the world we are in, so I don't want to criticise them, because I think they probably do the best they can in hard times.

This somewhat reflects the current dilemma that the Welsh press faces. The readership,

circulation and production have contracted, and journalists have to fight for the quality of newspaper content even when the staff and resources have decreased at the same time.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has outlined an overall picture of the Welsh press coverage of the AMs and the Welsh Assembly's daily activities. It also compared the coverage of the national and local newspapers, election and routine coverage, and it presented the interviewed AMs' remarks on the general Welsh press coverage of the Assembly.

This chapter consists of four major sections. First of all, it introduced the research scale and revisited the 12 chosen Welsh English-language newspapers and the two studied periods as well as the total sample of 3065 collected news items.

Second, it analysed the exact extent to which the Welsh press covered the Assembly and its AMs during the two selected periods. In order to find out how extensive the Welsh press coverage of the AMs was, it examined the total number of the newspaper issues involved and the number of relevant articles each issue possessed on average, and also discussed the length of the news articles and the space these articles and their accompanying images took up.

The most important finding is that the press coverage of the AMs was not substantial; in fact, it was curiously limited, as though Assembly politics held little or no interest for the newspapers or their readers – or else the press was trepidatious about entering the arena of party politics perhaps for fear of alienating large percentages of the readership. Although a number of previous research findings suggested that the Welsh media gave little attention to the Welsh Assembly elections (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004b; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007), they did not demonstrate how limited the coverage actually was, especially the Welsh press coverage. Therefore, this chapter examined the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs in great detail in order to depict the precise extent of the coverage, and it gave a detailed description of the length of the articles and the space they

accounted for.

As one of the prominent media, the press plays an important role in providing information for the public and in shaping people's understanding of citizenship, and in encouraging participation in the political processes in a democracy. Lippmann (1922), McCombs (2005) and Harrison (2006) have suggested that the public perceives the world through the eyes of the media, just as several other scholars (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Franklin *et al.* 2009) have noted that the ways in which the media report certain events and issues influence the formation of public opinions and help to encourage public debates. As a great number of researchers (Lippmann 1922; Cohen 1963; McCombs and Shaw 1972; McCombs 2004; McCombs 2005; Harrison 2006; Franklin *et al.* 2009; Coleman *et al.* 2009) have pointed out, the public thinks certain issues are important often because the media emphasise those issues. In addition, Dearing and Rogers (1996) have suggested that people often judge the relative importance of an issue on the basis of the number of the media messages on that issue, to which they are exposed.

If the Welsh press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs was found to be extensive, then it not only shows that the public is given a great deal of information about Welsh politics, but also that the Welsh press treats the Assembly and its AMs as important. For these reasons, it has been crucial to study the exact extent of the press coverage and the press content of the AMs. This study shows that the Welsh press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs is not significant, and also the majority of the people in Wales tend not to read Welsh newspapers. Newspaper circulation and readership have been declining dramatically in recent years, and people tend to rely on other media, such as television and online media, for information. However, the Welsh press still has a great impact on policy makers and on other media outlets in Wales. For instance, almost all interviewed AMs noted that they paid more attention to the Welsh newspapers after they were elected, especially as newspapers would carry articles concerning them, if they were asked or prompted by press releases. Even with reduced circulation the press still seems to have influence beyond its own pages, influencing, for example, their online versions. Therefore, the print media still play a role in Wales' democratic political landscape and in

delivering and reinforcing the issues related to women, and the position of women politicians and women in general since there have been a large number of women AMs in the Assembly.

Limited press coverage of Assembly politics and the AMs was also demonstrated in the third section of this chapter, which focused on the location and placement and nature of articles within the newspapers examined. It analysed the number of stories which were primarily concentrated on the AMs, and then reviewed the main subjects of the stories. It is true that the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs was not substantial. But once politics was covered, the contents were, in general, fairly serious. The press coverage of the AMs was not substantial, partly because a great number of long articles tended to focus less on the AMs themselves, while a large number of short articles tended to concentrate on them in greater depth.

The third section also discussed which journalists were responsible for writing the largest number of news articles during the two studied periods and what their specialities were. Unsurprisingly, the majority of the dominant political journalists were male. The analysis suggests only limited support for some of the accusations of bias voiced against the *Western Mail* by some female AMs (Ye 2007). As noted by Ye (2007), several female AMs expressed their strong disapproval of the ways in which the *Western Mail* covered the 2007 Assembly election, especially its attention to women politicians: one AM suggested that the paper had a Plaid Cymru perspective and it had an anti-Labour agenda; one argued that it lacked investigative journalists; and a few stated that it was misogynistic. With regard to the exact nature and extent of press coverage of the female AMs, the following chapters will offer more detailed descriptions and discussions.

Finally, this chapter reviewed the differences in the press coverage between the Welsh national and local newspapers, and the differences between the dailies and weeklies while they were covering the 2007 Welsh national election. The statistics showed that the Welsh national press in general paid more substantial attention to Assembly politics and the AMs than did the local weeklies. This echoed the finding of other studies that there was a

distinction between the dailies and weeklies in terms of election coverage (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004b; Thomas 2006). This research also found that the *Western Mail* stood out, in terms of giving the most extensive and intensive coverage to the AMs, among the 12 examined newspapers; this is supported by the comments of the majority of the 28 interviewed AMs and by the comparative statistics presented in this chapter. Moreover, the *Western Mail* had more experienced journalists to cover Welsh politics than any other newspaper.

Most significantly, it is not surprising that some sexist coverage did exist when female AMs were covered by the Welsh newspapers. A good example was the entertaining piece published by the *Western Mail* on the former Conservative AM Laura Anne Jones and the other five celebrity Welsh bachelorettes. However, so far, no strong evidence suggests that the *Western Mail* was particularly anti-women during the two studied periods. Further analysis of this issue is to be found in the ensuing chapters. In terms of gender issues, the following chapter will provide a detailed comparative study of the press coverage of male and female AMs. In particular, it will examine the differences in press attention that the men and women in the Assembly received during the two chosen periods.

CHAPTER 5

A Comparative Study of the Press Coverage of the Male and Female Assembly Members

Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine whether the Assembly Members received different treatment by the Welsh national and local newspapers depending on their gender during the two studied periods⁴². It will analyse the press coverage in great detail in order to carry out a comparative study of the press attention that the male and female AMs received.

Numerous studies show that women politicians have consistently been given less prominent media attention than their male counterparts (Kahn 1993; Kahn 1994a; 1994b; Norris 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Ross 2002b; 2002c; Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Heldman *et al.* 2005; Bystrom 2006; Adcock 2010; Ross and Comrie 2012), and subjected to essentialising their femininity and emphasising their contribution on issues related to women (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Childs 2002; Childs and Withey 2004; Bird 2005; Ye 2007; Mackey 2001). This chapter argues that overall the Welsh press gave more substantial coverage to the male AMs while the majority of the studied local weekly newspapers tended to report female AMs more frequently than the males. In addition, when the AMs were covered by the press, the women in the Assembly were more likely to receive positive comments in the news than their male colleagues. This study demonstrates that when there has been a high level of presence of female politicians in legislatures, gender bias gradually becomes less obvious and controversial: a changing attitude has been clearly observed both in colleagues' perceptions of women politicians and in media representations.

There are two major sections in this chapter. The first part is primarily about whom the Welsh press mainly focused on while reporting on AMs and Assembly activities. The

⁴² In this study, election period means the period between March and May 2007 – the third Assembly election period; the routine coverage period refers to the period between December 2008 and February 2009.

second one discusses the differences in the press coverage of the male and female AMs in detail. One of the key aims of this chapter is to discuss whether there were major differences in the news about the visibility of the men and women in the Assembly, given the fact that there have been a large number of women in the institution since its creation. Does the general gender parity in the Assembly effect women AMs' position in the public sphere? Does it change the media's perceptions of Assembly women? This chapter begins to address these questions.

Are women AMs less visible in the Welsh press?

Based on previous research (Kahn 1993; Kahn 1994a; 1994b; Norris 1997; Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Ross 2002b; 2002c; Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Ye 2007; Heldman *et al.* 2005; Bystrom 2006; Adcock 2010; Ross and Comrie 2012), it would be reasonable to expect that Assembly women are less visible in the media than are their male counterparts. For instance, Kim Kahn's studies (1993; 1994a; 1994b) on women politicians' campaign experiences of running for statewide offices indicate that some of the complaints about "differential treatment" by the press did exist. She found that women candidates for the US Senate consistently received less campaign coverage than did their male colleagues, and that the coverage they did receive was less likely to be positive, focusing on the assumption that they were unlikely to win (Kahn 1994b; see also Carroll and Schreiber 1997). She also found that journalists tended to concentrate on the issues that male candidates raised while significantly ignoring alternative issues prioritised by female candidates (Kahn 1993; see also Carroll and Schreiber 1997). Similarly, Thomas *et al.* stated that "[reporting] was skewed towards representing men rather than women, both in relation to politicians and members of the public" (2004a:285) in Wales. Ross *et al.* (2013) found that the UK major newspapers' coverage of male and female Parliamentary candidates was simply more "business as usual" during the 2010 British general election, showing that men were featured far more frequently in the press than were women. All these findings clearly suggest that this research project might find perceived biases in the Welsh press, in terms of its coverage of the Assembly women. It is worth noting that there has been an almost equal level of

political representation of men and women in the Assembly since the institution was created in 1999. The following section will now explore whether female AMs are reported less often by the Welsh press than are their male counterparts.

I. Party Leaders and High-profile Ministers – the Focus of the Welsh Press

Denver (2003) has noted that one of the main characteristics of modern national election campaigns is that the political party leaders are the major focus of the media. This is echoed by other research findings (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Ye 2007). For example, Thomas *et al.* (2004a) pointed out that the media coverage of the 2003 Assembly election was dominated by the four main political parties and their leaders. Similarly, Ye (2007) found that the Welsh national press coverage of the 2007 Assembly election was also heavily concentrated on the four main party leaders.

1) Four Party Leaders in the Welsh Press

First, it is useful to clarify how to measure the press attention that the party leaders received. In this study, how frequently an AM became the main focus⁴³ of the examined news articles is an important perspective to consider. As seen in Table 5.1, the four main party leaders enjoyed the most substantial press coverage in the two chosen periods, especially the then First Minister and Welsh Labour party leader Rhodri Morgan, who was the main focus AM of 463 articles in the sample of 3065 news stories collected. The former Plaid leader Ieuan Wyn Jones received the second most coverage in terms of the press attention that all AMs received – he became the main focus of 192 articles, listed after the former First Minister Rhodri Morgan (see Table 5.1).

⁴³ If a report was based on interviews with AMs, and the interviewees were given similar attention or their direct or indirect quotations were in similar wordage, the main focus referred to the interviewee who was given the most wordage. If a report was short or AMs were merely mentioned a few times in the article, then the main focus referred to the first mentioned AM. If an article was about other people's opinions of a politician, and the politicians themselves did not express any views, the politician was still the main focus.

Table 5.1 Number of Occurrences of AMs as the Main Focus AM (by Name)

	Number of Occurrences	% of Occurrences
Rhodri Morgan	463	15.1
Ieuan Wyn Jones	192	6.3
Edwina Hart	135	4.4
Nick Bourne	123	4.0
Brian Gibbons	106	3.5
Elin Jones	105	3.4
Andrew Davies	96	3.1
Jane Davidson	90	2.9
Helen Mary Jones	88	2.9
Peter Black	75	2.4
Mike German	70	2.3
Lesley Griffiths	60	2.0
John Griffiths	52	1.7
Jonathan Morgan	52	1.7
Alun Ffred Jones	51	1.7
Chris Franks	48	1.6
Carwyn Jones	47	1.5
Dafydd Wigley	46	1.5
Dafydd Elis-Thomas	41	1.3
Dai Lloyd	40	1.3
Kirsty Williams	33	1.1
Other	1052	34.3
Total	3065	100.0

Notes: 1) Any AM that was mentioned more than 40 times, except for Kirsty Williams.

2) Kirsty Williams was elected Welsh Lib Dem party leader in December 2008.

3) Carwyn Jones became First Minister and Welsh Labour party leader in December 2009.

The Welsh press also paid a great deal of attention to the other two main party leaders, the then Welsh Conservative leader Nick Bourne and the then Welsh Lib Dem leader Mike German. Mr. Bourne ranked number four in terms of the AMs who were featured most frequently in news stories. However, Mr. German, who was ranked number 11, was the main subject of a considerably fewer articles – 70 stories (see Table 5.1). This was probably because the Welsh Lib Dem party was the smallest major political party in the Assembly – it had six seats out of 60 in the second and third Assemblies. Incidentally, after the May 2011 Assembly election, the party only gained five seats. It can also be seen

from Table 5.1 that Kirsty Williams and Carwyn Jones did not enjoy as much press attention as the then party leaders. As stated in the notes in Table 5.1, Kirsty Williams was elected Welsh Lib Dem party leader in December 2008, and Carwyn Jones became First Minister and Welsh Labour party leader in December 2009. Nonetheless, Table 5.1 provides evidence for the claim that the political party leaders were the main focus of the Welsh press during the two research periods.

When the first female Assembly Lib Dem leader, Kirsty Williams, was asked whether there were any differences in the Welsh press coverage about her since she was elected as the leader, she suggested that only the volume of the coverage increased rather than any significant difference in content. She said to me:

... just more of it, my exposure to the journalists. I have a much greater understanding and better relationship [with them], because I simply know them better. I do a press conference every Tuesday morning. Well, of course, if I wouldn't have been a leader, I would have never done that. So, just a lot exposure to them really, I know them better. And, yeah, just volume really.

In terms of the press attention that has been paid to the First Minister, she also suggested:

I think the coverage comes from just the position. I don't think it would be different if there was a female First Minister. I just think that they cover the people that are the head of the organisation.

Ms. Williams' point was backed by the Conservative leader in the Assembly, Andrew RT Davies, who noted:

Obviously as leaders you do get greater profile, because in any walk of life whether you are the team captain; whether you are the manager of a store; whether you are the ganger on the road crew or whatever, you are leading a group of individuals or organisations. You are the point man or woman of that organisation, so you get greater coverage.

Both leaders' comments were evidenced by the statistics shown above – political party leaders were given the most coverage by the Welsh press when the Assembly and its AMs were reported. Obviously, they were paid more attention than most of the other AMs.

2) High-profile Ministers in the Welsh Press

What is also worth noting is that major Ministers in the Assembly were frequently covered by the Welsh press during the two chosen periods. Before a resounding “yes” vote in the referendum on 3rd March, 2011, the Assembly did not have direct law-making powers and it only had limited legislative powers in areas like health, education, transport, rural affairs and economic development. Therefore, the Assembly Ministers became the main spokespeople for their portfolio areas and hence the focus of the media.

An anonymous Labour Minister stated during my interview for this study:

As the Minister I get a fair crack of the whip in the Welsh media on the whole... at a national level, the main coverage I had has been as the Minister. If I wasn't the Minister, I wouldn't have been given that coverage.

As suggested earlier, the Ministers often drew more media attention than other AMs, partly because of their positions and portfolios in the Welsh Government. The former Heritage Minister in the third Assembly, Alun Ffred Jones, also noted in our meeting:

Obviously I was getting a lot of coverage then, because I was constantly opening something or doing something interesting. So, there was quite good coverage of my portfolio, because it's a good story portfolio, because I was doing tourism, heritage... I got a lot of coverage.

This can be explained by Table 5.1. For example, Labour AM Edwina Hart ranked number three in terms of the number of news articles. She was Social Justice and Regeneration Minister in the second Assembly, and she was made Minister for Health and Social Services in May 2007 after the third Assembly election. The number of the articles in which she was the main focus even exceeded that of the former leader of the Assembly Conservatives, Nick Bourne – 135 against 123 articles. This was in part because Ms. Hart had been a high-profile politician in the Assembly, and also partly because the position of Health Minister often put her in the media spotlight. This was evidenced by the coverage that another former Health Minister Labour AM Brian Gibbons received. Dr. Gibbons was the then Health Minister in the second Assembly, and in May 2007, after the election that year, he became Social Justice and Local Government

Minister. It is clear from Table 5.2 that Dr. Gibbons was the main focus of the press more frequently during the period when he was Health Minister than during the periods when he was no longer Health Minister, following the 2007 election and in 2008 and 2009. Likewise, Ms. Hart was reported by the press more often when she was Health Minister in 2008 and 2009.

Table 5.2 Number of Occurrences of AMs as the Main Focus AM in Different Months

		Election Period			Routine Coverage Period			Total
		Mar.-May 2007			Dec. 2008-Feb. 2009			
Name of the Main Focus AM	Rhodri Morgan	65	107	126	46	67	52	463
	Ieuan Wyn Jones	30	28	45	32	29	28	192
	Nick Bourne	24	11	16	35	23	14	123
	Mike German	19	15	27	2	5	2	70
	Kirsty Williams	3	0	1	15	11	3	33
	Carwyn Jones	21	8	1	7	9	1	47
	Edwina Hart	7	2	5	31	50	40	135
	Brian Gibbons	36	24	9	13	11	13	106
	Elin Jones	12	21	11	20	21	20	105
	Andrew Davies	45	12	5	14	9	11	96
	Jane Davidson	17	14	5	13	21	20	90
	Helen Mary Jones	18	11	20	7	16	16	88
	Peter Black	7	6	20	6	20	16	75
	Lesley Griffiths	1	4	8	11	12	24	60

Note: This table is part of a much larger table which was generated by crosstabulation based on two variables: Name of the Main Focus AM & Time Period of the Story. This table only includes any AM that was the main focus AM or was mentioned in more than 60 articles, except for Kirsty Williams and Carwyn Jones.

Other major Ministers in the Assembly Government were also reported more frequently by the Welsh press than those shadow Ministers and backbench AMs in the Assembly. For instance, Plaid AM Elin Jones was the main focus of 105 news articles (see Table 5.1 and 5.2). On 9th July, 2007, after the Welsh Labour-Plaid coalition Government was formed, Elin Jones was appointed as Minister for Rural Affairs. Obviously, agriculture and rural development have been of great importance to Wales. The former Rural Affairs Minister Elin Jones said:

Well, I think I got a lot of press coverage in the specific agricultural press, because there is an agricultural press of course. You know, the *Farmers Weekly*, the *Farmers Guardian*, the Farming and Countryside supplement of the *Western Mail*, they gave me a lot of coverage for the farming community who is reading that. So, that was good.

As noted in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, both Labour AMs Andrew Davies and Jane Davidson had a large number of articles mentioning or concentrating on them. Andrew Davies was Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks in the second Assembly and he was Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery in the second period chosen for this research. Jane Davidson was Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills before the 2007 Assembly election, and she subsequently became Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing in May 2007.

In summary, it is true that the four main political party leaders were the centre of the press attention when the Assembly and its AMs were reported on, especially during the election period (see Table 5.2). All leaders were men during the 2007 Assembly election period. Furthermore, except for Welsh Lib Dem leader Kirsty Williams, the three major party leaders in the Assembly were men during the routine coverage period. As mentioned previously, Ms. Williams was elected on 8th December, 2008. From Table 5.2, it seems that she received more attention from the press in December 2008 and January 2009, in spite of the fact that the coverage in terms of the number of articles was not as large as the other male party leaders. Nevertheless, Ms. Williams' predecessor, the former Lib Dem leader Mike German also received less press attention than the other leaders in the Assembly as stated earlier.

What is more, it can be seen from the highlighted names in Table 5.2 that besides the party leaders, five out of eight AMs who received the most press attention were female, namely Labour AMs Edwina Hart, Jane Davidson and Lesley Griffiths, and Plaid AMs Elin Jones and Helen Mary Jones. Apparently, they were more active during the routine coverage period than during the election period in terms of how much press coverage they received, based on the number of articles in which they were the main focus (see Table 5.2). The question is whether they received more substantial attention from the

local press than from the national press. This will be answered in later discussions.

II. Differences in the Press Coverage of the Male and Female AMs

A great number of researchers have noted that women politicians have been often less visible in the media than their male colleagues (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; Kahn 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994a; 1994b; Braden 1996; Fox 1997; Norris 1997; Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Aday and Devitt 2001; Bystrom *et al.* 2001; Ross 2002b; 2002c; Devitt 2002; Banwart *et al.* 2003; Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Heldman *et al.* 2005; Bystrom 2006; Ye 2007; Adcock 2010; Ross and Comrie 2012). Unsurprisingly, this was still the case when the Welsh national press reported on the AMs during the two selected periods despite the general gender parity in the Assembly. However, this pattern did not hold true for the majority of the local weekly newspapers (see detailed discussions inside this chapter).

1) Were female AMs less visible than males as a whole?

According to Table 5.3, there were almost twice as many articles that focused on or mentioned male AMs as those on female AMs. In terms of the gender of the second and third main focus AMs, males also outnumbered females: by a ratio of almost three to one, even though only 1182 out of 3065 articles discussed two AMs and 545 covered three AMs in their content⁴⁴ (see Table 5.3). These figures definitely back other researchers' claim that male politicians have often gained more attention from the media than their female colleagues (such as Kahn 1993; 1994a; 1994b; Norris 1997; Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Ross 2002c; Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Ye 2007; Heldman *et al.* 2005; Bystrom 2006; Adcock 2010; Ross and Comrie 2012). More importantly, the majority of the collected news items only concentrated on or mentioned one AM, which, to a certain degree, explains the reason why the press coverage of the AMs has been limited.

⁴⁴ 278 articles were less than 100 words in length (see Table 4.7); a small number of these articles may mention a second or even a third AM, but the gender of the second and third AMs in these articles was not counted here.

Table 5.3**Gender of the Main Focus AM**

	Number of Articles	% of Articles
Male	1969	64.2
Female	1096	35.8
Total	3065	100.0

Gender of the Second Main Focus AM

Male	845	27.6
Female	337	11.0
N/A	1883	61.4
Total	3065	100.0

Gender of the Third Main Focus AM

Male	390	12.7
Female	155	5.1
N/A	2520	82.2
Total	3065	100.0

2) Gender and Sources

Another finding is that male AMs were the most important source of 1067 articles, which is 34.8 per cent of all 3065 news items, compared to 18.4 per cent female AM sources (see Table 5.4). It is obvious that the press was far more likely to use male AMs than females as their main sources. In this study, the first main important source⁴⁵ can be an AM; a government spokesperson; other politician(s); journalists; editor(s); an analyst or commentator; member(s) of the public; Assembly staff; et cetera⁴⁶. A total of 357 articles (11.6 per cent) did not have any sources. What is worth noting here is that there were 278 news items which were less than 100 words in length (see Table 4.7). These items or articles' sources were not considered. Other news items, such as letters (except for those

⁴⁵ Here, sources are ideas and general information for the news story (Franklin *et al.* 2005:248; 2009). A source can be a person, or an organization, or a publication, and so on. A source often is a direct or indirect quotation in this research. A publication can be a study or a report or a survey or a newspaper or a website or a political party's manifesto or a programme or a film, et cetera. Other politicians can be councilors or MPs or MEPs; a joint statement by more than one politician, except for the AMs.

⁴⁶ There can be more than one "main source". For example, there might be an interview with more than one interviewee. In that case, the most important source refers to the source which is given the most wordage; the second most important source or additional source refers to the second source which is given the second most wordage.

written by AMs), opinion pieces or editorials, which did not quote others directly or indirectly, but merely featured the writers' own opinions, were treated as unsourced.

Table 5.4 The Most Important Source in Articles

	Number of References	% of References
AM Male	1067	34.8
AM Female	563	18.4
Other Politicians	328	10.7
Member(s) of the Public	225	7.3
Chairman/Chief of a Business/Organisation	193	6.3
Publication	159	5.2
NHS Chiefs/Staff	52	1.7
Government Spokesperson	50	1.6
Assembly Staff	36	1.2
Police/Police Spokesperson	17	.6
Analyst/Commentator	12	.4
Journalists	3	.1
Editor	3	.1
N/A	357	11.6
Total	3065	100.0

Berkowitz (2009) has noted that “source” often refers to officials and experts connected to society’s central institutions. As can be seen from Tables 5.4 and 5.5, members of the public as the first and second most important sources for the stories only accounted for 7.3 per cent and 7.4 per cent, respectively. It is important to note that, in this study, members of the public can be a professor or a researcher or an expert from a university or school; young people and school children; civil servants other than politicians; a spokesperson for a small business or organisation. Therefore, articles that used ordinary citizens as primary sources were not expected in a great number. Nevertheless, all collected articles were more or less related to AMs and Welsh politics, so it would not be unexpected for the articles to reference authorities. In addition, Berkowitz (2009) has found that the majority of mainstream sources tend to be male officials. This echoes the findings in this section. Some other studies (Grabe *et al.* 1999; Dolan 2005; Ross 2006; WACC 2000; 2007; 2010) have also suggested that men are always more frequently

quoted as sources than women, and the principal contributors are often white males in positions of power or authority.

Table 5.5 Second Most Important Source in Articles

	Number of References	% of References
AM Male	591	19.3
Other Politicians	341	11.1
AM Female	251	8.2
Member(s) of the Public	228	7.4
Publication	220	7.2
Chairman/Chief of a Business/Organisation	179	5.8
Government Spokesperson	81	2.6
NHS Chiefs/Staff	67	2.2
Assembly Staff	57	1.9
Police/Police Spokesperson	18	.6
Analyst/Commentator	11	.4
Journalists	8	.3
Editor	2	.1
N/A	1011	33.0
Total	3065	100.0

In a similar way, when the second most important sources are considered, male AMs were quoted more than twice as often as were female AMs, as illustrated in Table 5.5⁴⁷. It is also worth mentioning that 33.0 per cent of the sample did not have a second source (see Table 5.5). This, to a certain extent, explains the reason a large portion of the articles were extremely short in wordage. Table 5.6 reveals that 784 out of 3065 articles (25.6 per cent) did not directly or indirectly reference the AMs; about one-fifth of the sample used less than 50-word quotations from the AMs (this includes 398 articles in which the direct or indirect AM quotation was less than 30 words and 303 articles which had an AM quotation between 31 and 50 words); more than half of all articles (1580 in number) used more than 51 words from the AMs. From Table 5.6, it can be seen that the percentage of longer quotations (more than 51 words) that were given by both male and female AMs

⁴⁷ As mentioned in footnote 45, other politicians can be councilors or MPs or MEPs; a joint statement by more than one politician. Other politicians do not include AMs, so their genders are not discussed here.

was not significantly different (51.4 per cent and 51.7 per cent). In spite of this, the Welsh press still tended to use male AMs more frequently as sources than it did female AMs, because in total 1969 articles were focused on males compared to 1096 articles on females (Table 5.6; see also Table 5.3).

Table 5.6 Number of Occurrences of Main Focus AM by Length of Direct/Indirect Quotes

		Gender of the Main Focus AM				Total
		Male	% of Male	Female	% of Female	
Length of	0-30	277	14.1	121	11.0	398
Direct/Indirect	31-50	201	10.2	102	9.3	303
Main AM Quotes	More than 51	1013	51.4	567	51.7	1580
	Words	478	24.3	306	27.9	784
	N/A					
Total		1969	100	1096	100	3065

3) Gender and Images

Lister and Wells (2001) considered images as part of the cycle of production, circulation and consumption through which their meanings were accumulated and transformed, so it is important to examine the images which were published alongside the news stories. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a much higher percentage of the Welsh population could recognise the then Labour party leader and First Minister Rhodri Morgan than the other three main political party leaders in the Assembly (*Western Mail* 1st March, 2007; 22nd May, 2007; *South Wales Echo* 1st March, 2007; *Daily Post* 1st March, 2007; *Western Telegraph* 7th March, 2007; Shipton 2011). In order to gain a better understanding of this, the analysis of accompanying images is vital to this research, which also helps to explain and analyse the coverage that the Welsh press has given to the Assembly and its AMs. The question is how many images or photographs of the AMs were printed in the Welsh press in terms of gender and leadership. As displayed in Table 5.7, more than half of the 3065 news items (57.0 per cent) were accompanied by an image⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ Some articles had more than one image, especially during the election period.

Table 5.7 Is the Article Accompanied by an Image

	Number of Articles	% of Articles
Yes	1747	57.0
No	1318	43.0
Total	3065	100.0

Although 1747 articles out of 3065 contained an image, this does not mean that all of them were images of AMs. From the information in Table 5.8, it can be seen that only slightly more than one-fourth of the articles (26.4 per cent) had an image of an AM. A portrait of an AM means only one AM was photographed and nobody else was in the photo. Interestingly, the number of images of male AMs exceeded that of females in terms of group photos which show an AM with other people (see Table 5.8). Although the figures do not reveal a large difference (4.2 per cent versus 3.1 per cent), they still show that male AMs tend to be photographed more often with others than female AMs; and photos of male AMs tend to be printed in the press more often than those of female AMs. This indicates that more media attention was given to male AMs than females. It also suggests that male AMs may be more accessible to the public than female AMs by posing more often with others in the photos.

Table 5.8 Is the Image a Portrait of an AM

	Number of Images	% of Images
Yes	810	26.4
Group Photo A	130	4.2
Group Photo B	94	3.1
Group Photo C	74	2.4
No or N/A	1957	63.8
Total	3065	100.0

Notes: 1) Group Photo A (AM Male with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)

2) Group Photo B (AM Female with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)

3) Group Photo C (AMs with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)

Unsurprisingly, the claim that there were more photos of male AMs in the press than those of females is evidenced by the figures in Table 5.9, which reveal the gender of the AM in the picture or the gender of the most prominent AM image. There can be more

than one image displayed alongside each article, especially during the election period. Sometimes the first displayed image is not the most prominent one⁴⁹. From Table 5.9, it is clear that the number of images of men in the Assembly was almost double that of women – 696 images of males and 366 of females. According to Tables 5.8 and 5.9, 63.8 per cent of the articles did not accompany an image of an AM or AMs. Therefore, 36.2 per cent of the sample did. This suggests that the press has frequently used the images of the AMs. The frequencies that the Welsh press prints photos of certain AMs may affect the public’s recognition of these AMs. According to Table 5.9, it is obvious that the press tends to print more photos of male AMs than those of females. This indicates that the public may be more familiar with male AMs than female AMs, because male AMs’ faces are more frequently seen in the press. In light of the public’s ability to recognise the AMs, it is crucial to analyse these images.

Table 5.9 Gender of the AM in the Picture /the Most Prominent Picture

	Number of Images	% of Images
Male	696	22.7
Female	366	11.9
Both(Group Photo)	46	1.5
N/A	1957	63.8
Total	3065	100.0

Note: Group Photo (AMs Both Genders; AMs Both Genders with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)

It is interesting to examine Table 5.10 to learn more about the press coverage of the four main party leaders and their leadership characteristics. It can be seen that 115 portraits of the then Labour party leader Rhodri Morgan were the most prominent images, published together with the articles. This total does not include photos of him with others. The photos of Mr. Morgan outnumbered those of any other political party leaders in the Assembly. This partly explained why the Welsh public’s recognition of Mr. Morgan was far higher than that of the other Welsh political party leaders: the press printed images of him far more frequently than it did those of others. What Table 5.10 makes clear is that there were a considerable number of group photos (266 in number) which were about an

⁴⁹ If the images are similar sizes, the most prominent image refers the first one. If there is more than one AM image, then the most prominent AM image refers to the first or the largest image of an AM.

AM or a party leader or AMs with others. Furthermore, the most prominent image displayed as “AM(s)” refers to any image of either a male AM by himself or a female AM by herself, and it also means any image of AMs alone. Thus, it is difficult to say exactly how many photos of each AM were published by the press. As a result, it is useful to examine Table 5.11.

Table 5.10 The Most Prominent Image Displayed

	Number of Images	% of Images
AM(s)	451	14.7
Group Photo	266	8.7
Member(s) of the Public	232	7.6
Other Politicians	139	4.5
Constituency Scene	125	4.1
Welsh Labour Leader	115	3.8
Journalist	51	1.7
Plaid Cymru Leader	50	1.6
Explanatory Diagram	41	1.3
Welsh Tory Leader	40	1.3
Election Logo	35	1.1
Hospital/Ambulances	34	1.1
Welsh Lib Dem Leader	29	.9
The Senedd	18	.6
Celebrity	17	.6
Welsh Lib Dem Leader Kirsty Williams	13	.4
Election Scene	5	.2
Other	86	2.8
N/A	1318	43.0
Total	3065	100.0

Notes: 1) AM(s): Any image of an AM (this includes both genders); and any image of AMs.

- 2) Group Photo: Any image of an AM (this includes party leaders) or AMs with other politicians or members of the public.
- 3) Welsh Lib Dem Leader: Before 8th December 2008, it was Mike German; since the party leadership election, it has been Kirsty Williams.
- 4) Carwyn Jones was categorised as an AM since he hadn't been elected Labour party leader during the two periods studied. As for other former leaders of different parties, they were all treated as AMs.
- 5) Other: Mostly they were pictures of newspaper logos or animals or a part of a newspaper or lab objects etc.

According to Table 5.11, in terms of the AM who appeared in the most prominent images, former Welsh Labour leader Rhodri Morgan indeed ranked number one – he was in 183 photos. As already mentioned, 36.2 per cent of the sample had at least one image of an AM or AMs, and it was 1108 images altogether. 183 images out of 1108 were photos of Mr. Morgan, which in total is 16.5 per cent. Consequently, it is no surprise that far more Welsh people could name Mr. Morgan than other party leaders before the 2007 Assembly election (*Western Mail* 1st March, 2007; 22nd May, 2007; *South Wales Echo* 1st March, 2007; *Daily Post* 1st March, 2007; *Western Telegraph* 7th March, 2007; Shipton 2011). After all, he was also then the First Minister of Wales. There were 80 photos of the then Plaid leader Ieuan Wyn Jones in the two selected periods. Although this number is far smaller than that of Mr. Morgan's, it is close to double that of the then leader of the Welsh Conservatives Nick Bourne and it is more than double in comparison to the then Lib Dem leader Mike German's (80 images versus 45 and 36). This might explain why Plaid leader was ranked slightly higher than Mr. Bourne and Mr. German with regard to public recognition before the third Assembly election (*Western Mail* 1st March, 2007; 22nd May, 2007; *South Wales Echo* 1st March, 2007; *Daily Post* 1st March, 2007; *Western Telegraph* 7th March, 2007). Interestingly, compared to her predecessor Mr. German, based on Table 5.11, the new Welsh Lib Dem leader Kirsty Williams also did not become a frequently seen face in the Welsh press during the two chosen periods (see also Table 5.10).

Apart from the party leaders, photos of those high-profile AMs appeared in the press more frequently than other AMs as well. There were apparent differences between the volume of printed images of male and female Ministers in the Assembly (see Table 5.11). As discussed previously, more articles featured former Health Minister Edwina Hart than those in which the then Conservative leader and the then Lib Dem leader were the main focus (see Table 5.1 and 5.2). The situation in regard to articles is similar to the situation with photos: more photos of Ms. Hart were published as the most prominent images than photos of the two Opposition party leaders, Nick Bourne and Mike German.

Table 5.11 Name of the AM in the Picture/ the Most Dominant Picture

	Number of Occurrences	% of Occurrences
Rhodri Morgan	183	6.0
Ieuan Wyn Jones	80	2.6
Nick Bourne	45	1.5
Mike German	36	1.2
Kirsty Williams	16	.5
Carwyn Jones	15	.5
Edwina Hart	47	1.5
Brian Gibbons	33	1.1
Lesley Griffiths	31	1.0
Elin Jones	29	.9
Dafydd Wigley	28	.9
Andrew Davies	24	.8
Helen Mary Jones	23	.8
John Marek	20	.7
Peter Black	19	.6
Mark Isherwood	17	.6
Jane Davidson	17	.6
Lorraine Barrett	15	.5
Sandy Mewies	15	.5
Group Photo	73	2.4
Other AMs	316	10.3
N/A	1957	63.8
Total	3065	100.0

Notes: 1) Group Photo: AMs or AMs with Other Politicians or Members of the Public.

2) This table only includes any AM that appeared in more than 15 pictures.

Moreover, there are reasons why images of high-profile AMs like Peter Black and Jane Davison were not published as frequently as were those of Lesley Griffiths and Dafydd Wigley. It is true that former Plaid leader Dafydd Wigley was a widely-recognised politician, but he was no longer a sitting AM in the two chosen research periods. One of the reasons that photos of Mr. Wigley appeared in the press more than usual was a controversy over candidature during the 2007 election period. Mr. Wigley was not elected because of Plaid election policy of reserving the top places of its regional lists for women. His female colleague, Janet Ryder was on the top of the list, so she was elected instead of him. This stirred public campaigns and discussions calling for AM Janet Ryder standing

down in favour of Mr. Wigley after the election. Obviously, before the third Assembly election, he was a candidate who had drawn some considerable press attention: he was called “star quality politician” by the *Western Mail*’s chief reporter Martin Shipton (11th May, 2007:9). Another reason for his appearance in photos is that during the routine coverage period Mr. Wigley was a columnist of the *Daily Post*, for which he wrote 10 opinion pieces between December 2008 and February 2009. It is common that a picture of columnists is printed next to the byline.

As for the relatively substantial number of images of the Labour AM Lesley Griffiths, there is a similar explanation. Labour AMs Lesley Griffiths, Sandy Mewies, Carl Sargeant, Karen Sinclair and Conservative AM Mark Isherwood received the most attention from the *Evening Leader*. Except for Karen Sinclair, these AMs and the former Lib Dem AM Eleanor Burnham (who started to appear at the end of December 2008) wrote for this evening newspaper frequently. Latest news or “News from the Assembly” were the articles written by these AMs during the routine coverage period. These AM written articles were mainly about their constituency work or reporting on what they did recently as sitting AMs in the region. The reports were normally about events which happened a week prior. Therefore, their photos also appeared in the newspaper next to their articles. Beside the number of images, what is notable in the *Evening Leader* is that the paper had the largest number of articles which were written by the AMs among the 12 newspapers examined.

4) *Evening Leader* and Articles Written by AMs

During the election period, the *Evening Leader* only published three letters by the then sitting AMs. One was written by Independent AM John Marek, about council tax increase for community policing works (*Evening Leader* 20th March, 2007:12). The other two were written by Labour AM Karen Sinclair: one was about Wrexham’s Racecourse development (*Evening Leader* 5th March, 2007:12) and the other was a thank-you note for her constituents after she was re-elected into the third Assembly (*Evening Leader* 10th May, 2007:12). Another two articles by AMs in this period were statements to answer

election related questions placed alongside other candidates' personal views (*Evening Leader* 26th April, 2007:9; 30th April, 2007:9), so these two articles were not merely written by the AMs. To sum up, only a few articles or letters were produced by the AMs during the election period between March and May 2007. Therefore, in this section, only the articles written by AMs during the routine coverage period between December 2008 and February 2009 were taken into consideration in terms of doing a comparative study of the sitting AMs in the region.

As revealed in Table 5.12, there is very little difference between the numbers of articles produced by the five AMs, Mark Isherwood, Lesley Griffiths, Sandy Mewies, Carl Sargeant, and Eleanor Burnham, who were representing the area where the *Evening Leader* is based. As mentioned earlier, these articles written by AMs were the latest news or “News from the Assembly” or “Scribblings from the Senedd”. It can be seen from Table 5.12 that the former Lib Dem AM Eleanor Burnham’s three articles were published in the letters section of the newspaper. In my opinion, the column for the “News from the Assembly” looks more appropriate than the letters section in terms of presenting the articles written by AMs.

Table 5.12 Number of Articles that AMs wrote for the *Evening Leader*

Evening Leader		Time Period of the AM Article			Total
		Dec. 2008	Jan. 2009	Feb. 2009	
Name of AM	Mark Isherwood	4/	4/1	3/	12
	Lesley Griffiths	3/	5/	4/	12
	Sandy Mewies	2/	3/	4/	9
	Carl Sargeant	2/	2/1	3/	8
	Eleanor Burnham	1/	1/2	3/1	8
	Jocelyn Davies			/2	2
	John Marek	/1			1
	Rhodri Morgan	/1			1
Total		14	19	20	53

Notes: 1) Before the slash symbol (/) is the number of “News from the Assembly” articles.

2) After the slash is the number of letters.

Wahl-Jorgensen (2001) has highlighted that “the letters to the editors section” has

historically been seen as “among the few outlets available to the public for voicing opinion” (Kapoor and Botan 1992:5). Several studies (Grey and Brown 1970; Buell 1975; Hynds 1991; 1994; Sigelman and Walkosz 1992) have taken it for granted that the letters section constitutes a public forum (Wahl-Jorgensen 2001: 303-304). According to Wahl-Jorgensen (1999; 2001), the letters section has been justified as a “free-for-all” democratic forum, and one of the most frequently repeated statements of editors is that the letters section is a “wide open” public forum for members of the community. Clearly, anyone from the public can write a letter for a newspaper. However, Wahl-Jorgensen has also pointed out that “editors share preferences for particular kinds of public discourse, reflected in their choice of letters, but also in more subtle practices, such as the placement of letters on the page” (2001:310). One of the examples she gave was that one newspaper published an inaccurate report on the amount of a congresswoman’s sale of her shares in a local company. The politician was upset by the damage that the story had done to her reputation, and therefore telephoned the managing editor of the paper to voice her complaint. The editor suggested that instead of her lawyer writing a letter on her behalf, it would be more effective if she wrote the letter herself. Subsequently, the congresswoman’s “long letter of self-defense was printed as a guest column” (Wahl-Jorgensen 2001:310-311). This story is an exception because this does not happen every day. Moreover, the congresswoman’s letter was published as a guest column. Besides, in this research the AM column had already existed in the *Evening Leader*. Therefore, apparently the articles written by the AMs seem more suitable to be placed in the Assembly column in the newspaper than the letters section.

Nevertheless, the placement of the then regional AM Eleanor Burnham’s articles in the letters section does not suggest that the *Evening Leader* treated Ms. Burnham less seriously than others, and she happened to be a woman. Comparatively speaking, the numbers of articles produced by the area’s sitting AMs were considerably small, which were all around the figure of 10 for the top five of the eight AMs in Table 5.12. In fact, articles written by two other female AMs, Lesley Griffiths and Sandy Mewies, were all placed in the column for the AMs. Compared to the two male AMs, Mark Isherwood and Carl Sargeant, the women have not been given less space in the *Evening Leader* to voice

their opinions.

In total, there were 53 articles and letters written by the AMs between December 2008 and February 2009; this includes one letter by Rhodri Morgan, two by Jocelyn Davies and one by John Marek. The rather short letter written by Dr. Marek was to criticise MP Martin Jones for using public money to print “banal and boring” reports (*Evening Leader* 2nd January, 2009:12). By contrast, Rhodri Morgan’s letter took up nearly a half page of the letters section to deliver the then First Minister’s Christmas wishes and New Year’s greetings to the Welsh public (*Evening Leader* 24th December, 2008:12). Again, individual letters dominated the letters section.

Overall, as evidenced by the number of AM articles published in the newspaper, the region’s women sitting AMs have not been given less newspaper space than their male counterparts by the *Evening Leader*. This suggests that Assembly women may not be treated less importantly than male AMs by the newspaper.

5) National versus Local Newspapers

The claim that the *Evening Leader* treated female and male AMs equally is backed by the figures in Table 5.13. There were 163 articles which were mainly focused on or mentioned male AMs, while female AMs were the main focus of 130 articles in the *Evening Leader*. It is notable that the difference was not significant, because, seen clearly from Table 5.13, the national newspapers, the *Western Mail*, *Daily Post*, *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday*, have definitely paid more substantial attention to male AMs than female AMs during the two selected periods. As for the local daily and evening newspapers, the *South Wales Argus* was like the *Evening Leader*: there was no great difference in the amount of articles according to the gender of their main focus AMs. However, there was a huge difference in the *South Wales Evening Post*: 347 articles against 155 (see Table 5.13).

Table 5.13 Gender of the Main Focus AM by Newspaper

Nationals vs. Locals		Gender of the Main Focus AM		Total
		Male	Female	
Name of the Newspaper	Western Mail	510	146	656
	Daily Post	372	157	529
	South Wales Echo	185	72	257
	Wales on Sunday	46	12	58
	South Wales Evening Post	347	155	502
	Evening Leader	163	130	293
	South Wales Argus	156	132	288
	Cambrian News	49	81	130
	Western Telegraph	49	80	129
	Llanelli Star	28	87	115
	Penarth Times	26	40	66
	North Wales Pioneer	38	4	42
Total		1969	1096	3065

The *South Wales Evening Post*, which covers Swansea, Llanelli/Ammanford and Neath/Port Talbot, is based in Swansea. It is difficult to tell whether there was a real gender bias in this newspaper's AM coverage, or whether the news simply followed the AMs with the top jobs based in the area, irrespective of gender. Both Labour Swansea East AM Val Lloyd and West AM Andrew Davies were re-elected into the third Assembly in May 2007. During the 2007 election period, Andrew Davies, Brian Gibbons, Edwina Hart, Alun Cairns, Peter Black and Dai Lloyd were given the most coverage by the newspaper, and during this period, the coverage of Andrew Davies was obviously far more than that of Val Lloyd. As mentioned previously in this chapter, Andrew Davies was one of the Ministers in the Assembly during the two chosen periods; therefore, it would be expected that the press coverage of Mr. Davies was more substantial than that of Ms. Lloyd (see more detailed discussion in Chapter 6).

There was not much detailed election campaign coverage of candidates (including AMs) in this newspaper. In this respect, it was not like other studied newspapers which frequently published articles about candidates and provided space to the candidates to voice their opinions during the election period. Apart from the region's AMs, Andrew

Davies, Alun Cairns, Peter Black and Dai Lloyd, the then Health Minister Dr. Gibbons and the then Social Justice and Regeneration Minister Ms. Hart were frequently covered by the newspaper. As discussed earlier, Dr. Gibbons and Ms. Hart were covered by the newspapers more often than other AMs possibly because of their positions and responsibilities in the Assembly Government.

In accordance with the routine coverage period between December 2008 and February 2009, Edwina Hart, Peter Black, Alun Cairns, Andrew Davies, Dai Lloyd, Brian Gibbons, Bethan Jenkins and Helen Mary Jones received the most attention from the *South Wales Evening Post*. During this period, it is notable that health reporter Liz Perkins was the major reporter for the routine coverage. During the two chosen periods, the main subject of 102 articles was health, NHS and hospital matters, which was a large portion of the 502 news stories in the paper. The main subjects of close to another one-fifth of the paper's articles included social justice and the local economy. Of course, the AMs who were responsible for these issue areas were frequently quoted in the articles. As stated previously, Ms. Hart was Health Minister, Andrew Davies was Finance Minister and Dr. Gibbons was Social Justice and Local Government Minister during this routine coverage period. For example, there were a series of reports on senior citizen Paul Popham's cancer drug fight. These stories were about Mr. Popham's family, friends and local politicians campaigning for the cancer drug Sutent to be made available to him and other patients and reported in Swansea on the NHS (*South Wales Evening Post* 1st January, 2009:4; 6th January, 2009:25; 20th January, 2009:5; 23rd January, 2009:5). Naturally, the then Health Minister Ms. Hart featured in these articles and many other health related news stories.

Another reason why those above mentioned AMs were given more coverage is that the local constituencies' AMs were more frequently reported in the news than others. For instance, in the iPod incident⁵⁰ in December 2008, the first two stories on the iPod row in the paper were focused on Conservative AM Alun Cairns rather than the then Welsh

⁵⁰ After the AMs' expenses figures were released by the Assembly, the then Conservative leader, Nick Bourne and his fellow AM Alan Cairns caught the press attention by claiming their iPods on office expenses.

Conservative leader Nick Bourne (*South Wales Evening Post* 13th December, 2008:9; 15th December, 2008:2). This is probably because Mr. Cairns was one of the then South Wales West AMs while Mr. Bourne was an AM for Mid and West Wales at that time. It is reasonable for a local newspaper to report its regional AMs first. However, the Welsh Conservatives' representative, Mr. Bourne was put at the centre of critical discussions for his office expenses claim for an iPod. The paper ran follow-up stories on the iPod claim in the following days (*South Wales Evening Post* 16th December, 2008:16; 18th December, 2008:3; 20th December, 2008:8). One of the articles was under headline "Assembly iPod row puts heat on leader" (18th December, 2008:3). The point here is that for local newspapers, the AMs in the region seem to be more important and more newsworthy than the political party leaders. It can also be seen that far more male AMs were given coverage by the paper in the two selected periods. Therefore, the coverage of male and female AMs in the paper was significantly different.

It is also worth noting that although the *South Wales Evening Post*, like the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post*, published more than 500 articles about the Assembly and its AMs, a great number of them were rather short, as briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. 53 news items were less than 100 words, the largest number among all the newspapers studied (see Table 4.7). As shown in Table 4.9, 160 out of the 502 articles in the paper were less than six paragraphs in length, again the greatest category in the chosen press. Furthermore, 66.3 per cent of the articles printed by the paper were not primarily concentrated on the AMs, which was the largest percentage among the three papers that each published more than 500 news items (see Table 4.16). In addition, according to Table 4.18, among the daily and evening papers, the *Evening Post* printed the greatest number of the articles (276) that accounted for less than one-fifth of the space on a page. This indicates that the *Evening Post* did not give more substantial coverage to the Assembly activities and the AMs than the other examined local daily and evening papers, in spite of the fact that the number of its articles was much greater than that of other local papers.

In terms of the local weeklies, with the exception of the *North Wales Pioneer*, the other

four weeklies all provided far more substantial coverage to female AMs than to male AMs (see Table 5.13). This is backed by Ye's finding (2007) that several female AMs in the third Assembly pointed out that the local newspapers in their constituencies gave better attention to women in the Assembly than to men. Similarly, Cushion and Morgan (2003) suggested that AMs often rated their local newspapers as the most significant medium with regard to reporting politics, in part because they provided columns for local authorities, especially politicians (see also Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). As a result, local community newspapers might pay attention to their local constituency AMs regardless of their gender.

In the two chosen periods, the majority of the then sitting AMs were women in the regions where the weekly local newspapers were based. For example, in *Cambrian News*, Plaid AM Elin Jones was the main contributor to the paper's AM coverage. She became the Minister for Rural Affairs in July 2007, and she has represented Ceredigion since 1999. The former Tory leader Nick Bourne was also covered frequently by the paper, but his coverage was not as extensive as the coverage that was given to Elin Jones. The *Western Telegraph* is based in a region, where AMs were mostly female. In the 2007 Assembly election, Labour AMs Christine Gwyther and Tamsin Dunwoody were defeated by Conservative AMs Angela Burns and Paul Davies. Furthermore, regional seats were picked up by Plaid's Nerys Evans and Labour's Joyce Watson. As for *Llanelli Star*, the then sitting Labour AM Catherine Thomas received more coverage than any other AM during the election period. She often came first on joint statements from Assembly election candidates. Her rival Plaid AM Helen Mary Jones was often put in the spotlight as well during the Assembly election campaign period.

Another weekly worthy of discussion is the *Penarth Times*. The area's Labour AM Lorraine Barrett was paid the most attention by the paper, but the total number of articles between March and May 2007 was 35, which is far lower than that of the aforementioned three weeklies. Although there were 31 articles during the routine coverage period, 11 of them were written by the Labour AM Ms. Barrett and Plaid AM Chris Franks (see Table 5.14). According to Table 5.14, Ms. Barrett wrote seven letters and "News from the

Senedd” articles for the paper. Only one of these letters was published during the election period: a thank-you note from Ms. Barrett to the people who voted for her in the May 2007 Assembly election (*Penarth Times* 17th May, 2007:18). The other article published in May 2007 was a similar short thank-you letter from Conservative AM Andrew RT Davies, after he was elected to the third Assembly (*Penarth Times* 24th May, 2007:12). Nevertheless, whether it was during the election period or the routine coverage period, *Penarth Times* has given similar space to both male and female AMs to express their views. The *Evening Leader* published 53 articles written by AMs. Except for the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post*, *Penarth Times* published the fourth largest number of articles written by AMs among the newspapers studied, there being 15 articles in total. This is a relatively large number if the total number of news items about the Assembly and its AMs in the paper is taken into consideration.

Table 5.14 Number of Articles that AMs wrote for *Penarth Times*

Penarth Times		Time Period of the AM Article				Total
		May 2007	Dec. 2008	Jan. 2009	Feb. 2009	
Name of AM	Lorraine Barrett	/1	1/	2/	2/1	7
	Chris Franks		2/	1/1	1/	5
	Jane Hutt		/1			1
	Jane Davidson			/1		1
	Andrew RT Davies	/1				1
Total		2	4	5	4	15

Notes: 1) Before the slash symbol (/) is the number of “News from the Assembly” articles.

2) After the slash is the number of letters.

As mentioned above, the only different weekly newspaper among the five selected local weeklies was the *North Wales Pioneer*, in which the female AMs did not receive more substantial attention than the males (see Table 5.13). During the election period, the paper gave the most coverage to Plaid AMs Janet Ryder, Gareth Jones and Dafydd Wigley, and Labour AM Alun Pugh. The routine coverage was mainly based on Conservative AM Darren Millar and secondly Plaid AM Gareth Jones. Apparently, the majority of the AMs in the area were male, so it is natural for the paper to cover male AMs or to quote them as sources more frequently than it did females.

Jackson (1971) noted that the local press often attached great importance to its community leaders' opinion, because they had a decisive effect on local newspapers' content and presentation. Therefore, the AMs are expected to have great influence on the local press in their constituencies regardless of gender. Harrison (2006) also pointed out that local authorities became more strategic, more tactful and more professional in the development of their relationships with their local media (see also Delp 2008). This perhaps gives an insight into the influence that local elites and politicians might have on their regional and local newspapers.

6) The Welsh National Press and Articles Written by AMs

In total, 148 articles were written by the AMs in the two studied periods (see Table 4.15 in Chapter 4). The figure does not include a few articles which were written by more than one AM and a small number of articles in which an AM was just one of the contributors (this will be explained in more detail in the following discussions). Beside the local newspapers, like the *Evening Leader* and *Penarth Times*, the Welsh national press also published a number of essays and letters written by the AMs, especially the *Daily Post* and *Western Mail*.

A) *Wales on Sunday* and the *South Wales Echo*

In *Wales on Sunday*, there was only one article during the two selected periods written by an AM – an opinion piece by the former Welsh Conservative leader Rod Richards. The article, which took up close to a half of the page, was headlined – “It’s child’s play, this Rainbow coalition!” (*Wales on Sunday* 20th May, 2007:28) – which was about Mr. Richards’ comment on the three parties’ coalition negotiations, namely Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Tories and the Welsh Lib Dems, to form a coalition Assembly Government after the Welsh Labour party failed to gain a majority in the 2007 Welsh national election. The tone of the article was somewhat ironic – “in this dream – or nightmare – political fantasy, one can imagine a ‘Rainbow Coalition’ conference” (20th May, 2007:28), with a large

picture of the Plaid leader Mr. Jones with three fluffy cartoon characters entitled – “CUDDLY COALITION: How Ieuan Wyn Jones might look with his ‘Rainbow’ Cabinet”. The article might be considered a piece of serious writing with a satirical tone, but *Wales on Sunday*, Wales’s only national Sunday newspaper, is still allegedly considered as a tabloid⁵¹ (*Wales on Sunday* 3rd October, 2011). As discussed previously, tabloid journalism is often associated with “sensationalism” (Hallin 2000). It tends to emphasise entertainment rather than news and information (Sparks 2000).

Similarly, only a few articles were written by AMs in the *South Wales Echo*. Just a day before the 3rd May Assembly election, the four main Welsh political party leaders presented their last messages to voters to encourage the public to vote for them. The paper ran an article across two pages under the headline – “Why they want you to vote for them” (*South Wales Echo* 2nd May, 2007:24-25). This article was not counted in the 148 AM articles, because it was written by more than one AM. The other article written by an AM was a letter by Plaid AM Chris Franks. It was about Mr. Franks’ view on the 2012 London Olympics, saying “opportunities from Olympics coming at a huge cost” to Wales (*South Wales Echo* 31st January, 2009:18-19). These two articles along with the one discussed in *Wales on Sunday* did not mention any female AM. Therefore, these articles cannot be said to be focused on them either.

B) *Daily Post* and Articles Written by AMs

As stated above, there were a number of articles written by AMs in the *Daily Post*, unlike the national Sunday newspaper, *Wales on Sunday*, and the *South Wales Echo*. The total number of articles produced by AMs in the *Daily Post* was 25 – this included one letter which was written by several AMs. There were six articles written by AMs published during the election period; they were all letters, all printed in March 2007. As shown in Table 5.15, there were only five letters printed in March 2007. One letter was not counted in Table 5.15, because it was produced by more than one AM. It was a joint statement by

⁵¹ *Wales on Sunday* (2011) “British Newspapers Online” [WWW]
<URL: <http://www.britishpapers.co.uk/wales/wales-on-sunday/>> [Accessed 3rd October, 2011]

six Labour AMs who intended to draw the public's attention to the fact that they had voted to limit the rise in the police precept for North Wales taxpayers to five per cent (*Daily Post* 9th March, 2007:14). Except for this letter, three of the other five letters were written by male AMs (see Table 5.15).

Table 5.15 Number of Articles that AMs wrote for the *Daily Post*

Daily Post	Time Period of the AM Article				Total
	Mar. 2007	Dec. 2008	Jan. 2009	Feb. 2009	
Name of AM					
Dafydd Wigley		2/	5/	3/	10
Ieuan Wyn Jones		2/	1/	2/	5
Eleanor Burnham	/1		/2		3
Bethan Jenkins			/1		1
Dafydd Elis-Thomas				/1	1
Darren Millar	/1				1
Gareth Jones	/1				1
Carl Sargeant	/1				1
Lesley Griffiths	/1				1
Total	5	4	9	6	24

Notes: 1) Before the slash symbol (/) is the number of opinion-pieces or essays.

2) After the slash is the number of letters.

According to Table 5.15, there were nine AMs whose articles were published by the *Daily Post*; only three of them were women. Furthermore, the AMs, Dafydd Wigley, Ieuan Wyn Jones, who produced the most articles, were both men. Therefore, it is clear that the paper gave more space to male than female AMs in voicing their concerns. More significantly, five out of the nine AMs were Plaid AMs – Dafydd Wigley, Ieuan Wyn Jones, Bethan Jenkins, Dafydd Elis-Thomas and Gareth Jones. Dafydd Wigley was a columnist who wrote 10 opinion pieces for the paper during the routine coverage period. The paper published five essays by then Plaid leader Mr. Jones in its business section. Although the number of articles written by AMs is relatively small, it does suggest that the paper has given more space to Plaid than any other party in the Assembly. After all, the paper is mainly circulated in North Wales where Plaid Cymru is more concentrated and where Welsh is more commonly spoken than the South. This is backed by a statement made by an anonymous North Wales Conservative AM, who noted, “On the whole, the *Daily Post*

tends to represent more Plaid agenda, I would say, in their reporting. But it's not unusual for a newspaper to have a particular political slant." Thomas suggested that the *Daily Post* "has a more identifiable North Wales identity, visible most notably when it is articulating the region's interests against the alleged domination of the South" (2006:50). The Lib Dem North Wales regional AM, Aled Roberts also thought that the *Daily Post* at times tried to portray itself as being the newspaper of Northwest Wales. He said to me, "Because of that, perhaps at times it does take a Plaid stand. I suppose, there is a tendency the paper quotes Plaid spokespersons more than anyone else."

However, the former Heritage Minister, Plaid AM, Alun Ffred Jones did not think the *Daily Post* has a pro-Plaid agenda at all. During my interview with him, he stated:

I would ask the *Daily Post* to be fair-minded to everybody. But, no, there are emphases consistently on the headlines in the way they present stories. I don't think it's particularly sympathetic towards us, but it seems very peculiar. And also it has a slightly odd attitude towards the Welsh language, and that's not always seen to be fair and supportive. And yet, it has been read most widely in the Northwest where there are a great number of Welsh speakers, so that's a very peculiar stand to take. They, I am sure, would refute my allegation... It seems they take the view that anything that happens in South Wales must be bad. And it has a fairly negative view on the Assembly itself and constantly talks about North Wales being given or provided with bad deals. Nobody can prove it, but that's the way they think. That is why I think they are in tune with what the Tories say. The Tories are always banging on about North Wales not being given this, that and the other. So that's a very provincial attitude. And consequently, it conveys a negative message to the readers.

This comment reflects Mr. Jones' own political view towards both the Conservatives and the *Daily Post*: himself as a member of Plaid Cymru with a disapproving attitude towards anti-Assembly views. However, whether the Welsh Conservatives are anti-Assembly is altogether another question and it is not the question that this study seeks to answer.

The sitting Cardiff West Labour AM, Mark Drakeford, who is from Carmarthenshire and used to live in North Wales, also advanced his view about the *Daily Post*:

I don't detect a particular pro Plaid Cymru bias in it. I do detect a much more

skeptical attitude towards the Assembly in it. But it probably reflects its readership in that way. You know up there in Northeast Wales, people do feel the Assembly is far away and remote from them and that people don't understand the issues about North Wales in the way that they should, and something like that. And so in taking in a much more skeptical view of the Assembly as an institution, I guess it is simply reflecting the general mood of its own readership really. So I don't think it is pro Plaid Cymru. It may report warmly on a particular individual who is doing a good job, but it does that about Labour politicians, too.

Indeed, it is difficult to speculate that the *Daily Post* has a pro-Plaid agenda simply based on a few AMs' personal opinions and a small number of articles which were written by AMs. But, it did show that the paper gave more substantial attention to the AMs who represent the region than others.

C) *Western Mail* and Articles Written by AMs

Last but not least, the widely acknowledged national newspaper, the *Western Mail* printed 25 articles which were written by AMs during the two chosen periods. It is worth mentioning that two articles written by more than one AM and other Assembly election candidates were not counted here⁵².

Apart from these two articles, Table 5.16 demonstrates that only three articles were produced by AMs during the election period. One was written by the then Health Minister, Dr. Gibbons, who explained the reason why the Assembly Government introduced free prescriptions for the people in Wales (*Western Mail* 26th March, 2007:19). Another article was a letter by Dafydd Wigley. As mentioned earlier, Mr. Wigley, the former Plaid leader, lost the election to the then Plaid AM Janet Ryder because of the party's election rules. There were public campaigns calling for Ms. Ryder to stand down in favour of Mr. Wigley after the 2007 Assembly election. In support of Ms. Ryder, Mr. Wigley wrote to the *Western Mail*, and his letter was published (*Western Mail* 15th May, 2007:16).

⁵² One was about Assembly candidates' views on environmental issues, and five out of the six contributors were AMs (*Western Mail* 16th April, 2007:18-19). The other article was about the four main political parties' plans for the health services in Wales. Consequently, the article was comprised of the writing of four AMs – the then Labour Health Minister Dr. Brian Gibbons, the former Plaid Shadow Health Minister Helen Mary Jones, the then Welsh Lib Dem health spokeswoman Jenny Randerson and the then Welsh Conservative health spokesman Jonathan Morgan (*Western Mail* 16th April, 2007:22-23).

The third article was by Bethan Jenkins. After the third Assembly election, the paper devoted almost a whole page to the then newly elected Plaid AM Ms. Jenkins and showed a set of her blog posts to the public. The feature article was accompanied by a picture of the smiling Ms. Jenkins. She was photographed in the Senedd's Debating Chamber and the angle of the camera lens invites the reader to gaze at the mace – a symbol of authority, but the headline reads, "I've knocked on as many doors as possible..." followed by a subheading – "... Here the Plaid Cymru AM and keen blogger reveals the trials and tribulations of her campaign" (*Western Mail* 7th May, 2007:24). The paper's coverage of Ms. Jenkins' blog posts might be seen as a positive gesture, because the paper gave space to the AM and to show her hard work for her campaigns. However, it was not clear whether it was Ms. Jenkins who submitted her writings to the paper. It was more likely that some journalist discovered Ms. Jenkins' blog and then the paper decided to run a story on this. By contrast, it was quite clear that other essays and letters written by AMs were submitted to the paper by the AMs themselves. Another question is: would the *Western Mail* dedicate one page to a young male politician to popularise his blog? Maybe the answer is positive, but this remains an unanswered question.

During the routine coverage period between December 2008 and February 2009, the *Western Mail* published articles by AMs more frequently than during the election period (see Table 5.16). It is worth mentioning that the letter by Chris Franks in January 2009 in the paper (*Western Mail* 27th January, 2009:17) is identical to the one in the *South Wales Echo* (31st January, 2009:18-19). The only difference is that the *Western Mail* published the letter at the bottom corner of the letters section while the *Echo* placed the letter on the top middle of two pages with a large image of the then First Minister Rhodri Morgan and the former athlete and politician Seb Coe. The size of the image is more than triple that of the letter itself, and the Cardiff Bay's new custom house is its background. Clearly, the *Echo* positioned Mr. Franks' letter more prominently than did the *Western Mail*. This letter is an exception, because the studied press seldom printed identical news stories, except for several political advertisements. Therefore, the *Echo* obviously treats this piece of news more importantly than the *Western Mail* by giving it more newspaper space and

by positioning it in a more eye-catching location in the paper.

Table 5.16 Number of Articles that AMs wrote for the *Western Mail*

Western Mail		Time Period of the AM Article				Total
		Mar.-May 2007	Dec. 2008	Jan. 2009	Feb. 2009	
Name of AM	Chris Franks			/1	1/1	3
	Ieuan Wyn Jones		1/		1/	2
	Jonathan Morgan			1/	1/	2
	Peter Black			1/	1/	2
	Jane Hutt		1/		1/	2
	Brian Gibbons	1/				1
	Dafydd Wigley	/1				1
	Bethan Jenkins	1/				1
	Andrew Davies		1/			1
	Jeff Cuthbert			/1		1
	John Griffiths			1/		1
	Val Lloyd			/1		1
	Rhodri Morgan			/1		1
	Alun Ffred Jones				1/	1
	Dafydd Elis-Thomas				/1	1
	Leanne Wood				/1	1
	Christine Chapman				1/	1
	Nerys Evans				1/	1
	Leighton Andrews				/1	1
Total		3	3	7	12	25

Notes: 1) Before the slash symbol (/) is the number of AM essays.

2) After the slash is the number of letters.

It is also notable from Table 5.16 that the majority of AMs whose articles were printed by the *Western Mail* were men – only six out the 19 AMs listed in the table were female. Therefore, it is clear that the paper gave more space to the men in the Assembly. Furthermore, among the 19 AMs, eight of them were from Plaid Cymru, namely Chris Franks, Ieuan Wyn Jones, Dafydd Wigley, Bethan Jenkins, Alun Ffred Jones, Dafydd Elis-Thomas, Leanne Wood and Nerys Evans. Except for Conservative AM Jonathan Morgan and Lib Dem AM Peter Black, the remaining nine AMs were from the Labour party. Due to the rather small number of articles written by AMs, the answer to the

question of whether the *Western Mail* treats Plaid AMs more importantly by giving them more newspaper space than Labour AMs is not very obvious – 11 articles by Plaid AMs and 10 by Labour AMs.

The paper did give almost the same space to both parties. This was possibly because the third Welsh Assembly Government was a Labour-Plaid coalition administration. It may be argued that it is reasonable for the media to cover the parties in the Government more frequently than they do the others. What is more, the Welsh Labour party has been in Government and leading the Government in the Assembly ever since it was created, so people would expect a large section of the media to be questioning and challenging the establishment as well as sometimes being positive.

There is another possibility that perhaps the *Western Mail* really has treated Plaid Cymru differently than other political parties in the Assembly as the Labour AM claimed (Ye 2007). However, not all the AMs interviewed in this research project agreed with the claim that the *Western Mail* has a pro-Plaid agenda. For instance, Plaid AM Alun Ffred Jones noted, “There is no reason for me to believe the *Western Mail* has an anti-Labour agenda as it has a pro anybody agenda really. By and large, I think it is reasonably neutral.” Furthermore, the newly elected Plaid Assembly leader Leanne Wood suggested:

I would say sometimes certainly with individuals... [they] seem to be able to get reported on everything they say, whether it's to be first or accurate or not. So I think that if there was no criticism I would say the newspaper has its favourites and tends to give them more coverage and space than the politicians they don't like so much.

In spite of the fact that some Plaid AMs did not consider the *Western Mail* had an agenda in favour of their party, many other AMs from across the political parties in the Assembly did consider that this was the case. For example, the former Presiding Officer, Plaid AM Dafydd Elis-Thomas stated:

It's very difficult for me to comment on the *Western Mail*, because they have been very kind to me. But of course, the point is that the politics of the *Western Mail* is very close to my politics – more devolution for Wales, defending Wales' interest but also looking in an out looking way in international conflicts.

The present Deputy Presiding Officer, Conservative AM, David Melding also noted, “I would say they are broadly center-left in the way they think which reflects general work preferences, and they are broadly sympathetic to small ‘n’ nationalists...” Similarly, two anonymous Labour AMs strongly believed that the *Western Mail* had a pro-Plaid agenda. Take the comment from one of them, for example:

Historically, the *Western Mail* used to be known as the *Coal Owners’ Gazette*. It was always anti-Labour and pro-Tory. Now, in more recent years, that’s not the case because the Conservatives are not popular. And I think the opinion of most people who read the *Western Mail* with an honest eye is that it tends to support the nationalists – Plaid Cymru. And therefore, Labour candidates are not likely to get good press unless they are regarded as particularly awkward and sort of, as we say, a “thorn in the side” of the party. So most newspapers are political, very few are non-political. And so I certainly regard the *Western Mail* as not being a friend of the Labour... I mean I think it leans towards Plaid Cymru; I can’t say that it actually advocates their policy. But there is a support for their point of view.

Nevertheless, several other interviewees also believed that the *Western Mail* has an agenda which changes over time. This can be summed up by the opinions below:

Undoubtedly, historically the *Western Mail* has been obviously an anti-Labour newspaper... I think the paper has been slightly different in the post-devolution period. I think it is less anti-Labour and pro-devolution. At least it has that about it. I think in an authentic way, it generally wants to make devolution succeed. Sometimes it is critical as a result, but I think its main sort of frame with which it analyses and reports news has changed in the post-devolution period. And it is less crudely anti-Labour in a sense than it once was. (Mark Drakeford, Labour, AM)

In terms of the press coverage, I thought that Plaid Cymru had a better lead in the press coverage in the *Western Mail*, in particular in the 2007 election than we did in this year. Labour had far better coverage from the *Western Mail* and more positive coverage from the *Western Mail* in this year’s election. I am not blaming the *Western Mail* on that. I think Labour’s message and presentation were probably more effective than ours in this year’s election. In 2007, we were more effective in our presentation and in our content for that election. So, I think the *Western Mail* probably fairly treated the two parties. (Elin Jones, Plaid Cymru, AM)

Whether or not the *Western Mail* has an agenda which changes over time; whether its

political agenda is in favour of a particular Welsh political party; whether it gives more space to male AMs than females, in recent years it does give more space to the AMs across the parties in the Assembly to voice their concerns and to express their opinions. This is clearly evident in the larger number of articles which were written by AMs; they have been published by the studied newspapers more frequently than in previous years.

7) Gender and Comments on AMs

Interestingly, another finding suggests that the women in the Assembly received a much higher percentage of positive comments within all articles featuring female AMs than male AMs during the two studied periods. All opinions from others, such as other AMs, other politicians, journalists, members of the public were considered in the news stories, when they commented on the main focus AMs.

As it can be seen clearly from Table 5.17⁵³, 11.2 per cent of the articles (within gender) featured positive comments on females, compared with 8.0 per cent on males; 16.1 per cent of articles (within gender) had negative comments on males, compared with 6.8 per cent on females. However, the number of the articles which mentioned or were focused on male AMs was nearly twice that of females. Nevertheless, this, to a certain extent, signals a message that female AMs received more positive coverage from the Welsh press than did their male counterparts.

Table 5.17 Comments on the Main Focus AM by Gender

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N/A	Total
Male	157	317	57	74	1364	1969
% within Gender	8.0	16.1	3.0	3.8	69.3	100.0
Female	123	75	31	23	844	1096
% within Gender	11.2	6.8	2.8	2.1	77.0	100.0
Total	280	392	88	97	2208	3065

The claim that women received more positive comments from others is much more

⁵³ See detailed explanations on measurements: positive, negative and neutral in Code Book, entry No. 23.

obvious when the second main focus AMs are examined. According to Table 5.18⁵⁴, there were just 38.6 per cent of the collected sample that mentioned two AMs; among the 337 articles which focused on females, 22.0 per cent had positive comments and only 10.7 per cent had negative comments on them. By contrast, only 12.0 per cent of the 845 articles which focused on males commented positively on them, and 19.1 per cent had negative comments.

Table 5.18 Comments on the Second Main Focus AM by Gender

	Positive	Negative	Mixed	Neutral	N/A	Total
Male	101	161	46	20	517	845
% within Gender	12.0	19.1	5.4	2.4	61.2	100.0
Female	74	36	11	8	208	337
% within Gender	22.0	10.7	3.3	2.4	61.7	100.0
N/A	0	1	0	0	1882	1883
Total	175	198	57	28	2607	3065

Therefore, it can be argued that once the women AMs were covered, they tended to receive more positive coverage than did their male counterparts, despite the fact that women received far less frequent press attention in general. The positive comments women AMs received may be attributed to the hard work that Assembly women have done over the years. It also may be a result of the high level of female representation in the Assembly since the jurisdiction was created in 1999. There have been a large number of women in the institution for many years; journalists and the public may gradually accept the normalisation of women in the Assembly, either consciously or unconsciously. Lovenduski (2005) noted that some impacts of increased women's presence at political institutions are embedded within the political processes, so it is difficult to distinguish which is influenced by a particular individual's effort. However, gender has become a less

⁵⁴ From Table 5.18, there was an exception – one article only mentioned an AM but it did not mention the AM's gender and which party the AM belonged to; however the anonymous mentioned AM was given negative comment. This article was an essay written by Lib Dem AM Peter Black in which he noted urgent action was needed to improve many NHS premises, and the article was headlined "Sick buildings are a risk for patients and NHS staff" (*Western Mail* 9th February, 2009:21). In the essay, Mr. Black pointed out that when the Welsh Liberal Democrats brought up the hospital repairs issue into Senedd's Chamber debates, the party was accused by the Assembly Government of being "alarmist" and "ill-informed"; one AM suggested that the debate was "pointless". Mr. Black only referred to "one AM" and did not name the AM; therefore, the gender and party of that second mentioned AM was unidentifiable (see Table 5.18).

obvious issue when individual AMs are commented on and when the Welsh press covers female AMs.

Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has provided a detailed analysis of the different press coverage that men and women in the Assembly received during the two selected periods. It discussed five main perspectives with regard to gender. To put this in a brief summary: first, it looked at how much attention the four political party leaders and the major Ministers in the Welsh Government received; second, it examined the sources used in the news items; third, it discussed the images that were placed alongside the articles; fourth, articles written by AMs were analysed in terms of differences in the amount of the newspaper space that the national and local press gave them; and lastly, the comments that the AMs received in the news were compared in terms of gender.

Unsurprisingly, the male AMs were reported far more substantially by the studied press as a whole. This chapter raised the question of the visibility of male and female AMs in the Welsh press, and then examined the gender of the main focus AMs, and the most important sources and the most prominent images printed, in order to answer that question. In general, men in the Assembly were more visible in the press than were women; this was apparent in the Welsh national newspapers. That is because political party leaders and those high-profile Ministers in the Assembly have been given the most coverage by the Welsh press, and most of them happened to be men. The finding of the visibility of male and female AMs in the Welsh press reflects the claim of the previous studies that women politicians are less visible in the media than are their male counterparts (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; Kahn 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994a; 1994b; Braden 1996; Fox 1997; Norris 1997; Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Aday and Devitt 2001; Bystrom *et al.* 2001; Ross 2002b; 2002c; Devitt 2002; Banwart *et al.* 2003; Gidengil and Everitt 2003; Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Heldman *et al.* 2005; Bystrom 2006; Ye 2007; Adcock 2010; Ross and Comrie 2012). The Assembly has had a much higher level of women's representation than many other political institutions across the world. Most notably, in the second Assembly, there were

even more women AMs than male AMs (31 against 29), which is a world record. However, this did not ensure Assembly women equal press coverage with their male counterparts. This reinforces the claim that women politicians are given less media attention than are men, and politics is dominated by men.

The local daily and evening press (except for the *South Wales Evening Post*) differed from the four national newspapers in that they tended to give similar coverage to both male and female AMs in the two chosen periods. More significantly, except for *North Wales Pioneer*, the remaining four more locally focused community weekly newspapers covered female AMs far more frequently than the males. One of the main reasons is that the majority of the AMs in the regions where the four weeklies are based were women. This backs the claim in Jackson's study (1971) that the local community leaders' views often had great influences on local newspapers' content and their presentation. In this case, the key finding is that for the local newspapers, gender is less salient than who actually are the local community leaders. As other studies (Ye 2007; Cushion and Morgan 2003; Thomas 2006) suggested, AMs also considered their local newspapers as one of the most important media to be counted in terms of covering politics.

It was also notable that a number of articles written by AMs were published by the press. The *Evening Leader* (53 articles by AMs), *Western Mail* (25 articles), *Daily Post* (24 articles) and *Penarth Times* (15 articles) were the newspapers that gave the most space to the AMs to voice their concerns and to express their opinions. The local press, the *Evening Leader* and *Penarth Times*, provided almost the same space to men and women, whereas the national press, the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post*, clearly allocated more space to the male AMs. What is more, in the *Daily Post*, Plaid AMs were the major contributors and wrote the most of the articles. The paper is, after all, mainly focused in North Wales where Plaid Cymru is concentrated. Similarly, the *Western Mail* published almost identical numbers of articles written by Plaid and Labour AMs. This, to a certain extent, suggests that the paper might be more in favour of Plaid Cymru than any other Welsh political parties, as some interviewed AMs stated.

Interestingly, when the comments on the AMs were examined, female AMs were given a much higher percentage of positive comments and a much smaller percentage of negative comments than were the male AMs. This may suggest that once the women AMs were covered, they might receive more positive attention than the men, even though far less press attention was paid to female AMs as a whole. Ye's study (2007) partly reflects this, as one of the observations was that several female AMs noted that their local press paid better attention to the women in the Assembly than to the men. The conclusion reached on comments is also somewhat different from those of Kahn's studies (1993; 1994a; 1994b). Her findings suggest that women politicians had "differential treatment" by the press when their campaign experiences of running for statewide offices were discussed; the press coverage of the women candidates for the US Senate tended to be less positive than that of the male politicians (Kahn 1994b; see also Carroll and Schreiber 1997). As a result, it can be concluded that despite the fact that women AMs were given less press attention than male AMs collectively, they received more positive opinions from others when they were discussed in the news stories.

However, it is true that the local newspapers tended to reference their local AMs more frequently than the other AMs. Consequently, the gender of their local AMs was not of great importance in terms of the local press covering their constituency and regional AMs. Furthermore, high-profile women AMs, such as Edwina Hart, Elin Jones, Jane Davidson and Helen Mary Jones, often received significant coverage from the examined Welsh press. In terms of the position of Welsh women politicians in the public sphere, it is clear that there was a tendency for effective women politicians to have their voices heard by the Welsh press.

The next chapter will continue to examine the differences in press attention that AMs received in terms of gender, but it will concentrate more on the questions of whether the Welsh press covered the female AMs in gender-stereotyped ways and whether there is prejudiced coverage against AMs, especially the women in the Assembly.

CHAPTER 6

Does the Welsh Press Portray Assembly Members in Gender-stereotyped Ways?

Introduction

One of the main aims of this chapter, which is different in emphasis from the other chapters, is to explore whether Welsh newspapers depict female AMs from a gender-stereotyped perspective. Two questions have been raised: are there major differences in the press coverage of men and women in the Assembly; and are female AMs portrayed in gender-stereotyped ways?

Chapter 4 briefly mentioned that there was certain sexist coverage when the Welsh press reported on female AMs during the 2007 Assembly election period. Has the high level of female representation in the Assembly since its creation in 1999 affected media's perception of women AMs? This chapter further develops the argument made in the previous two chapters that female AMs did receive prejudiced attention and were more likely to be placed in leisure and style sections than their male colleagues during the two periods studied. Assembly women were represented in a more "feminine" way than males. Stereotypically constructed media portrayal of them was often found in traditionally gendered activities, such as shopping, visiting school children, supporting arts and recreation related events. Interestingly, both male and female AMs received negative⁵⁵ press coverage, including the most popular charismatic former First Minister, Rhodri Morgan.

Macrae *et al.* (1996) noted that the notion of a stereotype was introduced into social science when Lippmann applied it to depict "the 'typical image' that came to mind when thinking about a particular social group" (see also Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:166). In this current study, stereotyping means "describing individuals positively or negatively on the basis of characteristics seen as common to their group" (Norris 1997:153). Pilcher

⁵⁵ Here, negative coverage refers to news articles that cast a negative light on the reported AMs. This also includes other people's comments on the AMs which are somewhat critical or cynical or condemning or reproachful or disapproving of the AMs.

and Whelehan also pointed out that as a “typical image” about a social group, a stereotype can be “negative or positive, accurate or inaccurate, justified or unjustified” (2004:167). Relative to politicians, those characteristics can be based on issue concerns and personalities and the ways in which they present themselves.

As discussed previously, some researchers have noted that the contemporary media routinely trivialise the voices of female politicians and frequently give biased coverage to women politicians. For instance, Kahn and Gordon (1997) found that female US Senate candidates complained publicly about the press preference for style over substance. At the same time, after Carroll and Schreiber (1997) examined some major US newspapers’ coverage of women politicians in the 103rd US Congress, they noted that the Congresswomen were sometimes given prejudiced coverage, and they were treated less seriously by the press than were Congressmen in terms of receiving coverage of their bathrooms, for example, and relegating some articles about them to style sections. Most recently, Ross and Comrie (2012) studied print and broadcast news coverage of the 2008 New Zealand general election. They found clear bias against the long-serving Labour party leader Helen Clark based on her media visibility compared to that of John Key of the National party; and the study shows the disadvantages of sex and age of the older female incumbent (Ross and Comrie 2012). Another study by Ross *et al.* (2013) found that during the 2010 British general election, newspaper coverage was more male oriented than ever: male candidates were far more likely to feature in news stories and women were much more likely to be referenced in feature articles.

The Welsh Assembly is unique because of the general gender parity since its creation. Has the gender parity affected the media coverage of female AMs? Therefore, the questions are: are Assembly women often featured in style sections in the press as previous studies found? Are they often associated with “soft news”? Are they often related to the private sphere? Are they portrayed to essentialise their feminine characteristics? The following discussions will try to answer these questions.

Gender and Locations of the News Articles

The study of the number and location of newspaper articles and images is of great importance to this research project. That is because it does not only show how much press attention Assembly politics receives, but also implies the importance and seriousness with which the Welsh press treats women AMs.

Nancy Fraser argued that a defensible conception of the public sphere must permit the co-existence of strong publics “whose discourse encompasses both opinion formation and decision making” and weak publics “whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion formation and does not also encompass decision making” (1999:134). Despite that, women have entered the public sphere, enjoying some formal admission to citizenship via women’s movements. Ruth Lister noted that women have not yet been able to “shed the sexualized and familialised skin” (1997:71) that bound them to the private sphere. In fact, contemporary women still cannot simply eliminate the stereotypical images which have been constructed by traditions or through various kinds of means of communications, especially the media. Lister also argued that “the history of women’s exclusion from citizenship in Western societies is thus intimately linked with their relegation to the private side of the public-private dichotomy” (1997:71). She (1997) suggested that women politicians participate in both formal and informal politics – the “masculine sphere of formal politics” and the “feminine sphere of informal politics”. However, she argued that “political space belongs to all citizens, but men monopolize it” (UNDP 1995:41; cited in Lister 1997:146). Women are under-represented in formal politics to a large degree, so women politicians are still somewhat marginalised today. Carroll and Schreiber (1997:134) argued that if female politicians are covered frequently and on the front pages, this indicates that women are “significant and important political players”. However, if they are covered infrequently and relegated to the style section, this signals that women politicians’ presence is unimportant and their contributions are marginal. Likewise, if the Welsh press pays a great deal of attention to female AMs, and they often appear on the front pages, this to a certain extent shows that women AMs are “significant and important political players”; if they are often relegated to the leisure and entertainment section, this may suggest that the presence of women in the Assembly is not important, and that their contributions to politics are insignificant.

It is obvious that middle and top locations in a newspaper are the comparatively more important positions of a page than anywhere close to bottom. According to Table 6.1, among the 118 front-page stories, 51 were focused on male AMs and were placed in the middle of a front page. By contrast, in the same front page location, there were only 19 articles featuring women (see Table 6.1). With regard to inside-page stories, which are the articles placed other than on the front page of a newspaper, a large portion of these articles related to female AMs and were published in less prominent locations in a newspaper. For instance, 234 out of 1096 articles which primarily focused on Assembly women were placed at the top corner of a page, and 146 articles were put at the bottom of a page. Only about one-fourth of the articles which covered more than one page were about women AMs (43 articles out of 160). These figures show that the men and women in the Assembly received quite different treatment – articles about male AMs were often placed in more prominent positions in the newspapers and male AMs apparently received more substantial attention than did the females as a whole, as mentioned previously.

Table 6.1 Number of Occurrences of Main Focus AM in Different Newspaper Locations

		Gender of the Main Focus AM		Total
		Male	Female	
Placement of the Article	FP,Middle	51	19	70
	FP,Middle Edge	21	4	25
	FP,Top Corner	7	4	11
	FP,Top	7	3	10
	FP,Bottom	1	0	1
	FP,Bottom Corner	1	0	1
	IP,Top	558	287	845
	IP,Top Corner	374	234	608
	IP,Middle	307	142	449
	IP,Bottom	221	146	367
	IP,Bottom Corner	163	104	267
	IP,Middle Edge	141	110	251
	IP,1 or More	117	43	160
	Total	1969	1096	3065

Notes: 1) FP stands for Front Page.

2) IP stands for Inside Page which means any page of a newspaper but the front page.

The total number of articles focused on the male and female AMs were significantly different – 1969 articles based on males and 1096 on females (see Table 6.2). This is almost twice as many articles that featured men compared to articles featuring women. When considering the newspaper sections where the news stories were located, what is notable in Table 6.2 is that male AMs were more likely to appear in the business sections – 62 articles versus 14 for females. This indicates that men in the Assembly were more likely to be associated with business and economy than were women. What is more, women AMs were more likely to be placed in news brief sections if the total number of articles concentrating on men and women is considered; 219 out of 546 news briefs were focused on women.

Table 6.2 Number of Occurrences of Main Focus AM in Different Newspaper Sections

		Gender of the Main Focus AM		Total
		Male	Female	
Location of the Article	News	1226	693	1919
	News Brief	327	219	546
	Letters	118	65	183
	Opinion Piece/Editorial	116	56	172
	Front Page	88	30	118
	Business Section	62	14	76
	Political Advertising	17	12	29
	Feature Article	13	3	16
	Leisure & Entertainment	0	4	4
	Review	2	0	2
Total		1969	1096	3065

It can also be seen in Table 6.2 that all four articles that were published in the leisure and entertainment sections of newspapers referred to female AMs. Although there were only four articles and this number is not statistically significant, it is true that male AMs never received such press treatment during the two studied periods. This echoed what Carroll and Schreiber (1997) and Ross *et al.* (2013) have found: women politicians are more likely to be featured in the style section than are their male counterparts.

One such news story was published by the only Welsh Sunday national paper, *Wales on*

Sunday, which was a piece of two-page reporting written about “Wales’ 50 bachelorettes of the year” (25th March, 2007:24-25). Former Conservative AM Laura Anne Jones⁵⁶ and Plaid Cymru AM Bethan Jenkins⁵⁷ were also on the list. Their photographs appeared among another 48 female celebrities, most of whom were popular singers and actresses. The comments they received concentrated on their personal interests and political careers, which were different from sexual remarks about other celebrities. A big cross page headline read, “BEAUTY REALLY IS SKINS⁵⁸ DEEP!” with the word “SKINS” in a striking red colour (*Wales on Sunday* 25th March, 2007:24-25). This sends a message to the reader, and it also plays into the stereotype of women as sexualised objects. Would the newspaper have done this to male politicians? This is doubtful. Ross and Sreberny discussed how the press similarly treated Judith Church’s image⁵⁹, and they noted, “it plays into the familiar stereotype of woman as sexualized body, first and foremost, and beauty can never be successfully matched with brains” (2000:95). To a large degree, the combination of beauty and brains seemingly cannot exist at the same time in women. If a woman politician is young and attractive, some people might consider her to be in the post because of her looks rather than her brains. Similarly, some people may think about her appearance first rather than her work. By contrast, if it is a young and good-looking male politician, it would be the first impression of some people that his brain or abilities put him in office, rather than his looks.



⁵⁶ When the report was published, Laura Anne Jones was still the Conservative AM for South Wales East in the second Assembly. She lost her seat in the May 2007 Assembly election.

⁵⁷ By the time the news came out, Bethan Jenkins was a candidate for South Wales West. She was successfully elected to the third Welsh Assembly in the 2007 election.

⁵⁸ Siwan Morris the leading actress in E4’s teen drama *Skins* has been crowned *Wales on Sunday*’s Bachelorette of the Year.

⁵⁹ Ms. Church was a Labour MP elected to the Westminster Parliament by a by-election in 1994.

Another article was written by the then leisure and fashion journalist Rin Simpson in the *Western Mail* (17th April, 2007:6-7), which focused on the break-up of Prince William and Kate Middleton. The journalist gave her suggestions on some of Wales' most eligible bachelorettes who might be fit for Prince William, and the former Conservative AM Laura Anne Jones was one of the Prince's perfect future bride candidates (see detailed discussion in Chapter 4). Although another story in *Wales on Sunday* was not included in these four entertainment articles⁶⁰, it was a celebrity related piece which focused more on entertaining the reader. In a Senedd Chamber debate, Labour AM Tamsin Dunwoody⁶¹ voiced her concern by mentioning one of Arnold Schwarzenegger's films in the light of the May 2007 Assembly election. She then went on to say that she was worried that the public was far more likely to vote in reality TV shows than in Assembly elections. Later, *Wales on Sunday* ran an article on that comment, and displayed an image of her, subtitled – "Tamsin Dunwoody is keen to take heed from the films of Schwarzenegger" which is accompanied by a much larger picture of Schwarzenegger (4th March, 2007). In addition, the journalist wrote cynically, "Too true – and we can only hope more AMs are prepared to tackle the big issues raised by Arnie's films" (*Wales on Sunday* 4th March, 2007:10). Too true, if the story is trivial or sounds "less *realpolitik*" or sounds sexier, women politicians are more likely to be in the spotlight (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000). Ironically, Ross pointed out, "If [women] insisted on flaunting the conventions of femininity by daring to become politicians, then the least they should do was to act like women and not interfere in the *realpolitik* of business and corporate affairs" (2002b:84).

⁶⁰ The other two articles were both published in two weeklies, namely *Llandlli Star* and *Cambrian News*. The article in *Llandlli Star* was placed under the leisure and entertainment section in "worship guide and the editor's column". It was a story about the ex-Carmarthenshire Councillor, Jim Jones, who had mistaken someone else for the Assembly Minister Edwina Hart in a charity ball. The funny part was that "Jim darted away to greet 'Edwina' and we were all a bit gobsmacked when he planted a kiss on her lips and gave the 'Minster' a mighty hug" (*Llandlli Star* 1st March, 2007:32). It is certain that this story was simply a joke which the Councillor himself might see the entertaining bit of it. There is no implication of sexism against women. The other report in *Cambrian News* was about a contemporary artist, Pip Woolf's drawings of "people with public power" (12th April, 2007:38). The article only mentioned Ceredigion AM Elin Jone who opened Ms. Woolf's *Making a Point* exhibition in the region. Therefore, it is not a story focused on a particular AM.

⁶¹ Tamsin Dunwoody was the Labour AM for Preseli Pembrokeshire in the second Assembly. She was not successfully re-elected in May 2007.

6 Western Mail

NEWS

Goodbye Kate, hello to a Welsh bachelorette?

Prince William's split from Kate Middleton has elevated him to the status of the world's most eligible bachelor. Western Mail reporter **Rin Simpson** runs the rules over some of the nation's most eligible bachelorettes who might be fit for a (future) king

Willow Corbett-Winder

Name: Willow Corbett-Winder
Age: 28
Job: Personal shopper and health reporter
From: Carmarthen

Why Willis should marry her: Willow is a former Miss Wales and has a great figure. She is also a health reporter and has a great job. She is also a personal shopper and has a great job. She is also a health reporter and has a great job.

Katherine Jenkins

Name: Katherine Jenkins
Age: 31
Job: Soprano
From: Carmarthen

Holly Holyoake

Name: Holly Holyoake
Age: 31
Job: Actress
From: Carmarthen

Jemima Phillips

Name: Jemima Phillips
Age: 31
Job: Actress
From: Carmarthen

Laura Anne Jones

Name: Laura Anne Jones
Age: 31
Job: Actress
From: Carmarthen

7 Western Mail

NEWS

Back to work for William after 'mature decision' over love split with Kate

Prince William has returned to work after a "mature decision" to end his relationship with Kate Middleton. The prince is expected to return to his duties as the Duke of Cambridge in the coming weeks.

Prince William's return to work: The prince is expected to return to his duties as the Duke of Cambridge in the coming weeks. He has been seen at the Royal Naval School in Portsmouth, where he is studying for a degree in maritime studies.

William's relationship with Kate: The couple's relationship has been the subject of much speculation in the media. It is believed that the prince and princess have decided to end their relationship amicably.

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matt withers

Stormy Flynn's motion on the ocean

AS REGULAR readers will know, Stormy Flynn's motion on the ocean was a bit of a surprise. The motion was introduced in the Welsh Assembly on Monday, 26th February. The motion was titled 'The Welsh Assembly should consider the impact of climate change on the Welsh coast'. The motion was supported by a number of other Assembly Members, including Rhodri Iwan Jones, Huw Iwan Jones, and Huw Lewis.

Hasta la vista Tammy!

AT AROUND half past four on Wednesday, the first round of the election was over. The results were in, and the Welsh Labour Party had won a majority. The Welsh Labour Party's victory was a significant one, as it marked the first time that the party had won a majority in the Welsh Assembly since 1999.

Rev Griffith in dragon's din...

THANK God - if it isn't too late to say so - for the Welsh Assembly's decision to elect Rev Griffith as the Welsh Assembly's first female Speaker. Rev Griffith's election was a significant one, as it marked the first time that a woman had been elected as the Speaker of the Welsh Assembly.

Labour's bad cover version

AND so we return to Labour, who last week got around TV laws preventing party political rival politicians (and their staff) from appearing on their latest ad straight on the internet.

QIP TO JUDGE

Tories in no position to criticise Rhodri joke

HEARD the one about the Welshman who told a joke about an Irishman who considers himself a Brit, only to provoke the wrath of a Welsh woman who lives in England?

GAG ROW: Cheryl Gillan and Nicola Morgan

DON'T MISS MATT'S BLOG
mattwithers.welshblogs.co.uk

Gender and Images

As mentioned above, the study of the location and nature of the images is essential to this research. Images are an indispensable part of the contemporary press, as Lister and Wells (2001) noted, images should be considered as part of the cycle of production, circulation and consumption. This section focuses on whether the images of women AMs concentrate on gender stereotypes.

First, it is helpful to examine the sizes of the images of AMs. It is highly likely that the more frequently the photos of an AM are published by the press, the more people are able to recognise the AM. The more prominent the images are, the more familiar the AM is to the public and the more likely people are to be able to name the AM.

As can be seen clearly from Table 6.3, there were almost twice as many photos of male AMs as those of female AMs, when the AM photos that were less than 1/5 the size of the articles were examined. This is exactly the same situation when AM photos which were 1/2, 1/3 or 1/4 the size of the articles, and when those that were similar size to the articles, were considered. Moreover, with regard to images that were larger than the article size, 52 out of the 121 images featured women, and 69 were images of men. As mentioned in Chapter 5, except for the group photos, the number of photos of male AMs was almost twice that of females – 696 images of men versus 366 of women (see Table 5.9). Considering this, it is obvious that male AMs were treated more prominently than were female AMs in terms of the size of AM photos.

Table 6.3 Number of the Main AM Images by Size

		Gender of the Main Focus AM		Total
		Male	Female	
Size of the Main AM Image	Less than 1/5 of the Article's Size	236	142	378
Displayed	1/2 of the Article	107	49	156
	Similar as the Article	100	46	146
	Bigger than the Article	69	52	121
	1/3 of the Article	68	37	105
	1/4 of the Article	45	26	71
	1/5 of the Article	44	14	58
	Group Photo	47	26	73
	N/A	1253	704	1957
Total		1969	1096	3065

Studies on gender stereotyping in the media indicate that femininity is frequently associated with domesticity and sexuality (Tuchman 1978b; 1981⁶²; European Commission 1999; Pilcher and Whelehan 2004; Ye 2007). Norris (1996) has also suggested that British female political candidates were often considered to be more caring than males. With that in mind, how did the Welsh press portray Assembly women in those published images?

Table 6.4 illustrates the background and form of the images⁶³ of the most important male or female AM that was covered in each news article. What is notable from Table 6.4 is that far more male AMs were photographed with a rural background⁶⁴ – 25 images against nine for female AMs. For example, there was a picture of AM Carl Sargeant with a group of pupils who took part in an environmental clean-up (*Evening Leader* 18th February, 2009:16). The picture was taken in an open field where the participants were

⁶² The 1981 version of “The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media” in *The Manufacture of News* is the extract taken from the version in *Hearth and Home* which was printed in 1978.

⁶³ Group Photo means an image of more than one AM, or an image of AMs with other politicians or members of the public; Close-up includes face close-up and a close shot of an AM or an AM with others, if the background of the photo cannot be identified by the measurements listed under this variable.

⁶⁴ It's difficult to tell whether the rural background of an image is from the AM's constituency or somewhere else. Obviously, some AMs' constituencies have more rural areas than do others.

fully equipped to do the clean-up. Another picture placed in this category showed the smiling Helen Mary Jones surrounded by vegetables in a wet market which was published by *Llanelli Star* for the paper's "love Llanelli... Let's put heart back into town" campaign (8th January, 2009:5), showing that shopping is an activity which is conventionally gendered female. Ms. Jones was part of an action committee which wanted to encourage more people to shop in Llanelli and to improve people's shopping experience in the town.

Table 6.4 Number of the Main AM Images by Form and Background

		Gender of the Main Focus AM		Total
		Male	Female	
Form of the Main AM Image Displayed	Close-up	420	237	657
	Casual Scene	70	22	92
	Conference & Office-based	51	35	86
	Constituency Meeting	42	15	57
	Office Background	26	14	40
	Senedd Background	25	9	34
	Rural Background (eg Farm; Market)	11	10	21
	School Scene	7	17	24
	Arts & Recreation Event	12	6	18
	Factory/Construction Scene	2	1	3
	Home Background	3	0	3
	Cartoon	47	26	73
	Group Photo	1253	704	1957
	N/A			
	Total	1969	1096	3065

www.thisiscarmarthenshire.co.uk NEWS Llanelli Star, Thursday, January 8, 2009 5



Multi-storey closure provokes traders' fury

THE closure of Llanelli's only multi-storey car park on the first day back to work after the new year led to a noticeable downturn in business, according to town traders.

Angry business owners and shoppers inundated Carmarthenshire Council's call centre with complaints about the closed car park on January 2.

The high number of calls led to the eventual opening of Murray Street car park at 11.15am.

Andrew Frost, of Frost's newsagents in Llanelli Market, said: "It showed a total disregard for traders and all the promises about helping the town centre."

"Traders are up against it at the moment, and there was a noticeable difference in trade. The flow of customers increased after the car park was opened."

Callers to the council's helpline were told that January 2 — seen by many as the first working day after the holidays — was a statutory holiday for council workers.

Mr Frost added: "Arrangements should have been made. It's not a bank holiday."

Council transport boss John McEvoy has apologised and said arrangements would be made to open car parks on holidays in future.

A council spokeswoman has since moved to clarify the holiday situation. She said: "January 2 was taken as an annual leave day by most staff — it was not given by the council. It is usual over the Christmas holidays for all staff to take some of their annual leave at the same time so that buildings can be shut, which is far more cost-effective than keeping large buildings open for small numbers of staff."

St Elli Centre deputy manager Andrew Stephens and councillor John Jenkins pictured outside the multi-storey car park.

"This applied to January 2 because some staff were taking the day off anyway, due to it falling on a Friday — in other years, depending on the day, we have all been back in work on January 2."

Love Llanelli... Let's put heart back into town

LLANELLI STAR CAMPAIGN

■ Helen Mary Jones wants more people to enjoy the shopping experience in Llanelli, which she, as part of an action committee, wants to improve. HK110708F-003

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16 Evening Leader Wednesday, February 18, 2009

Your news

PENYFFORDD

SALSA: SalsaWales is offering exciting new six week women-only programmes starting on February 23 in Howarden, Mansel and Penyffordd when pupils will be learning brand new choreographed routines in the latin dance section. Level 1 will focus on mambo and Cha cha cha, levels 2 and 3 will be adding in Brazilian street samba rhythms. Pupils will also learn partner casino salsa and la rueda (group salsa). For further information and to book a place, email marie@wales.co.uk or ring 01352 770305. www.salsawales.co.uk

FITNESS TRAINING FOR MIDLIFE: The mid-life body workout for those in their 40s and 50s. As people go through life and their bodies begin to change, so should their workouts. The following classes are available for those older people who want to get fit:

- Cardio stretch: boost your metabolism and burn fat. Get your heart and lungs in shape on Tuesdays at 7.30pm in the Edith Banks Hall, Northop.
- Strength, tone and stretch: Shape and define your body, increase strength, bone density and flexibility on Thursdays at 6.15pm in Penyffordd Institute. Pupils will be doing their exercises to African, South American and Caribbean rhythms.

Both classes are mixed (women and men) and cost £4 per session. For further information email marie@wales.co.uk or ring 01352 770305.



Swimming club members make a big splash

TWENTY Seven members of Buckley Swimming Club took part in the two day Valentine meeting at Holywell recently, and it turned into a good two days for the swimmers with 52 personal best times posted, and 32 top three medal positions collected along the way. Records were also broken by David Hughes, 100 breast stroke, and Emma Squires, 400 Individual medley. Age-group (10-11 year old) best girl award went to Emma Squires and Emily Davies, and "Best 11 year old boy" went to Elliot Jones, with Buckley coming joint second as a club overall. Those who took part were: Rachel Agrippa, Amanda Kelly, Yasmin Amin, Admin Kerrad, Jemma Benson, Georgia Lee, Siobhan Benson, Callie Lightfoot, Thomas Clarke, Elice Lightfoot, Abbie Davies, Danielle Morgan, Chloe Davies, Clinton Roberts, Emily Davies, Keira Roberts, Andrew Finnegan, Daniel Smith, Chelsea Furlong, Rebecca Squires, Ceri Hughes, Emma Squires, Carys Hughes, Luke Thompson, Davies Hughes, Paul Thompson, Matthew Ibell and Elliot Jones.

OAKENHOLT

WI: The president, Valerie Bowles, opened the February meeting of Oakenholt Flint WI and introduced the speaker, Michelle Davies of the Citizens Advice Bureau, who gave a very interesting talk on the work of the organisation. She was thanked by Jane Carr. The competition for "advice to youngsters on money management" was won by Yvonne Stephenson. Raffle prizes were won by Alma Edwards and Edna Nelson. The tea hostesses were Jane Davison and Anne Phillips.



BUCKLEY

Youngsters join in clean-up

SPECIAL needs pupils from Belmont School, Mill Lane, Buckley, took part in an environmental clean up along with members of Neighbourhood Watch, Keep Wales Tidy, community wardens and MP Mark Tami and AM Carl Sargeant.

Get your pictures published in the Evening Leader

LGC NLW

In addition, there were close to three times as many images in which the male AMs were pictured in their offices than were females (42 photos versus 15). Furthermore, about twice as many images of males were taken against Senedd backgrounds and in factory and construction scenes compared to those of females (see Table 6.4). For instance, in the *Western Telegraph*, there was a story about a Pembrokeshire recycling company which was being stopped from expanding due to an inadequate electricity supply (10th December, 2008:9). One of the region's AMs, Paul Davies visited the recycling plant and offered his

help by promising to take up the case to the Assembly Environment Minister. There was a picture of Mr. Davies and two staff of the company against a pile of recycling materials published alongside the article. Of course there were some images of female AMs categorised under factory and construction scene. One example would be a photo of the then Rural Affairs Minister Elin Jones, taken in a factory. The news story was about the Minister's visit to the British Wool Marketing Board Department in Newtown (*Western Mail* 3rd February, 2009:3).

westerntelegraph.co.uk/news

County news - Wednesday, December 10th, 2008 | 9

Power struggle

A PEMBROKESHIRE recycling company is being stopped from expanding and employing 12 extra staff because it can't get enough electricity.

A. J. Recycling in Boncath already employs 14 people and wants to expand and take on more. But it needs a stronger electricity supply and has been told it would cost £50,000 to install.

Preseli Pembrokeshire AM Paul Davies has now taken up the company's case with the Welsh environment minister.

"It is ridiculous that a successful Pembrokeshire business which is creating jobs in a green industry is being hampered by a lack of power supply," said Mr Davies.

"We should be nurturing every job in Pembrokeshire, especially green ones, and yet this relatively simple problem is stopping a successful company from expanding."

A. J. Recycling takes orange bags from the north of Pembrokeshire and recycles cardboard, plastic, paper, metal, tyres

and glass, preventing up to 25,000 tonnes a year from reaching landfill.

It also collects old tyres from garages throughout Wales and the border counties, shreds them and then turns them into rubber matting and other products.

But to run its powerful shredding and sorting machines it needs three phase electricity.

"We are having to use generators instead and it is highly costly to both the environment and the company to run on a day to day basis," said managing director Andrew Jenkins.

"It is making life very difficult, especially as there is so little value in these recycled materials at the moment."

"We're employing 14 people full time and I'd like another 12 people to work for me. I'd like to move the tyre shredding plant and I'd like to make the end product here but at the moment we have to ship it abroad due to the lack of electricity supply on site."

"Not having the power is restricting us tremendously. It's a shame."

WHAT A WASTE: Preseli Pembrokeshire AM Paul Davies is pictured with Andrew and Sonia Jenkins from A. J. Recycling in Boncath. The company wants to employ an extra 12 people, but can't because of an inadequate power supply.

IN BRIEF

On the up?
PEMBROKESHIRE County Council's cabinet last week recommended a calculated £51,493.75 Band D equivalent council tax base for the coming year, compared with the current year's £51,070.45, a rise of £423.30.

VAT Reductions across the Store! (excludes clothing)

Welcome to our Winter Wonderland

don't forget to visit Santa in his Grotto*




Tuesday, 3 February 2009

COUNTRY & FARMING

Western Mail 3

Wool marketing board still offers important service, says minister

INCREASED availability of artificial fibres and falling demand for wool has left farmers shearing their sheep more for welfare reasons than money.

And now a 14% fall in the number of sheep in Britain since 2005 has forced the British Wool Marketing Board to cut costs by restructuring operations and warn of difficulties in maintaining the service to producers at the current price.

Part of the service is a network of depots across Britain, and Rural Affairs Minister Elin Jones visited the BWMB depot at Newtown for an insight into its work.

BWMB chief executive Ian Hartley and depot manager Russell Morgan showed the minister the daily operations from delivery to grading, packing and testing at the second largest grading depot in the UK.

She met with the wool graders who grade approximately two million fleeces annually with the average clip size at the depot being 858kg.

Last season the depot received 4.37 million kilograms of wool from 5,000 active producers. The total UK clip was 32.30 million kg.

The Minister said she was interested to see the skilled grading operation at Newtown for herself.

"The BWMB continues to offer an important service to wool producers in Wales by collecting, grading and marketing their wool and ensuring fair competition between the large number of small producers both in Wales and across the UK," she said.

Mr Hartley acknowledged the difficult market conditions across UK and international markets and stressed the value of the promotion done by the BWMB to market the British Wool brand globally.

Board vice-chairman Gethin Havard, who farms 900 acres near Senyrbidge with his two brothers, spoke of the board's commitment to training within the farming community. With the assistance of European funding, a total of 2,500 young shearers have been trained in Wales - 6,000 across the UK - over the past six years.

Mr Havard said the board was pleased to have the opportunity to raise awareness of the BWMB's work and its activities among producers and the industry at large.

"We are fundamentally a producer organisation and exist to market their wool," he said.

"Achieving the best possible returns is paramount and we will continue to do all we can to achieve this."

BRAND: Ian Hartley, left, CEO of BWMB, Farms Minister Elin Jones and Russell Morgan, BWMB Newtown depot manager

newspaper newsbulletin

Helping farms to grow organic

A FARM visit organised by Organic Centre Wales near Tlywyn next Tuesday afternoon will help organic livestock farmers find out about vegetable production.

The event, suitable for all organic or in conversion livestock producers looking for a new direction, will focus on potato production, but other crops could be considered.

It takes place on Glyn Pugh's 106-hectare farm, Tlywyn, Pwll on Tuesday February 10.

It began organic conversion in 2004 and sheep are being reduced to around 20 pedigree Texels, while the cattle herd is increasing.

They started growing pota-



Interestingly, there were a similar number of both male and female AM images which were taken at schools, and more than double the number of images of female AMs were produced at arts and recreation related events compared to those of their male colleagues – 17 images of females and seven of males. For example, AM Elin Jones posed with the owners of a rosette manufacturing firm, after it won the order to supply the 2008 Royal Winter Fair with rosettes and prize cards (*Cambrian News* 11th December, 2008:30). Similarly, another weekly, *Penarth Times* published two articles on the area's popular Washington Gallery, and Penarth AM Lorraine Barrett was in both of the images which were placed at the side of the two articles. The first one was about a new wine bar launched at the Gallery, and Ms. Barrett and friends raised a glass to the new bar meanwhile for a photo shot (*Penarth Times* 1st March, 2007:2). The other article was under the headline – “Tourism visitors sample best of Gallery” (*Penarth Times* 22nd March, 2007:5). When Ms. Barrett hosted a visit to the Gallery during Wales Tourism Week, she and the visitors posed for a group photo which was even larger than the text of the article itself. It is also notable that numbers of images are not simply comparable because overall there were almost twice as many male AMs featured as females. As a result, the numbers may be understood proportionately. For example, 17 images out of 1096 articles featured in arts and recreation settings where gender is a focus for female AMs versus seven images out of 1969 articles featured in arts and recreation settings where gender is a focus for males. This even widens the difference in coverage. However, during the two studied periods, there were almost an equal number of male and female AMs in the Assembly, so more balanced coverage is to be expected: if there are 10 images of males in a particular setting, then a similar number of images of females are to be expected.



2 • Local News www.penarthtimes.co.uk Thursday, March 1, 2001

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- pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,
7, 8 and 15

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- pages 12 and 13

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- pages 19, 20, 21

Raising a glass at Gallery

FRIENDS of the Washington Gallery recently attended the launch of its new wine bar - and raised a glass to Maggie Knight, wishing her luck with the new venture.

Penarth AM, **Lorraine Barrett**, said: "The Washington Gallery is a gem in our town. I hope the new wine bar brings in more people who will appreciate everything the gallery has to offer, from first-class exhibitions to ceramics and jewellery!"

The wine bar is open on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 5pm until 8pm.



CHEERS: Lorraine Barrett AM, Town Councillor Jill Penn and other Friends of the Washington Gallery raise a glass to the new wine bar.

Social services: Ex Leader 'vindicated'

my business. The team has Penarth Marina. Jenni: case proceeds w Breast Can

Tourism visitors sample best of Gallery

DURING Wales Tourism Week, local Assembly Member **Lorraine Barrett** hosted a visit to the town's popular Washington Gallery by members of the Wales Tourism Alliance.

Mrs Barrett, together with gallery director Maggie Knight, welcomed the Tourism Alliance's Director Sir Brooke Boothby, who owns Fônnon Castle. Also at the visit were artists who have exhibited at the gallery and members of the South East Wales Tourism Forum led by its Chair, Mandy Davies.

Mrs Barrett said: "Tourism is an important part of the economy of Wales and I am delighted to welcome our visitors to the Washington Gallery which is a jewel in the crown of Penarth. "We are very lucky to have this venue in the town, which is an attraction in itself and an important part of our built heritage."



VISIT: Lorraine Barrett AM welcomes visitors to the Washington Gallery. (Picture courtesy of Gary Were, ffoSolutions photography)

WANTED

AVAILABLE NOW

Admin/Assistant	Barry
Befrienders	Penarth
Advisers	Llantwit
Sports Assistant	Barry
Gardeners	Cowbridge
Classroom Helpers	Vale of G
Marketing Assistant	Vale of G
Drivers	Barry

If nothing here catches your eye, remember, we have 100's of other opportunities available for you.

You may be forgiven to think that is for older people, however, that is whether you are 14 or 40 opportunities available for you.

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In short, photos examined here show that female AMs were portrayed in a more typically "feminine" way, such as at arts and recreation events, school and constituency meeting scenes, while males were represented in rather more "masculine" scenes, such as offices, factories and construction fields, rural areas, and in the Senedd which is a symbol of power. However, the numbers of all the presented images pale into insignificance compared to the entire sample of 3065 news items (see Table 6.4).

It is also interesting to examine the angle of the camera in which these AM photos were taken⁶⁵. According to Collier and Collier, the camera is “another instrumental extension of our senses, one that can record on a low scale of abstraction... No matter how select a unit we might wish to photograph, the camera faithfully records this specialized subject and also all other associated elements within focus and scope of its lens” (1986:7). However, they (1986) also noted that photojournalists’ views are often edited ones. Therefore, how the images were taken is a useful way to examine how photographers view the characters in front of their cameras and how this may affect the viewers. As Kraft suggested, camera angle has “significant, predictable effects on judgments of the physical and personal characteristics of the characters, on recall of these characteristics, and on recall of the gist of the stories themselves” (1987:291). In this study, the AMs became the characters that photojournalists concentrated on, and those photos of AMs with the articles that were published alongside of them might consciously and unconsciously affect readers in its own way.

Mandell and Shaw’s study found that “viewers are significantly – and unconsciously – influenced ‘favorably’ by visuals in which a person is photographed from a low angle” (1973:353). In this research, a Low Angle Shot means that the camera lenses were looking up on the people in the images, and a High Angle Shot means that the camera lenses were looking down to the people in the images. It is easy to associate a Low Angle Shot to a tendency that people in the photos are looked up to, while a High Angle Shot suggests a tendency that the people in the photos are being looked down upon. From Table 6.5, it can be seen that almost an identical number of images of both male and female AMs were in High Angle Shots. There were more than double the number of images of male AMs than that of female AMs in Low Angle Shots. This, to a certain extent, suggests that male AMs were pictured in a more respectful way than were females. As mentioned above, Mandell and Shaw (1973) suggested that viewers favour low camera angle shots. The findings of Tiemens (1970), Kraft (1987), Kappas *et al.* (1994)

⁶⁵ If an image is a close-up shot, but it is obvious that the camera’s angle is from a high angle, then it belongs to the measurement of High Angle Shot; it is the same as Low Angle Shot. If an image is shot from a distance, but one can identify whether it is a High Angle Shot or Low Angle Shot, then it is coded under High Angel Shot or Low Angle Shot, the measurement Distant Approach comes the second.

and Sevenants and d'Ydewalle (2006) also support the claim that a lower camera angle influences the perception of people in a positive way. Similarly, Satteli's study (2010) reveals that faces which are photographed from a low camera angle appear to viewers as more credible.

Table 6.5 Number of the Main AM Images by Camera Angle

		Gender of the Main Focus AM		Total
		Male	Female	
Camera Angle of the Main AM Image Displayed	Face Close-up	254	155	409
	Close-up	224	108	332
	Low Angle Shot	112	51	163
	Distant Approach	64	36	100
	High Angle Shot	15	16	31
	Group Photo	47	26	73
	N/A	1253	704	1957
Total	1969	1096	3065	

To conclude, this section suggests that the Welsh press generally treated male AMs somewhat more importantly than females in terms of the size and number of images concerned, the background and camera angle of the images captured during the two chosen research periods. Most significantly, the men were portrayed in a more conventionally “masculine” way in AM photos, while the women were often photographed in scenes associated with typically “feminine” activities.

Gender and Issue Concerns

A large number of studies on various political systems suggest that female politicians have a different style of politics than men or, rather, they practice politics in a more “feminine” way than do men. For instance, Childs (2004) argued that many female Labour MPs believed that women politicians have a feminised style of politics and, in an earlier study, Childs (2002) found that women politicians primarily articulated women's concerns in Westminster. Bird (2005) also found that more women MPs have used parliamentary questions to address gender related issues. This observation is backed by Childs and Withey (2004) who found that women representatives tended to act more

specifically for women, as their research's title suggests – *Women Representatives Acting for Women: Sex and the Signing of Early Day Motions in the 1997 British Parliament*. Similarly, Mackey (2001) found that elected female Scottish councillors believed that they have a responsibility to act for women by raising issues concerning women in policy debates. The reason is that women politicians are believed to have introduced “a kinder, gentler politics”; one major perspective is “characterised by co-operation rather than conflict, collaboration rather than hierarchy, honesty rather than sleaze” (Norris 1996:93; also cited in Childs 2004). This is echoed by Norris' finding that British female political candidates were considered to be “more caring, practical, approachable, honest, principled, and hardworking” (1996:100). All these studies suggest that female politicians are likely to prioritise issues related to women or to address the so-called “soft” issues, so it seems logical to conclude that the news coverage of women politicians would be more likely on these issues. This has been seen as a negative aspect when the media report women politicians, inasmuch as female politicians have also been active in a wide range of other types of legislation, rather than solely on women's issues, such as abortion, childcare, violence against women, women's health and equal opportunity (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Ye 2007). Therefore, it is important to look at whether the Welsh press fell into the same pattern when the AMs were covered during the two studied periods. What makes the Welsh Assembly different from the British Parliament is the large number of women AMs in the institution since its creation. Has the general gender equality affected policy-making in the Assembly? Has it affected the media representation of Assembly women?

As Table 6.6⁶⁶ reveals, male and female AMs seem to have concentrated on different policy areas when they were covered by the studied Welsh newspapers. It is worth mentioning that the Welsh Assembly did not have direct law-making powers during the two research periods. Moreover, health, economic development, education, transport, housing, environment and rural affairs were the major areas in which the Assembly has

⁶⁶ This table was based on the news articles which were more than 100 words from the sample of 3065 news items, and the 278 news items which were less than 100 words in length were excluded. Social Welfare: this measurement includes more than one issue that is listed under this variable. It can be any two or more of the issues here: e.g. health services; housing; education; crime; policing; domestic abuse; childcare; poverty and child abuse, etc.

had devolved legislative powers. Therefore, these policy areas frequently appeared in media coverage of the Assembly and its AMs.

Table 6.6 Number of Major Policy Areas Mentioned by Main Focus AM

		Gender of the Main Focus AM		Total
		Male	Female	
Major Policy Area the Main Focus AM Referring to	Food & Health Services	205	214	419
	Social Welfare	237	119	356
	Economic Development & Employment	251	87	338
	Social Justice	210	73	283
	Culture, Tourism, Sport, Recreation & Communications	108	69	177
	Coalition	143	7	150
	Education & Training	66	78	144
	Housing, Highways & Transport	89	49	138
	Equality	75	44	119
	Environment	49	52	101
	Welsh Identity & Welsh Language	56	14	70
	Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry & Rural Development	24	44	68
	Local Government & Public Administration	33	13	46
	Devolution	34	8	42
	Ancient Monument & Historic Buildings	15	7	22
	Energy & Resources	8	14	22
	Water Services & Flood Defence	4	8	12
	Fire & Rescue Services	3	2	5
	N/A	359	194	553
Total		1969	1096	3065

Note: N/A includes the 278 news items which were less than 100 words.

It is apparent from Table 6.6 that male and female AMs had similar number of articles focusing on health services, education and environment. However, proportionately

speaking, women featured much more heavily in health, education and environment than men. Moreover, there were almost twice as many articles which focused on women AMs that were related to rural affairs, energy and resources, water services and flood defence as compared to those focused on male AMs. The Assembly Ministers who were responsible for areas, such as health, education, environment and rural affairs, were mostly female⁶⁷. This is probably the main reason why a somewhat larger number of articles on women AMs were concerned with these areas, despite the overall number of articles on male AMs being almost double the number of those covering females.

As is evident in Table 6.6, nearly three times as many articles focused on male AMs rather than female AMs when the topics were social justice, economic development or employment, and more than three times as many articles focused on male AMs than on females when the issues concerned devolution, Welsh language or Welsh identity. Similarly, the Ministers whose portfolios were around these policy areas were mostly male. For example, since Alun Ffred Jones was appointed Minister for Heritage in the Welsh Government on 22nd July, 2008, the Heritage Minister during the routine coverage⁶⁸ period was a man.

What is more, most articles on coalition talks, which occurred just after the 3rd May 2007 Welsh national election, were concerned with male AMs – 143 articles versus only seven concerned with female AMs (see Table 6.6). At this time, all party leaders in the Assembly happened to be men. Take the *Western Mail* for instance, the national newspaper that gave more in-depth and extensive coverage of the Assembly election than any other studied newspaper. There were consistent front-page stories of the Assembly election in May 2007, particularly from 3rd May to 9th May. During the election period, the four party leaders received the most coverage from the paper, especially Rhodri

⁶⁷ For example, before the May 2007 Assembly election, Jane Davidson was the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills; Brian Gibbons was the Assembly Health Minister and Carwyn Jones was Minister for Environment, Planning and the Countryside. After the third Assembly elections, Ms. Davidson became Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing; Edwina Hart was Minister for Health and Social Services; Jane Hutt became Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in July 2007 and Elin Jones was Minister for Rural Affairs.

⁶⁸ Routine coverage period is the time period other than the election period; in this study, it is the second chosen time period which is between December 2008 and February 2009.

Morgan who was the leader of the Labour party and First Minister in the second Assembly. After the election, the paper's main focus was the coalition talks, because none of the main parties in the Assembly had achieved a majority in the election. The *Western Mail* ran intensive coverage of the events, including front-page covers, such as "Dismal night for Labour has Rhodri facing coalition talks" (4th May, 2007:1-2), "Deal or no deal? Time for Rhodri to make that coalition call. But to whom?" (5th May, 2007:1). As the coalition talks continued, the leader of the Lib Dems Michael German was also put into the spotlight – mostly based on his ability to lead, which was challenged within the Welsh Lib Dem party. For instance, the paper devoted its front page to the incident, as the heading goes, "Coalition crisis at Assembly as Lib-Dem feuds break out" (7th May, 2007:1). Two more pages were dedicated to this front-page story, as the defiant leader said, "I won't resign as I have the confidence of the party" (7th May, 2007:4-5). A Lib-Lab coalition was ruled out when Mr. German told the Labour leader that "I doubt my AMs will support the deal" (16th May, 2007:6-7). Similarly, Plaid Cymru leader Ieuan Wyn Jones was also paid substantial press attention when the coalition talks went on, because he was likely to be Wales' First Minister. This did not become a reality either in that the Lib Dems pulled out of the so-called rainbow coalition talks – a coalition of Plaid, the Conservatives and the Lib Dems. The paper published a series of reports on this. For example, articles were headlined "Ieuan on brink of power" (19th May, 2007:1), "Ieuan 'ready for tough decisions'" (19th May, 2007:5), "Plaid eyes rainbow coalition for leading role in Assembly" (21st May, 2007:6-7), "Shock twist as Lib-Dems say 'No' to rainbow deal" (24th May, 2007:1 and 5) and many more.

One anonymous male Labour AM's comment reflected on the coalition negotiations and the press coverage that the Assembly leaders received. He stated during one of the interviews that I conducted with the AMs:

Of course in 2007, Rhodri Morgan was our leader, who is a very charismatic figure, known by almost everyone in Wales. So it wasn't surprising that he would attract a lot of attention... It was really a question for most people: did they or didn't they want Rhodri Morgan to continue? Now, Labour still won the largest number of seats, so you can say on balance yes they did, but our share of the vote dropped. So, we had little choice other than to go for a coalition, which

at first was going to be with the Lib Dems. We had already had done a deal with them some years before and those discussions seemed to be heading the right direction, but then the Lib Dems said no. So we were facing the possibility of what we called a rainbow coalition then. But Rhodri Morgan was able to break through that as we know to get an agreement with Ieuan Wyn Jones of Plaid Cymru, and we had One Wales agreement. So, yeah, that would focus attention on party leaders and how well they led their parties, the types of decisions they took had major impact on the future of their parties.

Obviously, the political parties' representatives during the coalition talks were mostly their party leaders, and all of them were men at that time. Therefore, it was mainly male AMs who were referenced in the press coverage of the 2007 coalition negotiations.

In terms of the examined policy areas and the AMs who mentioned them, there was no clear evidence to suggest that the Welsh press coverage of female AMs tended to be more focused on issues related to women as previous studies have found (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Childs 2002; Childs and Withey 2004; Birds 2005). However, due to their ministerial positions in the Assembly, certain AMs did receive a great deal more press attention than others, irrespective of gender. The Assembly only had devolved legislative powers over limited policy areas, so the Ministers who were responsible for these areas were often featured in the press. For example, top government positions in rural affairs and environment are not traditionally associated with women, but Assembly Ministers for these areas were women. As a result, a larger number of articles featuring women AMs were concerned with issues around these areas than male AMs.

Press Coverage of the AMs' Dress Sense

Apparently, some AMs appeared in the studied newspapers far more frequently than others, and the coverage was certainly not all about AMs' constituency work and Senedd debates. It is widely acknowledged that the media pay far more attention to female politicians' looks, attire and personal relationships than they do to their male counterparts (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Witt *et al.* 1994; Greenberg-Lake; Congressional Record 1993). However, this is not entirely true when the appearance and dress style of the men and women in the Assembly were covered by the 12 Welsh

newspapers; in fact, compared to women AMs, it was the male AMs who received much more substantial and rather negative attention during the two studied periods.

Only two articles mentioned women AMs' dress style. For example, the *Western Mail's* then Senedd correspondent David Williamson produced an article on the peak of coalition talks, headlined "Nervous times in the corridors of potential power" (10th May, 2007:2). It described the tensions among the political parties during the coalition negotiations – although how the AMs dressed was not at all important to the discussions or their outcome, he described the then Deputy Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler as "dazzling in a purple jacket" and also wrote:

Plaid Cymru leader Ieuan Wyn Jones sported a white shirt with a tie as brightly red as any Labour rose. True, only a fevered mind would interpret this as a deliberate overture to Labour leader Rhodri Morgan, but speculation has reached such a pitch (10th May, 2007:2).

It is obvious that there is nothing negative about either AM's clothes. Similarly, when Rhodri Morgan was re-appointed as the First Minister after a tough three-week battle and uncertainty, Mr. Williamson also described Labour AM Jane Hutt as "red-bloused Jane Hutt" who nominated the First Minister, and used the colour of Ms. Hutt's blouse to associate with the Labour party (*Western Mail* 26th May, 2007:4-5). In another article, Mr. Williamson commented on the New Year's first Chamber debate session in 2009, and he also mentioned Rhodri Morgan's scarlet necktie:

Perhaps it was the dazzling brightness of First Minister Rhodri Morgan's scarlet tie, but while he batted away questions from rival party leaders, most AMs kept their heads down and squinted at their computer screens (*Western Mail* 14th January, 2009:5).

Again, a bright red necktie does not really have anything to do with good or bad Chamber performances. Here, it is perhaps a mere connection with the red colour of the Labour party. However, neckties do signify a sense of masculinity and masculine power, and they were only mentioned when male AMs were referred to. By contrast, when female AMs were mentioned, only their jacket and blouse were described. "Blouse" is definitely a

feminine word compared to “shirt” which describes a top for men. This indicates that a distinction between femininity and masculinity exists in terms of gender while AMs were covered by the newspaper. Perhaps, it was also merely the writing style of a particular journalist or a way of making politics more engaging. It is true that women AMs’ attire was seldom mentioned during the two examined periods. Except for the *Western Mail*, only one news item mentioned AMs’ attire in the other 11 examined newspapers. It was a letter written by a member of the public who commented on the then First Minister, Rhodri Morgan’s clothes on a Politics Show. The letter was headlined “At least dress properly for the part, Mr. Morgan” (*South Wales Echo* 3rd February, 2009:17), and this reader did say she was “disgusted” at Mr. Morgan’s attire.

This was certainly not the first time that Mr. Morgan was mocked because of his clothes. The *Western Mail* in particular did single out his poor dress sense. For instance, the paper devoted a whole page to analyse how style plays its part in politics and how well the UK’s political leaders and the four Assembly leaders were dressed: “As David Cameron is voted one of the Britain’s best-dressed men, Political Editor Tomos Livingstone explains why the Assembly election could be decided as much on style as substance” (4th April, 2007:11). Unfortunately, as always, Rhodri Morgan was described as the leader who “was mistaken for a tree creature from *Doctor Who*” and whose dress sense was “eccentric” and so on.

Wednesday, 4 April 2007 Western Mail 11

NEWS

For those who don't think style should play a part in politics... two words – Michael Foot

As David Cameron is voted one of Britain's best-dressed men, Political Editor **Tomos Livingstone** explains why the Assembly election could be decided as much on style as substance

IF ELECTIONS are decided on the cut of a suit or the colour of your shoes, David Cameron might as well put his feet up for the next two years.

The Tory leader has been voted the second best-dressed man in Britain by men's fashion magazine *GQ*, while his likely ballot-box opponent Gordon Brown has the ignominy of being the second-worst dressed.

Mr Cameron, who famously appeared for the cameras in Converse trainers the day his son was born, is described as "a politician who understands the news agenda is set as much by appearance as it is by words".

Mr Brown, meanwhile is rumoured to have had a "makeover" as he prepares for the prime ministership, complete with pink ties and infamously expensive dental work.

But can we expect style to play a part in the result of next month's Assembly elections too? All four party leaders are men, and it can't be said that any of them are flamboyant dressers – although First Minister Rhodri Morgan could probably be placed in the box marked "eccentric".

Mr Morgan, who in 2005 was mistaken for a tree creature from *Zoetrope* while at the BBC Wales studios in Llandaff, is unlikely to hit the campaign trail in the bespoke Timothy Everest suits favoured by Mr Brown, let alone appear in Converse trainers like Mr Cameron.

Does it matter how our politicians dress, and how they appear? Anyone who thinks not should remember the fate of Michael Foot, the Labour leader vilified for wearing a donkey jacket at the Cenotaph. Mr Foot had plenty of genuine political problems, but that image stuck in people's minds and made it impossible to view him as a potential Prime Minister.

Mr Morgan has, however, managed to turn this rule on its head (as he has with so many other political dictums). His unspectacular style – his choice of tie rarely strays from the Cardiff Rugby Club staple – tells its own story. "I'm not New Labour slick," it says, "I do my own thing." Voters know what they're getting before he even opens his mouth.

This sartorial modesty is currently very much in fashion – trying too hard is a cardinal sin, which may explain why Mr Brown's changes of tie have yielded so many acres of newspaper. And it also explains why Mr

Name: Rhodri Morgan
Position: First Minister
Style: Unique might be the best way to describe the top politician in Wales' dress sense. Not known for worrying about his appearance, but at least he is recognisable.
Image: Like his ties, a bit old-school. Not afraid to hark back to Labour's pre-Blairsty days.

Name: Mike German
Position: Lib-Dem Assembly leader
Style: After a diet that any TV makeover show would be proud of, Mr German has transformed his appearance. Smart suits and always impeccably turned out.
Image: Far more restrained than some of his Lib-Dem colleagues. Would never be seen with a Cheeky Girl.

Name: Nick Bourne
Position: Tory Assembly leader
Style: Another sharp-suited dresser, Mr Bourne may not be as stylish as his party leader, but could never be criticised for looking anything less than smart.
Image: Sober, straight-down-the-line and in control. Like he hopes his party will be come May.

Name: Ieuan Wyn Jones
Position: Plaid Assembly leader
Style: His recent tour around Wales saw him don check shirts and walking boots. Would never be described as a city slicker, but has made efforts to modernise.
Image: Salt-of-the-earth and not afraid to mix with the people of Wales.

Cameron recently told an interviewer, "I'm not really interested in what I wear. If I'm left to myself I'd probably go to Next or Marks & Spencer."

So what of our other Welsh political leaders? Ieuan Wyn Jones has taken a leaf out of Mr Cameron's book, giving speeches in a relaxed, move-away-from-the-podium style. His recent party conference address was also notable for the force with which it was delivered – not an attribute the Plaid leader was credited with in the past.

Mike German, leader of the Lib-Dems in the Assembly, has always been noted as a sharp dresser, and is a recent winner of the Weight Watchers award for the most successful dieter in Cardiff Bay. Perhaps he's taken a leaf from Sir Menzies Campbell, who told party activists last year that he had been brought up to "polish your shoes if you're going to leave the house".

Tory leader Nick Bourne is also a smart, if sober, dresser in keeping with his academic background. I doubt we'll see him follow Mr Cameron in being pictured wearing recycled trainers, somehow.

Perhaps the most famous recent example of clothes having a bearing on politics was when the contenders for the Tory leadership, Mr Cameron and David Davis, were asked on *Woman's Hour* whether they wore boxers or briefs. Mr Cameron went for boxers, and the rest is history. "It defined the difference between the candidates," said the presenter of the show that day, Martha Kearney. Welsh politicians take note.

Moreover, the paper printed an eye-catching front-page cover to ridicule Mr. Morgan's necktie while complaining about rail network during the 2007 Assembly election campaigns; the heading goes, "Now is a great time for Welsh railways – Really Rhodri? To the 20,000 who endured rail chaos yesterday, that's as odd as your tie..." (13th April, 2007:1). There was then a detailed report following the front page. What is odd is that when it goes, "Rhodri's publicity stunt yesterday may have seemed a trifle odd, but it was nothing compared to his striking choice of necktie" (13th April, 2007:6).

6 Western Mail  Friday, 13 April 2007

NEWS



ON TRACK? Rhodri Morgan was keen to highlight 'a £400m investment' in the railways, but his PR exercise was overshadowed by passenger frustration at delays in restoring the line between Cardiff and Swansea

Rhodri campaigns by train – as 22,000 suffer in continuing signal works fiasco

FIRST Minister Rhodri Morgan yesterday crossed Wales by train as part of an election publicity stunt – at the same time as up to 22,000 commuters were caught up in more chaos on one of the nation's busiest lines.

The timing of Mr Morgan's train ride could not have been more embarrassing for the First Minister. He tried to highlight investment in the rail network in Wales while it came to a standstill across much of the country.

Work on the Cardiff to Swansea line has overrun from the bank holiday weekend, forcing rail passengers on to replacement buses for the whole week.

Network Rail has since apologised and promised a 'full investigation' into why the work was not completed on Easter Monday as planned.

The First Minister acknowledged the irony of the situation as he started his epic nine-hour trek from Cardiff to Bangor on a succession of Arriva trains.

"It's slightly ironic," he said. "But only slightly because you

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Network Rail Promises 'full investigation' into overrun

have got to remember that's a £400m investment overall.

"It's very regrettable that the work has taken longer than expected and I'm sure there will a lot of letters flying to and from passengers."

It is understood that a full service will be available from 3.30pm tomorrow, while a limited service between Cardiff and Swansea was due to be running today via the Vale of Glamorgan line.

Western route director Robbie Burns said, "Hundreds of engineers have been working round the clock to finish testing the new signalling system... We would like to thank everyone for their continued patience whilst we finish

Off key

Rhodri's publicity stunt yesterday may have seemed a trifle odd, but it was nothing compared to his striking choice of necktie.

Featuring a segment of a large purple saxophone, it would have looked like a poorly-chosen Christmas present from a distant cousin, were it not for the vaguely official-looking crest at its centre.

Either way, it certainly failed to hit the right notes.

this crucial work. I can assure you that we will undertake a full investigation into the causes of this overrun once normal services have been restored."

The money being spent on the new signalling system was "a huge investment in Wales" and "the sort of money you only spend once every 40 or 50 years", the First Minister said.

If re-elected on May 3, his party would integrate Wales' transport networks by harmonising rail tick-

ets and timetables with the Traws-Cambria bus service. Labour is offering more carriages, discount off-peak travel for pensioners, more police on public transport and better lighting at stations.

Mr Morgan said rail subsidies had made travelling from North to South Wales more reliable and comfortable.

"There are more people now using the railways in Wales than at any time since 1959," he said.

However, his words were of scant consolation to the thousands of commuters and shoppers caught up in the seventh day of disruption.

First Great Western, which runs

services between Swansea and London, estimated as many as 20,000 of their passengers had been affected by the works, while Arriva Trains Wales estimated up to 2,000 of their passengers had been affected.

A spokeswoman for rail watchdog Passenger Focus said, "Our view is that passengers are quite understanding about the reasons for the engineering works, if they're told in time. Many passengers will have planned their journeys around engineering works, specifically expecting them to end on Tuesday. To find out it's overrunning to this weekend is very frustrating for them. [Network Rail] need to get their

timescales right for passengers to plan their onward journeys."

Alun Ffird Jones, Plaid's transport spokesman, said, "I do the journey from North to South Wales on a weekly basis. On the plus side the two-hourly service from Holyhead to Cardiff has been a success but for me to get from Bangor to Cardiff sometimes stretches to five hours. What we're asking for is a proper three-and-a-half hour train journey. We need to keep on investing more highly so we can link this great nation of ours."

Rhodri Morgan's train journey in full

8.50am – Leaves Cardiff Central Station

9.27am – Arrives Abergavenny to meet local Party campaigners

9.57am – Leaves Abergavenny

12.06pm – Arrives at Wrexham to meet local candidates and see site of proposed new rail depot

1.34pm – Leaves Wrexham

2.02pm – Changes trains at Shotton

2.39pm – Arrives at Flint for tour of railway station and town leisure centre, where he met skateboarders (see picture)

4.49pm – Leaves Flint

5.47pm – Arrives in Bangor for door-knocking with local candidate

Total time: Eight hours and 57 minutes

Comparable time for the new Government-subsidised north-south air link between Cardiff to Anglesey launched on Wednesday: Under an hour



PUBLICITY EXERCISE Rhodri Morgan meets skateboarders Jonathan Thompson and Patrick Jones, both 16, in Flint

What is more, the paper published four articles on the profiles of Wales' four political party leaders just a week before the election. In the last article, the paper's then political editor Tomos Livingstone described Rhodri Morgan as a "maverick who reshaped post-devolution politics", and interestingly he wrote that Mr. Morgan's "wisecracking speeches and idiosyncratic dress sense helped mark him out in an age of on-message politicians" (26th April, 2007:16-17). Clearly, this is a positive comment. It seems that it is somehow a compliment to a male politician when he is criticised for his poor dress style. This, to some extent, affirmed what Ross and Sreberny said about women politicians – being young and good-looking can be "turned in to the iconic/ironic imagery of contemporary popular culture" (2000:95). Nevertheless, it is clear that the former First Minister did receive massive press attention even though it was not all positive.

Mail  NEWS Thursday, 26 April 2007

Maverick who reshaped post-devolution politics

In the last of our profiles of Wales' political leaders, Political Editor Tomos Livingstone focuses on the man who has run Wales for seven years – First Minister Rhodri Morgan



WHATSOEVER the voters' verdict or that in a week's time Rhodri Morgan can still claim to have done more than anyone to reshape the Welsh political landscape after devolution.

The polyruth Harvard graduate, whose walloping speeches and idiosyncratic dress sense helped mark him out as an agent of change, took the job he started in 1999 – he once famously replied "do one-legged ducks swim in a circle?" when asked if he wanted to be First Minister – at the third attempt.

Written off after twice losing out on the Labour leadership in Wales, once to Ron Davies, and then to Alan Michael, Mr Morgan finally took office when Mr Michael was ousted in February 2004.

Many saw his elevation as the Welsh party's snub to Prime Minister Tony Blair, who turned Mr Morgan down for a junior ministerial job in 1997 and tried to force Mr Morgan to resign.

It was Mr Morgan, 67, who introduced the concept of "clear

reel water", a policy agenda for Welsh Labour that defined itself by its differences with New Labour in London and was popular enough to give the party a water-tight majority in the May 2003 Assembly elections.

Although many felt it was little more than a soundbite (which Mr Morgan himself didn't use for years, characteristically leaving it out of a keynote pre-election speech after journalists had been briefed), a range of policies from the rejection of foundation hospitals to the re-introduction of a form of student grant, were designed to give Welsh Labour a distinctive feel – and appeal to traditional Labour voters disillusioned with Blairism.

Despite insisting there was no such thing as "Morganism", he has set himself the ambition of changing the way Wales was run and to banish forever the notion that the country's ills were entirely the fault of rule from Westminster.

The wide-reaching "boffice of the omelette", bringing almost all public bodies under the direct control of the Assembly, is already changing the way the public sector works.

And the Assembly itself is to get new powers this month, allowing it to introduce primary legislation – subject to Westminster approval – for the first time.

But Mr Morgan's long-term

aim of a Scottish-style parliament will only happen about a year-and-a-half, which even he admits will be some years away.

Now he faces another tough fight, confronting the people of Wales to stick with him as a time when the electoral cycle is turning against Labour. He hopes to resign as First Minister in 2009, but it looks as if he'll have to cut another tricky coalition deal first.

Some of his critics wonder whether he could have achieved more – particularly in the scrap with Labour's devolution ray-busters – were he not undone by his reputation for gaffes. He declined to attend the 60th anniversary D-Day commemorations in June 2004, and compounded the error two months later by turning up late to meet the Queen.

For a man so dependent on his name for the people's image – he once claimed in an interview to be "on first name terms with everybody in Wales" – they were fatal errors of judgment.

But he can justifiably point to other achievements in office, with unemployment at a record low and the Assembly firmly established as part of Welsh life – something that seemed unlikely after the waver this "yes" vote in 1997 and the shambles of Mr Michael's departure in 2000.

Unscathed by the New Labour need to be constantly on message, as chair of the Public Accounts Committee at Westminster, he famously referred to Tony Blair's spinner-in-chief Alastair Campbell as a "practitioner of gynaecological medicine" when "spin doctor" would have done.

More recently he risked the wrath of Number 10 by suggesting that swapping Mr Blair for Gordon Brown could do a lot of good to his own re-election chances.

But the mistrust of the early 2000s has gone, and both Blair and Brown have been happy for Rhodri to run the campaign his own way, complete with gaffe, utterances and musings on why New Labour is like Venice's Mido ("crescentic" and showing its age).

Relations with Labour MPs have not always been good – the Assembly's long struggle with NHS waiting lists being the primary cause – but affection has grown over the years.

Whereas once MPs would furiously tell journalists exactly what they thought of his latest utterances, nowadays a slough

"Rhodri is Rhodri" is the normal response.

Hywel Rhodri Morgan was born in the upper Swansea valley in 1939, his father was Professor T. E. Morgan, a leading Welsh historian.

A graduate of both Oxford and Harvard Universities, he worked as a civil servant in the old Welsh Office, drawing up papers for the extension of the M4 motorway across much of South Wales.

He became MP for Cardiff West in 1972, and following Labour's election victory 10 years later became chair of the Public Administration Select Committee, where his forensic and colourful approach led to him being named "interrogator of the year".

A passionate devolutionist, he became leader of the Welsh Labour Party having been pipped to the post first by Ron Davies and then by Mr Michael.

When Mr Michael resigned as First Secretary (as the position was then known) in February 2000, Mr Morgan was the natural replacement, and promptly promised, in his own style, to "smash the Welsh champagne bottle and let it fizz".

He negotiated a coalition with the Liberal Democrats in October 2000, before winning a nominal majority of one in the May 2003 elections.

A keen sports fan, he is regularly to be seen at home fixtures of both Cardiff City FC and the Cardiff Blues rugby side, as well as Welsh internationals in both sports.

He has been a season ticket holder at the Arms Park since the 1940s.

His aim is to stay on as First Minister and retire gracefully in 2009, with devolution finally settled as the natural way of operating Welsh politics.

It would be a far cry from his first day in office, stricken with flu, the new First Minister model a power-rap and a couple of aspirin to get him through a vital first engagement – rallying the dispirited civil service troops in Cathays Park.

A keen runner and walker, Mr Morgan, perhaps aptly given his unconventional style, also enjoys a group of journalists. "I like jazz because you can play the wrong note".

He is married to Julie Morgan, a freelance journalist. They have one son and two daughters.

UNIQUE STYLE First Minister Rhodri Morgan at his home near Cardiff

Picture: Andrew James

Rhodri Morgan

Born: September 1939, Cardiff
Job Title: First Minister, Welsh Assembly Government
Education: Westminster Grammar School, Cardiff; St John's College, Oxford and Harvard University
Political Achievement: Saved

the devolution project – and kept Welsh Labour together – after the Alan Michael debacle.
Moment to forget: A bad summer in 2004 when he declined to go to the D-Day commemoration and was late to meet the Queen.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Most importantly, there seems to be a universal acknowledgement that Mr. Morgan certainly did not stand out by his excellent dress sense, but that this did not truly matter or affect what he was doing as First Minister. Another example would be an opinion piece by the paper's chief reporter Martin Shipton, who commented on the then Conservative leader Nick Bourne's conduct – Last roll of the dice for Tory leader as he loses key player (28th February, 2009:10). The article mentioned that Mr. Bourne was forced to apologise to his staff when he allowed them to publish documents that ridiculed Rhodri Morgan's attire. As discussed previously, the four political party leaders were given the most substantial coverage by the Welsh press, and above all, the former First Minister Rhodri Morgan was the number one apple of the press' eye, regardless of negative or positive coverage. Moreover, the coverage also suggests that the Welsh press might put more emphasis on image politics than gender these days. As Lister and Wells (2001:62) noted, everyday life in the 21st century has become a "visual culture" because of an explosion of imaging and visualising technologies.

Differences in the Coverage of the AMs in the Same Region

There were a few pairs of male-female AMs in the same region, where one male AM and one female AM were elected to the same constituency or a similar area. It is interesting to do a comparative study of these AMs as a straightforward way to examine the different press treatment that men and women receive in the Assembly.

Even though it is reasonable for the national press not to pay equal attention to each sitting AM, the more locally-focused press has no excuse for neglecting or preferring one AM to another in the same region, based on the fact that both AMs represent the same area, if not precisely the same constituency. If the coverage was hugely different, then it would be easy to conclude that the press did treat AMs differently in terms of gender. Furthermore, during my interviews with 15 women AMs in the third Assembly in 2007, some stated that their regional and local press gave much better coverage to the female AMs than did the national press (Ye 2007). To examine the different press treatment that the AMs in the same region received is also an effective way to affirm whether these female AMs' claim was exactly the case or not.

As mentioned above, a few male-female pairs of AMs were elected into the same region. For instance, Labour Swansea East AM Val Lloyd and the constituency's West AM Andrew Davies were both re-elected into the third Assembly in 2007. Likewise, Labour Newport West AM Rosemary Butler and East AM John Griffiths were also re-elected into the third Assembly. The Wednesday weekly *Western Telegraph* dedicated its front page to the 2007 Assembly election on 2nd May, and after the election, the following Wednesday, Conservative new AMs Angela Burns and Paul Davies also made the front page, as the heading goes, "The day the county turned blue" (9th May, 2007:1). That is because both of them were newly elected into the third Assembly – Paul Davies for Preseli Pembrokeshire and Angela Burns for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire. Plaid South Wales Central AM Chris Franks and Labour AM Lorraine Barrett for Cardiff South and Penarth are paired together, because the *Penarth Times* devoted almost equal newspaper space to both AMs to voice their opinions. It published 12 articles and letters written by the two AMs (see Table 5.14 in Chapter 5). It is worth noting that the area's AM Lorraine Barrett was the one that the paper paid the most attention to ahead of other

AMs.

As stated previously, the local press tended to report on their local AMs more often than the other AMs, whereas the national press concentrated more on party leaders and Ministers. After carefully examining how the Welsh local press covered the AMs from the same region, an unsurprising point emerged: the press did quote or report the male AM more frequently than it did his female colleague. This, to a certain extent, can be explained by Table 6.7 below. Clearly, far more photos of Andrew Davies were published than those of Val Lloyd – in fact, five times more (see Table 6.7). This may be explained by the fact that Mr. Davies was a Minister in the Welsh Government throughout the second and third Assemblies, while Ms. Lloyd was not. All the four photos of the Swansea East AM Ms. Lloyd were printed in the *South Wales Evening Post*, which is a local newspaper based in Swansea, while among the 24 photos of Mr. Davies, 10 of them were published by the same newspaper, while other newspapers that published photos of Mr. Davies included the *Western Mail* (3 photos), *Evening Leader* (3 photos), *South Wales Argus* (3 photos), *South Wales Echo* (2 photo), *Daily Post* (1 photo), *Llanelli Star* (1 photo), and *Western Telegraph* (1 photo). In contrast, Ms. Lloyd’s appearance in her local press was extremely limited. She appeared even less in the national press. What is more, two of the four photo opportunities were with school children, as she accompanied news stories headlined “AM joins children to clean up city” (*South Wales Evening Post* 2nd March, 2007:39) and “Healthy start to pupils’ day” (12th May, 2007:8).

Table 6.7 Assembly Members in the Most Dominant Picture

	Number of Occurrences	%
Andrew Davies	24	.8
Val Lloyd	4	.1
John Griffiths	11	.4
Rosemary Butler	10	.3
Chris Franks	8	.3
Lorraine Barrett	15	.5
Paul Davies	7	.2
Angela Burns	9	.3
Total Articles	3065	100.0

These stories reflect an earlier finding in this chapter that female AMs are more likely to be represented in recreation events and school scenes. The *South Wales Evening Post* produced the third largest number of articles (502 out of 3065) among the studied newspapers. Like Ms. Lloyd, only one photo of Mr. Davies was used by the newspaper regarding the 2007 election – the two photos appeared just after both of them were successfully re-elected into the third Assembly. As stated above, the newspaper did print more photos of Mr. Davies than it did those of Ms. Lloyd. However, in the second Assembly, Mr. Davies was the Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks, and he was the Minister for Finance during the second research period between December 2008 and February 2009. Apart from the one election photo, two out of nine photographs presented Mr. Davies as the Swansea West AM and the other seven were photographed in the events which related to Mr. Davies' ministerial role in the Assembly Government. For instance, one story was about the then Swansea West AM Mr. Davies, who praised youngsters for their help with his Christmas card (*South Wales Evening Post* 6th January, 2009:8). Other news articles only mentioned Mr. Davies as the Minister, such as the ones headlined “Korean firm eyes £80m investment” (*Evening Post* 10th March, 2007:7), “Drugs firm’s new Welsh HQ” (*Evening Post* 15th March, 2007:18) and “Amazon to bring 2,700 jobs” (*Evening Post* 29th March, 2007:1). Therefore, it can be argued that the photos of Mr. Davies might not have been published as frequently as they were, had he not held ministerial positions in the Assembly.

Meanwhile, Lorraine Barrette was the AM for Penarth, so it was expected that the *Penarth Times* to print more photos of her than other AMs. However, the number of photos of each AM was small compared to the total number of articles studied, so this does not necessarily demonstrate different treatment of male and female AMs. Therefore, it is useful to examine how often these AMs became the main focus of the news articles.

It can be seen clearly from Table 6.8 that the number of news stories that were primarily focused on male AMs was greater than those that were concentrated on female AMs, especially the pair of Andrew Davies and Val Lloyd. Despite there being more pictures of Lorraine Barrett printed than those of Chris Franks (see Table 6.7), there were still

more articles focused on Mr. Franks than on Ms. Barrett. Although occasionally there was a greater number of news articles that were secondly and thirdly focused on female AMs rather than on male AMs, the total number of articles concerned was quite small (see Table 6.8). As a result, it can be said that male AMs received more attention than did female AMs, which reflects the findings of previous chapters.

Table 6.8 Assembly Members as the Main Focus AM

	Number of Occurrences	%
Andrew Davies	96	3.1
Val Lloyd	18	.6
John Griffiths	52	1.7
Rosemary Butler	38	1.2
Chris Franks	48	1.6
Lorraine Barrett	33	1.1
Paul Davies	30	1.0
Angela Burns	27	.9
Total Articles	3065	100.0
Assembly Members as the Second Main Focus AM		
	Number of Occurrences	%
Andrew Davies	24	.8
Val Lloyd	5	.2
John Griffiths	8	.3
Rosemary Butler	15	.5
Chris Franks	6	.2
Lorraine Barrett	7	.2
Paul Davies	14	.5
Angela Burns	8	.3
Total Articles	3065	100.0
Assembly Members as the Third Main Focus AM		
	Number of Occurrences	%
Andrew Davies	11	.4
Val Lloyd	1	.0
John Griffiths	6	.2
Rosemary Butler	4	.1
Chris Franks	1	.0
Lorraine Barrett	7	.2
Paul Davies	1	.0
Angela Burns	2	.1
Total Articles	3065	100.0

Conclusion

This chapter examined whether the Welsh press covered AMs in gender-stereotyped ways during the two periods studied. Five sets of conclusions emerge from the analysis of the previous discussions.

First, concerning the locations of the news articles, undoubtedly male AMs received more substantial press attention than did female AMs. For example, more articles that focused on men in the Assembly were placed on the front page than were those that focused on women AMs. Generally, articles on male AMs were given more prominent positions in newspapers than were articles about women AMs. Furthermore, males were less likely to be covered in news briefs than were female AMs. Stories on male AMs were more likely to be published in business sections than were those on females; and, unsurprisingly, the articles on women AMs were more likely to be placed in style sections. Female AMs tended to receive somewhat more sexist comments. This reflects what other researchers have found (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000).

The second conclusion is that, in terms of the number and nature of the published images, there were far more photos of male AMs than photos of female AMs. Males were treated in a more credible, somewhat positive and respectful manner than were their female colleagues when the angle of camera shots was taken into consideration. Female AMs were represented in a more “feminine” way, while their male counterparts were portrayed in more “masculine” scenes. For instance, a significantly larger number of male AMs were pictured in rural, office, Senedd, factory and construction scenes. Interestingly, far more women AMs were photographed in arts and recreation events than were men in the Assembly. However, the number of these images compared to the total number of articles collected was small, so the difference in press treatment that AMs received in terms of image and gender may not be statistically significant.

Third, this chapter examined how male and female AMs practice politics by taking issue

concerns as an example. This leads to the conclusion that there was no clear evidence to support the claim that the press coverage of women AMs tended to focus on issues related to women more than do their male colleagues, as Carroll and Schreiber (1997:145) pointed out:

...the reporting on women in Congress definitely leaves the impression that women members are most concerned with and active around issues of women's health, abortion, and to a lesser extent sexual harassment. It is on these issues that they are portrayed as agents of change who are making a difference.

Apart from covering the political party leaders, the press did pay more frequent attention to Ministers in the Assembly than it did other AMs. This means that the press tended to cover the AMs more with regard to their positions in the Assembly Government than it did their gender. Women AMs have held ministerial office in the Assembly in a variety of portfolios, such as finance, rural affairs and environment, which are often traditionally associated with men rather than women.

Interestingly, only a couple of articles mentioned female AMs' attire, and there was no negative feeling attached. By contrast, quite a few articles discussed the male AMs' dress style. Therefore, the fourth conclusion can be drawn from these reviewed articles: male AMs received more substantial and negative coverage on their attire than did their female counterparts. This contradicts what previous researchers have stated – the media give far more attention to female politicians' appearance and personal relationships than they do to males (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Witt *et al.* 1994; Greenberg-Lake; Congressional Record 1993). Surprisingly, the former First Minister Rhodri Morgan was ridiculed on his dress on several occasions, but it seemed that this has never affected his recognition by the public and that his reputation was unlikely to suffer because of his poor dress sense. Perhaps he was perceived to be flouting the demand to participate in image politics. Perhaps his reputation was even enhanced.

Finally, this chapter made a comparative study of a few pairs of male and female AMs from the same region. It is not obvious that male AMs received more substantial press

coverage than female AMs in their local press. However, the Welsh press as a whole did report or quote one or other of the AMs more frequently when they held ministerial roles in the Assembly Government.

Both men and women in the Assembly were given negative press coverage, including the well-known former First Minister Rhodri Morgan. This perhaps echoes the saying – all press is good press. It may be argued that politics is all about publicity, and politicians are considered fair game by the press. Most importantly, during the two examined research periods, the Welsh press did not particularly single out female AMs' appearance and dress style. In more recent years, the Welsh press seems not to have given as much sexist criticism to women politicians as it did a decade ago. This may partly be because of the potential consequences of affirmative action of ensuring equal female participation in the Assembly since the start of the institution. The political evolution of a gender-balanced Assembly has somehow changed the culture of the Welsh press, when women politicians and politics are covered. The presence of a large number of women over a period seems to have gradually made gender parity a norm. Welsh Journalists' perception of female politicians as a whole may have shifted. Of course, there may be other factors influencing the change in the press. For example, due to a large number of existing studies on how unfairly women politicians are treated by the media, the Welsh press may be cautious about avoiding receiving the same complaints. Besides, if journalists would cover female AMs as they did a decade ago, that would certainly draw criticism and there might be an outburst of anger among Assembly women. There is no shortage of strong female characters in the Assembly. Furthermore, the Assembly is a much smaller legislature than others; AMs and the Welsh journalists are more closely linked.

The next chapter will discuss how the AMs themselves view the ways in which the British national media cover AMs and Assembly activities in general and whether they consider there to be prejudices against women AMs in particular in the Welsh press.

CHAPTER 7

Press Coverage of the Assembly through the Eyes of the AMs

Introduction

Briefly speaking, discourses analysed in this chapter are, for the most part, the viewpoints of the 28 AMs from the fourth Welsh Assembly concerning how the AMs themselves view the media coverage of the Assembly Members and their daily activities. To examine how politicians perceive newspaper coverage of themselves is to gain a better understanding of the press attention they receive. The questions are: what do they think about the coverage of what is occurring in Welsh politics; how do they feel about those reports on themselves; do they think the coverage is fair and balanced; how can political coverage be improved to engage the electorate?

This chapter illustrates the prevailing view among AMs that the British national media give even less coverage to the Assembly and Welsh politics than do the Welsh media⁶⁹. Furthermore, not all the AMs I interviewed considered that their voices are heard in the Welsh press, both males and females. What is more, a few female AMs claimed that prejudiced coverage of women AMs still exists in the Welsh press, although they conceded that there has been much more positive coverage in recent years. This chapter builds on preceding chapters and, by presenting the interviewed AMs' points of view, argues that the positive change in press coverage of Assembly women is a result of the high level of female representation in the Assembly since its creation.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first is primarily an examination of the UK's national media coverage of the Assembly both through the discourses in the Welsh press and through the eyes of the AMs. Unsurprisingly, there was a universal acknowledgement that coverage of the Assembly is extremely poor in the London-based British national media. The 28 interviewed AMs offered their concerns and explanations, so this section also attempts to reveal the reasons why there is little coverage of the

⁶⁹ Previous chapters noted that the Welsh media coverage of the Assembly is limited, and the majority of the Welsh people receive information from the British national media. So, it is important to have a sense of how the UK national media cover Welsh politics.

Assembly in the UK national media from the AMs' perspective.

The second section of this chapter records how the interview participants feel about their representation in the Welsh press, especially the women in the Assembly. This section is comprised of two important parts and accordingly it endeavours to answer two questions. It first asks AMs whether they consider that their voices are heard in the Welsh press. Second, AMs were questioned about their perceptions of any prejudices or biases when the Welsh press covers their daily activities.

A number of interviewed AMs pointed out changes that had occurred in the Welsh press coverage between the 2007 and 2011 Assembly elections. Consequently, the last section of this chapter explores the AMs' different reactions towards the *Western Mail's* marking exercises before each of the last two Assembly elections, the changes in the Welsh press coverage of the Assembly and the changes in the media practices in Wales. For instance, there has been an obvious shift from print media to online and social media, as more and more people use online resources for information. Most significantly, this research reveals that AMs concluded that there has been a noticeable positive change in recent years in terms of the attention that female AMs have received from the Welsh press, even though the change might have been made subconsciously by journalists and editors, rather than through deliberate shifts in media policy.

The following discussion will focus on how the interviewed AMs feel about the British national media coverage of the Assembly and Welsh politics.

UK's National Media Coverage of the Assembly

As stated and discussed in great detail in previous chapters, the Welsh press pays limited attention to Welsh politics and the Assembly (see also Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; Jeffery 2004; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). What about the London-based UK national media? It seems that they report on Welsh politics even less than do the Welsh media. This observation is primarily drawn from the Welsh press coverage, and it is also a perception

from almost all interviewed AMs, though there is no statistical evidence to support this.

I. Is “poor” the one word to summarise the coverage?

About three weeks after the 2007 Assembly election, a coalition Government of Plaid Cymru, Welsh Conservatives and Welsh Liberal Democrats was highly likely to be formed and Wales seemed on the brink of being led by a nationalist First Minister – Ieuan Wyn Jones. However, the UK national media allegedly showed little interest in what was happening in Wales. Two article headlines clearly support the previous claim: “Wales’ seismic shift [coalition talks] fails to raise a ripple in England” (*Western Mail* 22nd May, 2007:11); “Rainbow coalition? More like a National Assembly for Farmers, according to one Westminster figure [a Labour MP]” which is followed by a subheading, reading “The London Media have shown little interest in this month’s events at the Assembly but the Westminster village is alive with gossip about Cardiff Bay” (*Western Mail* 22nd May, 2007:21). As the former Plaid Cymru Assembly leader, Ieuan Wyn Jones pointed out, “It is hardly surprising that people are unaware of the election when 85 per cent of the people of Wales get their information from the London-based media who tend to ignore Wales. With less and less coverage of the Assembly, it is proving ever more difficult to get the message across to the public” (*Western Mail* 1st March, 2007:2; *South Wales Echo* 1st March, 2007:3).

The former Plaid leader’s claim is backed by Thomas (2006) and others (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Delp 2008; Ye 2007), demonstrating that 85 per cent of the newspapers consumed in Wales are London-based. Furthermore, Thomas *et al.* (2004a) have stated that the Welsh daily newspapers are regularly purchased by only 50 per cent of the electorate in Wales. Even though the UK national media have shown little engagement with Welsh politics, a huge percentage of the Welsh population pays attention to them. Compared to the UK national media, the Welsh press gives considerably more substantial coverage to Welsh politics, but it tends to be neglected by half of the people in Wales. Therefore, to a certain degree, this may partly explain why about 50 per cent of the Welsh population did not know of the 2007 Assembly election just two months before the polling day and why

a large percentage of the Welsh population is not interested in politics (see detailed discussion in Chapter 4). More Welsh people read their regional and local newspapers than the Welsh national newspapers. As discussed in previous chapters, the Welsh local press does not cover the National Assembly as much as the Welsh national press does. Thus, it would seem to be important for the journalists who work for the local papers to report on the Assembly more prominently and to take the Assembly seriously and to encourage the public to engage with politics.

With respect to the UK's national media coverage of the Assembly activities, the views of the 28 interviewed AMs were unanimous. All interviewees held a negative opinion of the British national media and they all believed that their coverage of the Assembly is extremely poor. For instance, descriptions like "very poor", "very little", "zilch", "awful", "invisible", "virtually zero reporting", "non-existent", "shocking", "notoriously bad", "lamentably weak", "pretty desperate", "disappointed" and "not bothered" were used. One anonymous Labour Minister said to me in our meeting, "Well, it's non-existent in the UK media. London newspapers very rarely give any attention to the Welsh Assembly." Similarly, the Lib Dem AM, William Powell, also asserted, "Oh, in the UK press, I think we are virtually invisible, you know, very limited." These remarks are definitely not atypical. The following statements offer some insight into what the AMs across the political parties think about the UK's national media coverage of Welsh politics and the Assembly activities.

Oh, well, they are usually of course not bothered. And the UK media, I think, have scant regard really for what goes on here in Wales. They are not particularly interested, so it's very difficult to form an opinion on how they report us, because they report us so rarely. (Kirsty Williams, Lib Dem, AM)

The UK press is predominantly uninterested in very much of what is going on in Wales, so the quality of reporting what happens in Wales is very, very poor. It is very London-centric or very England-centric. (Mick Antoniwi, Labour, AM)

Well, the UK media doesn't know the Assembly exists, I am quite confident in saying that. One thing I did notice when the Lib Dems agreed to support the

Labour Government's budget just early this week⁷⁰, that did actually make the national news. That was the first time in a long time that I can remember the Assembly featured at all on the national news, apart from when the First Minister was chosen a while ago. (Suzy Davies, Conservative, AM)

Similar to what the former Plaid Cymru leader Mr. Jones said about the neglect of the Assembly by the UK national media, the current Plaid leader, Leanne Wood, also stated:

Awful, in the UK, I think there is very little understanding of devolution. I listen to a lot of Radio 4, and often things are reported there on the news. You know, the House Minister said this was going to happen, but it doesn't actually apply to Wales; it doesn't actually apply to Scotland. They are presenting it as a British position, and it isn't. And then in terms of how Wales is reflected in the news agenda of the United Kingdom, I don't think we have a future at all. Scotland has been a success in recent times in making sure they are on that agenda. As far as they are concerned in Wales, back in 2007, we spent four to six weeks in coalition negotiations, and there was no reporting of that on the UK network news at all. Had they had covered that, then it wouldn't be such a surprise and shock when after the 2010 election, the Conservatives were considering to go into a coalition with the Lib Dems. The coverage of that was just like this had never happened before. And it happened here. So those things are extremely frustrating. And I remember as well a few years ago when quite a lot of different issues had come on in the Assembly and the big news item on the UK level was some bull called Shambo who would be given some order to be put down for some reason. I can't remember the details now. But it was major, major news on UK-wide network then. I think my feeling is that it's just the wrong vision of what we are about really.

It seems that the media gave undue prominence to the "Shambo story" while neglected the Assembly activities. On the one hand, this might suggest that the British national media do not care about Welsh politics. On the other hand, it might also indicate that politics could be dull and boring, even though it is often carried on in the public interest. Whereas, to a certain extent, entertaining coverage interests the public, but it is not necessarily in the interest of the public (Franklin 1997; Franklin *et al.* 2005). Obviously, from the AMs' and the Welsh press' perspective, the coverage of the Assembly in the London-based UK national media is poor. Then, the question is why little coverage has been given to the Assembly by the UK national media as AMs pointed out? What reasons

⁷⁰ This interview was conducted on 30th November, 2011. Interview dates are also stated in each transcript on the enclosed DVD.

do the AMs think are behind their claim that the British national media tend to neglect the Assembly?

II. Explanations AMs Offered

As far as the 28 interviewed AMs are concerned, there are several possibilities for why the Assembly activities have not been widely reported by the British national media. First and foremost, about one-third of the interview participants believed that the UK's print and broadcast media are extremely centralised, and that they do not reflect the diversity of the United Kingdom. For example, one anonymous male Labour AM has stated that the UK national media are mainly concerned with what is happening in Westminster Parliament and are incredibly London-centric. His view was backed by the Cardiff Central Labour AM, Jenny Rathbone, who suggested:

I think it's the very London-centric press that we have in the UK generally, and the power is very concentrated in the UK around London, so there is much less serious coverage about what's going on in the rest of the UK.

It is possible that the coverage of the rest of the UK is less prominent than that of the London area, because of the position of London as the capital city of the country. This leads to the second explanation that the AMs offered through their own experiences – the UK national media do not take Wales seriously and neither do some national politicians in London. For instance, Plaid Cymru AMs Bethan Jenkins and Lindsay Whittle stated similar arguments. In addition, the Lib Dem AM William Powell also noted:

In terms of the UK, we are sort of an add-on, and Wales is often, you know, the poor relation in press and media coverage. Scotland has got a significantly higher profile as you might expect, Northern Ireland to a certain degree also. We are the one that comes at the bottom of the pile in terms of profile.

Mr. Powell's claim was echoed by the Labour AM Keith Davies, who provided an interesting example:

I mean my personal opinion is people in London feel that Wales is far away, but I

only need two hours to get home. And they're really not interested. I mean I used to be on national committees in England, and they used to ask me, "How long will it take you to get home?", as if I lived hundreds of miles away. And I would tell people in Northern England, I would be home sooner than you. So, I think we are a bit of irrelevant for a lot of the politicians in London.

Thirdly, several AMs, such as Dafydd Elis-Thomas, Leanne Wood and Kirsty Williams, suggested that the UK national media have limited understanding of devolution. That is partly because the Assembly is a fairly young institution, and devolution is a new concept as the Lib Dem AM Aled Roberts and one anonymous Conservative AM pointed out. Even though devolution is new and the Assembly is a young jurisdiction compared to the British Parliament, the Assembly was founded more than a decade ago. At the end, it is down to communication – how to disseminate the knowledge of responsibilities and powers of the Assembly widely to the Welsh public and to the UK population, and even to the rest of the world. Therefore, the media play a significant part in terms of getting the messages across, and so does the Assembly itself.

Fourthly, five AMs across the political parties thought that limited coverage is related to the population numbers in England and Wales. For example, two anonymous Labour AMs noted, "Wales is a very small country. The matter is as simple as that, isn't it? The commercial reality of it" and "England is by far the largest country within the United Kingdom, so the great majority of their sale is going to be in England." The present Deputy Presiding Officer, David Melding, also said to me in our meeting:

It's just that when this is five per cent of the UK [population], so the papers spoke of a few bad returns for an investment. To cover Welsh politics probably would not really be commercially viable I guess. So that's part of the problem I think.

Similarly, another anonymous Conservative AM stated:

The UK press of course just sees Wales as that's that place somebody goes for a holiday occasionally, with half population of Yorkshire. You know it's a tiny little place; we don't really need to bother about that.

This claim is almost identical to what the Plaid Assembly leader Leanne Wood suggested:

They don't really feel the Welsh and Scotland positions need to be reflected that much, because they feel the population is mainly in England, so it's about reflecting English politics then.

Perhaps it is true that Wales is a small nation, but it is one of four nations that comprise the United Kingdom and people in Wales have a strong Welsh national identity (Day 2002; Evans 1968; 1975; Smith 1991; 1995; 1999; Bourhis *et al.* 1973; Aitchison and Carter 1999; 2004; Davies 2007; Jones 1993; Robbins 1994). Besides, England is not synonymous with the UK, and sometimes the decisions that are made by the British Parliament in London do not include the Welsh and Scottish perspectives (Chaney 2002; 2004; Chaney and Fevre 2002; Mitchell 2006). However, Wales has a small population compared to England. This leads to other possibilities why Wales is neglected by the UK national media.

The Pontypridd Labour AM, Mick Antoniw, believed that it is due to the limited resources that the UK national press possesses:

I think the reasons are predominantly that the resources of newspapers that particularly have been put into journalism have been going down and down...The standards of journalism have been declining.

This claim is supported by Franklin (2011:2), who noted that in the print press:

... journalists' jobs have followed the downward spiral of published titles, shrinking circulations, reduced pagination, the truncated range of editorial content and sections along with the volume of advertising revenues.

Moreover, Franklin (2009:3) presented some striking numbers of the declining newspaper circulations in the UK:

... aggregate circulations of daily and Sunday titles across all sectors are in sharp decline from 38.4 million in 1965 to 32.6 million in 1985, plummeting to 22.7 million in 2007: 15.7 million copies lost in the paid newspaper market (41 per

cent) with an accelerating rate of decline in reader numbers.

This seems to be an undeniable fate of today's newspapers, but the Welsh press remains important as discussed in previous chapters: it has an impact on local authorities and Assembly Members, and it still influences its online editions and the contents of other media outlets, such as television and radio. Plaid Cymru AM Alun Ffred Jones, a former journalist, commented on the political economy of the UK national press:

I think if you go back a number of years, you'll find that there were journalists from the national press based in South Wales. The *Times* had correspondents here. A number of the London dailies had correspondents here. That was partly because of the importance of South Wales as an industrial centre – big coal mining areas, big steel production areas and big tin plate production areas.

Mr. Jones explained further that the neglect of the Assembly by the UK national press is a mixture of a weak Welsh economy and lacklustre political performance down in Cardiff Bay:

You know as far as the economy of the UK, this was an important place, and also as far as the relationships between the workers and the managements, this was a very heavily unionised part of the world... Of course, papers in those days had many, many more reporters out and about. Those gradually were taken back. The coal industry contracted and disappeared, and obviously the heavy industries disappeared down the valleys as well, ending up with just two big works now. So, Wales as a whole has become less important economically to the UK in general. But, as we have gained more political control, it's almost seen as irrelevant. Well, they can do whatever they like down there; London carries on regardless.

This explanation seeks to draw on history of the Welsh national identity in the coal mining industry and other heavy industries. Maybe it is somewhat true that Wales is financially more dependent on England than Scotland is. To a certain extent, this makes its financial and political status less prominent than the Scottish position at the UK level. This may also influence the UK national media's perception of Wales as a whole.

It can be seen clearly that the explanations offered above are some of the thoughts from the sitting AMs in the present Assembly. Whether these reasons are all of great

significance and whether they are completely objective, is another question. However, the AMs' viewpoints give some insight into the problem that exists in terms of the UK national media reporting the Assembly and Welsh politics.

The Welsh press coverage of the AMs and Welsh politics is not substantial either (as discussed in previous chapters, especially Chapter 4). In fact, generally speaking, the coverage of the Assembly is fairly limited in the Welsh press, even though it does a somewhat better job than the UK national press. Among the 12 examined Welsh English-language newspapers, the widely acknowledged Welsh national newspaper, the *Western Mail*, paid relatively more substantial attention to the Assembly and its AMs during the two studied periods. This is evidenced both by the opinions that the interviewed AMs expressed and by the comparative statistics revealed in Chapter 4. The next section will focus primarily on how the interviewed AMs feel about how the Welsh press represents the AMs, especially the women in the Assembly.

Representations of Women AMs in the Welsh Press

The content analysis demonstrated that women AMs received far less press attention than male AMs in general in the Welsh press (see detailed discussions in previous chapters). Furthermore, news articles featuring women were more likely to be placed in style sections, and women AMs tended to receive more sexist comments than did their male colleagues. This is backed by existing studies; several researchers have noted that if a story seems more trivial or sounds “less *realpolitik*” or sounds sexier, women politicians are more likely to be placed in the spotlight (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000).

However, data generated from the interviews for this study show: not only have some women AMs complained that their voices are not entirely heard by the Welsh press, particularly not by the Welsh national press, but also some interviewed male AMs have addressed the same concern. This is partly because the Assembly and its AMs are not extensively covered by the Welsh press. To a certain extent, the Welsh press does not treat

politics as importantly as it does sports or celebrities. Some of the AMs have suggested that their voices are not heard by the press in part also because of the political parties in which they are a member: a few female AMs mentioned that when they received negative coverage it was not because of their gender, it was because their parties were not popular.

I. Are women AMs' voices heard in the Welsh press?

In terms of answering the question of whether their voices are heard by the Welsh press, among the 16 interviewed male AMs, only the Plaid Cymru AM Lindsay Whittle strongly believed that his voice was not heard as an individual politician:

My own personal voice? No...Press release is not being put to use at all. You know, it takes a long time to prepare a good press release; some research goes into press release, and then it gets no coverage at all... I spoke about post traumatic stress disorder amongst our troops, which had no publicity. I spoke about the rights of the Gurkha soldiers who live here in Wales now, from Burma, which again had very little publicity. I spoke about the rights of the elderly in social services, looking after them in care homes, again no publicity. We will all hopefully be elderly one day. You know, it's important that we are taken good care of, when we are old. So there has been little publicity on that, and I am disappointed.

Six out of the 16 male AMs said that they were content with the coverage they received from the Welsh media. For example, an anonymous Labour Minister noted, "As the Minister, I get a fair crack of the whip in the Welsh media on the whole." The Conservative leader in the Assembly, Andrew RT Davies, stated:

I was content, but you are always looking for the next story. It's just a bit like a journalist really. I think you can always get more coverage in the papers. As a politician, you always want more coverage on the basis that it's a strong platform to put your message.

In order to answer the question of whether his voice is heard by the Welsh press, the current Deputy Presiding Officer, Conservative AM David Melding also noted:

Yes, I think so. I know the main journalists, and I am quite happy to talk to them

in a variety of settings. And I feel they approach me as well... You know, politicians should not expect coverage automatically just because I am elected. It doesn't mean that you need to wait for my every word, and then give a projection. It's only when you say something interesting, you know real issues, you can get proper coverage. And you know sometimes you are surprised what you think is a good story doesn't take off, and then sometimes you are slightly surprised that a more trivial story gets a lot of coverage. And there is a bit that you can't predict.

Mr. Melding just addressed one of the main concerns that the interviewed AMs pointed out: sometimes trivial aspects of a subject get a great deal of press attention. They are more likely to be entertaining than simply covering a debatable issue on economy or environment. This might reflect a tendency that the current Welsh press tends to be in a more tabloid style. Hallin (2000) noted that tabloid is often associated with sensationalist content, and as suggested by Sparks (2000), tabloid journalism emphasises on entertainment rather than on news and information.

Nine male AMs across the political parties believed that their voices were only sometimes heard by the Welsh press. For instance, the Labour AM Keith Davies, who provided an almost identical answer to others, said to me:

I think so, yeah, reasonably. I mean I don't get flagged by the Welsh press and don't get praised by the Welsh press, but I do get quoted. So, it's been reasonable. So, I have got no complaint whatsoever.

According to the Conservative AM Byron Davies, as an individual politician, he has a better relationship with his local newspapers than the national press:

I certainly do with the papers that I would say count for me, which are my local papers. I actually don't have very much coverage or indeed relationship with the *Western Mail*.

Other male AMs addressed a similar point. For example, the former Heritage Minister, Plaid Cymru AM Alun Ffred Jones noted, "I get heard in local press, but again my voice within the national press, the *Daily Post* and the *Western Mail*, is really a matter [of concern] for me." These comments reflect what Jackson (1971) suggested: the opinions

of local community leaders are of great importance to the local press. The fact that the AMs considered their local newspapers gave them more substantial coverage might also be because the local AMs had focused more on their local newspapers than the national ones in terms of developing a working relationship (see Harrison 2006; Delp 2008).

Meanwhile, the Lib Dem AM Aled Roberts also pointed out that his local press gave him more attention:

Personally, probably on the Welsh-language press, yes; on the English-language press, less so. Because I think the English-language press tends to concentrate on sort of government figures and on party leaders. The one thing I do have is that, I do have sort of a weekly article in the local paper which tends to... it at least gave you an opportunity to get our message across.

Wales does not have a daily Welsh-language newspaper. The Welsh-language press tends to focus on the Welsh-speaking population, and they are even more community based publications than the English-language newspapers (Williams 2007). Therefore, it can be concluded that constituency AMs do get more press attention from their local newspapers than the national ones.

With regard to the interviewed women AMs, some considered the Welsh press did a good job in terms of providing a place to voice their concerns and views. Four out of the 12 interviewed women AMs were content with the coverage they received, and believed that their voices were heard in the Welsh press. For example, the Plaid Assembly leader, Leanne Wood, answered the question positively, “Yeah, I’ve got no complaint. Personally, I think I do tend to get coverage for the things that I’ve sent out.” An anonymous female AM noted, “Yeah, I am doing respectably well I guess in press coverage, sometimes by being controversial.” Similarly, in order to answer the question, another Plaid Cymru AM, the former Rural Affairs Minister, Elin Jones, pointed out:

I used to work very closely with the agricultural and rural journalist in the *Western Mail*, Steve Dube, who did the weekly supplement when I was a Minister. And before then when I was an opposition spokesperson, I then had a quite good relationship with their political journalists, Martin Shipton, David

Williamson and Matt Withers. So, you know, I think that I've always been a politician who talks to journalists. Not all politicians like to bother with journalists. I only found that it's better to have someone inside talking to them rather than not answering the phone when they are ringing you.

Furthermore, Ms. Jones who believed that her voice was heard regardless of her gender, noted, "I think there is no sort of differential to me that I am a woman compared to if I would be a man. I haven't found myself treated differently because I am a woman." Other female AMs pointed out that their voices were not heard by the press, also not because of their gender, but in part because of the political parties that they belong to. These AMs are among the five women AMs who considered that their voices were only heard by the Welsh press sometimes. For instance, in terms of the 2011 Assembly election campaign experiences, an anonymous female Conservative AM suggested, "I had personal experience of negative campaigning because I am Conservative, but not because I am a woman." With regard to her own press coverage, the Cardiff Central Labour AM, Jenny Rathbone, stated:

I don't think it's ignored because of the fact I am a woman; I think it's ignored because of maybe ingrained sorts of historical antipathies towards Labour by some in the press or they are just not interested in us.

Apparently, Ms. Rathbone felt marginalised because she was a Labour politician; she felt she was treated in a certain way because of historical antipathy towards the Labour party, not because of her gender. An anonymous female Labour AM who suggested political apathy in Wales and how journalists are apathetic towards politics, said to me in our meeting:

As much as any Welsh politician is, I don't think it's different because you are female. To be fair, I've never encountered anything like that with any of them. I think it's just a struggle to get anybody to be interested in politics at all.

Interestingly, when less-experienced and good-looking female AMs were covered by the Welsh press, personalisation and style were frequently focused on. The re-elected Plaid Cymru AM in the current Assembly, Bethan Jenkins, noted, "In general terms, apart from

a few blips, I think my coverage is generally positive.” Ms. Jenkins was the youngest AM when she was first elected to the third Assembly in 2007. During my interview, she also asserted:

I do think that it was really difficult at the beginning to be taken seriously. So you would get a sort of, “Well, we won’t put that in type” attitude. Or you get the fluffy story, like, “Oh, the youngest AM, she is here and what is she like as a person.”

Similarly, the first elected female leader in the Assembly, the Lib Dem AM Kirsty Williams noted:

Oh, when I was first elected in 1999, it was horrible. I used to get covered more often for what I wore, for whether I would get married. It was really challenging for a young woman who didn’t have any experience, who didn’t know any better. I found it quite difficult to cope with media attention. And I made some mistakes undoubtedly, because I didn’t know any better; I didn’t have the right level of support around me. And it took a long time for me to find a place where I was comfortable, and ... get reported in national media for what I was saying and doing rather than any weird construct they created.

Both Bethan Jenkins and Kirsty Williams have considered that at present they have a good working relationship with the Welsh media in general. However, it is clear that as good-looking young female politicians, they were both given coverage that they considered problematic when they started as politicians. Therefore, the next part of this chapter will discuss what the interviewed AMs’ thoughts are around the question of whether there are prejudices in the Welsh press in terms of covering the AMs, especially the women in the Assembly.

II. Biases against Women in the Welsh Press

1) General Views on Women AMs and the Welsh Press

Surprisingly, the majority of the interview participants, including Labour AM Jeff

Cuthbert's PA Katie O'Brien⁷¹, have noted that they do not see any significant differences in terms of the coverage of male and female AMs in the Welsh press. This can be summed up by the Pontypridd Labour AM, Mick Antoniwi's comment:

I don't think it's been an issue. I don't think you can say that the women had any less share of what coverage is going than anybody else. I don't think that's a question that male Assembly Members are getting covered on things and female Assembly Members aren't. I think by and large it's been pretty balanced and reasonable. Particularly bear in mind, a lot of the stuff on the environment and sustainability was pursued by my predecessor here Jane Davidson who's played a very, very effective role in it. Some of the legislation which came through in terms of fire safety and so on was brought up by Ann Jones, another female Assembly Member. Of course, a lot of educational changes and so on were brought in – it's been a big chunk of the time – first by Jane Davidson then by Jane Hutt, so they've been quite influential on the actual policy side.

Most significantly, four female AMs particularly pointed out that compared to women MPs in Westminster, women AMs are given far fairer press attention. For instance, an anonymous female AM noted, "I think that if there was a virtual above-the-line difference between male and female AMs in the way they were covered, and then I think that would draw criticism." The Conservative AM Suzy Davies talked about the UK national media's coverage of women MPs and said to me in our meeting:

I suppose we are all familiar with, you know, Theresa May and her kitten heel shoes or that sort of stuff. I don't notice it so much, when we are talking about the Assembly, because that element, that slightly more frivolous element is missing anyway. So, it's always a lot more serious.

When the UK national media tend to focus on personalisation and style in covering women MPs, tabloidisation is clearly to be seen. Ms. Davies' view was echoed by the Lib Dem leader Kirsty Williams who considered that the media tend to focus more on women politicians' appearance than their male counterparts:

[They tend to focus on] what they wear, and I think that happens to women politicians everywhere. You only have to look at how Theresa May has been

⁷¹ Ms. O'Brien was PA for the current Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler, from January 2009 to October 2009. She has been researcher and senior researcher for Mr. Cuthbert since October 2009.

treated and how Caroline Flint in the last Government... There's a big focus on what Caroline Flint wore and didn't wear. I think that happens a lot.

Furthermore, Ms. Suzy Davies provided two interesting examples with regard to two of her female colleagues in the Assembly:

It's quite a mixed crowd over here in the Assembly. You know, some are tall; some are short; some are fat, thin, old, scruffy, tidy. And that doesn't tend to feature quite so much as the thing you remember about an individual female politician. I suppose one of the reasons for that is that you could argue that none of us are great characters. I mean certainly when Eleanor Burnham was part of the Assembly, she was the Lib Dem Member for up in North Wales. I mean she used to attract non-political comments, when she was mentioned in the newspapers, because she was perceived as a bit eccentric really. And that does no harm, because everyone will have heard of Eleanor Burnham as a result of that. And it wasn't particularly negative coverage, but she was obviously identified as somebody interesting and characterful. Maybe it says something about the rest of us, we are all a bit dull, I don't know. Well, I give one example that I am quite surprised about actually. We've got Antoinette Sandbach. She is a Welsh Conservative Assembly Member. She is 6'5" and she wears heels, that makes her about 6'7". So, she is taller than anybody in that building. I don't recall ever seeing an article which mentioned her, saying giantess or extra tall Antoinette. I think for some reason, they haven't used that to comment about her. I am pleased, but I am kind of surprised, that's all. If she were an MP, capturing the attention of Quentin Letts in the *Daily Mail*, you can be pretty sure that somebody would have commented on it by now, even though it's completely irrelevant to her working function.

It seems true that the newly elected female AMs to recent Assemblies are facing less demeaning coverage in terms of their appearance, compared to the coverage that Kirsty Williams and Bethan Jenkins received when they started their career as AMs (see further discussion in the next section). This suggests that women in the Assembly are accepted as a norm: they are actually there to do their job and no longer being the token of some parties' equality policy.

Comparing the media coverage that Assembly women received to what women MPs received, the Labour AM for Cardiff Central, Jenny Rathbone, stated:

I think that there is possibly more different coverage in Westminster. I think if it

started reporting female politicians differently with different standards from male politicians, we would have a big row about it. So I don't think ... they do and I suspect they don't dare, whereas the London-based press has. The tabloid press based in London is much more denigrating of women. A lot of them have these semi-nude women on page three, which sets the tone really, for their political coverage. There is strong evidence they denigrate women, and they denigrate women politicians as well. I don't think you could say that about the coverage of Welsh politics in Wales, no.

Ms. Rathbone's critique of the British tabloid press was backed by her colleague, Cardiff North AM, Julie Morgan, who noted:

Well, certainly, I don't think about the Welsh press. I certainly think about the UK press ... they quite often are negative about MPs... We had all the Blair Babes stuff. You know, that was very, very demeaning to women, being called Blair's Babes. They used to comment about women's breasts or things like that.

Both Ms. Morgan and Ms. Rathbone suggested that female AMs received more positive press coverage in the Welsh press than women MPs in the British national press, and this was largely explained by the significant level of women's representation in the Assembly. Ms. Rathbone noted, "There are quite strong women in the Welsh Assembly. I really think there would be a huge protest and campaign and outburst, if they did try some of the tactics⁷² they tried in London." Meanwhile, Ms. Morgan also suggested:

They don't do it so much. You don't have an atmosphere here in Welsh press, I don't think. You are so immediate; you are so close to it, aren't you? I think maybe that's why. A small bubble here; the Welsh press and politicians are very linked.

However, the former Cardiff North MP, Ms. Morgan, now AM for the constituency, suggested that the media were deliberately using language of "sexism" when she was covered. This is because she was not often reported as an MP but primarily as the wife of Wales' former First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, who is well-known by the Welsh public. Ms. Morgan, the current Cardiff North sitting AM, noted:

⁷² See her comment above. Ms. Rathbone stated that the London-based UK national press often denigrates women and women politicians.

I am usually reported as being his wife, which is a bit sexist, you know. I think they do that. For example, on this [phone-hacking scandal]⁷³... my phone was hacked, and I think it was all reported. They were hacking my phone to get Rhodri. But when they described me, I was former First Minister's wife, you know, so I think there is a lot of sexism in the newspaper in that sort of way. That does happen all the time really.

Furthermore, the Lib Dem leader, Kirsty Williams, also mentioned how the Welsh press treated her female colleagues with regard to visual presentation, especially the former Lib Dem AM, Ms. Burnham:

I think it's quite interesting in their use of photography, the kind of photographs used to illustrate their pictures. They can choose from very unflattering pictures of some of my female colleagues. I think some of them are more like, flippant diary pieces. For instance, *Wales on Sunday* can still focus relentlessly on some of my female colleagues. I think of my colleague Eleanor Burnham, who in particular was regarded as a source of fun in *Wales on Sunday* for quirky comments she would make. Whereas I think there were other male Assembly Members that would fill those columns as well, but it was not the men that were picked on; it was Eleanor Burnham who was picked on.

This is backed by the claim in Ross and Sreberny's study that "the media construct women politicians in ways that belittle their status" (2000:80). Carroll and Schreiber (1997) and Kahn and Gordon (1997) also noted that female politicians were often paid more negative attention by the media than men. However, in recent years, women who work in political organisations, including women politicians themselves, have fought for more positive coverage of women officials in the male-dominated media. Their efforts have been somewhat realised in terms of some of the media's changing attitudes towards the way they cover female politicians.

2) Two AMs' Personal Experiences with the Welsh Press

As mentioned above, both Plaid Cymru AM Bethan Jenkins and the Lib Dem leader Kirsty Williams believed that it was difficult for them to be heard by the press at the very

⁷³ AM Julie Morgan was notified by her mobile phone company that her phone was hacked during the period around 2005 and 2006 when she was MP for Cardiff North and her husband was the then Wales' First Minister. She learned of the phone-hacking incident in 2011, five years after what happened.

beginning of their political careers in terms of issue concerns. Moreover, both AMs talked about some sexist press attention that they received, especially when they were first elected. Looking back at the coverage of the election campaign in 2007 and personal experiences with journalists, Ms. Jenkins said to me:

During the candidacy, I was doorstepped by a political correspondent. I forgot a certain issue, so I had to leave my bag in a café just to get away from the journalist. I had a not very nice experience on another political show. They got me on the show to talk about how I got elected, but then talked to me about independence and put me in a corner. So I did look... it was a bad thing to see the answer, because I was not expecting the question. So, you know, I had a negative experience like that, but again it was in my career. But now it's more positive than negative. Before it was more negative than positive.

According to Ms. Jenkins, there was more positive coverage of her personally during the 2011 Assembly election than the 2007 election. However, she believed that sexist coverage in the press still exists now and then:

I think now that I've been here for four and a half years, people can take me more seriously on the issues that I raise. But I still think there is a perception that in some element in the press ... there would be sexism, but nobody would be there to talk about it or acknowledge it, because you have to have facts, you have to have figures or whatever to back it up. But I do believe there is an element of that. I mean I had, for example, a story about me in *Wales on Sunday*. And it was about my partner and me, and why people were going to stand against me. And then they put a caption and a picture of me: Oh, Sexy AM, because I was in some "sexy" AM column. They spanned it as sort of a sexy story then. It was supposed to actually be politics, which is what I am about. So that's what I don't appreciate. I complained to the editor about that, because they wouldn't do the same to a man. They just wouldn't. And I think that's unacceptable really. That type of treatment that women still have to tolerate, because inevitably or invariably there are men in key positions in the media who push those types of stories just to sell papers... It's only a few months ago, when I had this article written about me. I'd like to say that's got better, but it didn't obviously, because it did this story. I had the same type of story when I was first elected as well.

Sexualisation is clearly suggested here. Even though sexism against women AMs was not so obvious in the Welsh press during the two studied periods, Ms. Jenkins' comment echoes what previous researchers have claimed: the media often emphasise the stereotype

of women as sexualised objects (Bonner *et al.* 1992; Macdonald 1995) and the media portray women politicians in a less serious way than they do their male counterparts, and noticeably more sexist attention is paid to female politicians than males (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000). Besides, the Welsh press is dominated by male journalists whose views might affect political coverage in terms of defining how an effective politician appears traditionally, such as being assertive or possessing a macho style (see Ye 2007). Therefore, it is more difficult for a woman to be considered as an effective politician against the traditional views of what an effective politician looks like.

Similarly, the Lib Dem Assembly leader, Kirsty Williams, talked to me about some eye-watering press incidents that occurred when she was first elected in 1999:

They used to call me an Assembly Spice. It was at the start, I was the youngest one here. It was at the height of Spice Girls. And so, yeah, I was called the Assembly Spice in media interviews. *Wales on Sunday* offered to buy me a whole wardrobe of clothes, if I would go up into town and have my pictures taken, shopping and do all these things. I was asked if I would model wedding dresses. They had my pictures taken sitting back in front of a chair, and I was compared to Christine Keeler⁷⁴. Yeah, it was grim actually. It was really, really quite grim. I was on the front page of the *Western Mail* just walking down the corridor here in the first week. I was on the front page of the *Western Mail* on the opening day of the Assembly because of what I wore. It was hard. It was really, really, really hard. And that caused a lot of resentment among female colleagues here. It was really hard to be taken seriously, because everybody got the impression that I was just here for the laugh bit, for the fun bit of it rather than here to do serious work. And it was really horrible actually. At first it was really hard.

It is apparent that the media tended to focus on Ms. Williams' appearance, when she first started as a politician. This is not difficult to understand, because she was the youngest Member in the newly established Assembly and good-looking. It might on the surface look like a compliment to Ms. Williams, when she was compared to Spice Girls and Christine Keeler in terms of physical attractiveness. But in fact, it sends out a much

⁷⁴ Christine Keeler was a well-known English model and showgirl. In 1960s, Keeler sat for a portrait which became famous in that posture.

clearer message that beauty can never be successfully matched with brains in terms of being a professional politician (Ross and Sreberny 2000). As mentioned earlier, the Assembly was new and many journalists did not yet thoroughly understand devolution. In our meeting, Ms. Williams also added:

It was hard though, really not very pleasant, not very pleasant. I remember at home listening... They had a sketch for Radio Wales, talking about the first day here, and at the end of the sketch was, "What a beautiful member who breaks the madness; keep wearing the skirt that short, everything will be alright." And I just cried and cried and cried, because I didn't even think my skirt was that short. But obviously it was regarded as being too short. It was baptism of fire actually in how to handle the media. I was offered the front page of the *Western Mail*. I went to a party conference. They said if I wore a dress with the red dragon on it, they would guarantee me that they would put it on the front page of the *Western Mail*. Grim! Grim!

While talking to me, in fact, the memory brought a tear to her eyes. Nevertheless, in terms of the 2011 Assembly election coverage, she considered the coverage was noticeably positive:

Since then I came a long way, I think I know what I am doing more than I did back in 1999, so I don't make some of the mistakes that I made. Obviously, when you become the leader of the party, you have been taken more seriously. I think we were treated fairly. But I think there is a constant challenge. I think that female politicians have to worry about stuff that, perhaps their male counterparts don't have to.

However, with regard to the 2008 Lib Dem leadership election, Ms. Williams felt that the coverage of herself and her opponent, the former Cardiff Central AM, Jenny Randerson was somewhat unpleasant as well:

That was a bit grim. Yeah, again, that was quite difficult. We were made do some really weird stuff. We had to walk downstairs. The soundtrack was "Here come the girls", so quite degrading kind of music based stuff. Yeah, some of it was difficult. And the media heaped up the differences between us. But I don't know whether it would be any different if I had been standing against a man. I think there were perhaps some quite interesting challenges for Edwina Hart, when Edwina Hart stood against Carwyn Jones and Huw Lewis... On an equal basis, I think it was quite difficult for her. I think it was more difficult for her than it was

for me running to be leader, because I wasn't running against another man.

Perhaps, as Ms. Williams mentioned earlier, she learned from some mistakes that she made in her early years in the Assembly. In fact, according to Labour AM Jeff Cuthbert's PA Katie O'Brien, Ms. Williams is an excellent presenter who has a good working relationship with the media. Here is what Ms. O'Brien said to me:

Kirsty is quite a good political presenter. She is very good at working with the press and media, so I suppose in that way sometimes being a woman would work to an advantage because people would rather read a column from someone who has a pretty face than some sixty-year-old looking bloke. But I think Kirsty has got to go after the press. I don't think they gave her any extra because she is a woman, likewise I don't think they gave her any less. But I just think that she goes after it really. I think that's it in Wales. Go after it if you really want it. You are trying to get stories and you build good relationships with reporters who sell papers. You will get press.

Likewise, the Lib Dem AM William Powell thought highly of their leader's strong media performance and stated:

Kirsty is a very energetic campaigner and particularly effective in broadcast media. She's got very, very refined skills, and is undoubtedly our best media performer. I think several of us who were elected in 2011 on these regional lists, like Eluned or Aled can give thanks to her. I mean we might say that the numbers of extra votes that got us elected over being the runner-up, were so small that you could say, it was Kirsty's strong performance in one or two leadership debates that made the difference, particularly the last one which took place at the University of Newport which I attended in the studio audience. I would say that the votes that made a difference were a direct result of her media performance on that particular occasion, because I saw it and it was good and it was widely seen. And I think that made a difference for me, and my margin was larger than some of the others ... Kirsty was seen as the clear winner in my opinion of that leaders' debate. And that made a difference and gave us a big boost.

When Mr. Powell was asked whether the impact would be different if Ms. Williams' performance was not seen on television; he noted, "Absolutely, hugely so, absolutely, because television is a vital medium." Indeed, television plays an important part in today's politics. A well-known incident occurred in 1960 between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. The first-ever televised Presidential debate in US history produced mixed

results (Tiemens 1978; Wanzenried *et al.* 1989; Kraus 1996). The majority of people who listened to the debate on the radio considered both candidates to be the winner, while the majority of people who watched the debate on TV leaned towards John F. Kennedy as the winner. Apparently, both candidates' appearance and style had an influence on the audience's perception of the debate winner (Tiemens 1978; Kraus 1996; Druckman 2003). In the 1960s, television was a new medium, but in the 21st century, online media are more popular, especially the social media. As discussed in the previous chapters, the majority of the people in Wales do not read the Welsh national newspapers (Thomas 2006; Ye 2007). Therefore, it can be said that the Welsh print media do not play a decisive role in the Welsh public's choice of its Government in terms of elections. However, as discussed previously, the Welsh press does still have considerable influence on the development of opinion of local authorities, such as AMs, and it has certain influence on its online editions and on other media outlets, like radio and television.

Apart from the broadcast media, a number of interviewed AMs suggested that the public has spent more and more time on online media and social media rather than on reading newspapers. Thus, the AMs' views on the change in media practices in Wales will be discussed in the following section. But first, the interviewed AMs' thoughts will be discussed with regard to the coverage of marking all sitting AMs out of 10 before the 2007 and 2011 Assembly elections in the *Western Mail*.

Changes in the Coverage

I. Change in Reaction: The Western Mail's Scoring System

Interestingly, the *Western Mail's* exercise of marking all sitting AMs out of the score of 10 before the 2011 Assembly election elicited an enormously different reaction among the interviewees compared to 2007.

As will be discussed later, there has been a significant shift in terms of how people gain their news and information in recent years. Unsurprisingly, five out of the 29 interview participants did not know the marking reports existed, and all of them were newly-elected

AMs in the fourth Assembly. This suggests that newspapers may no longer be one of the most important media that some politicians use to acquire their political news. However, they said after the election, they paid more attention to the newspapers, especially in order to cultivate a working relationship with their local papers. When these five AMs were asked whether they thought it was a good exercise for a newspaper or any other media outlet to evaluate AMs or MPs before elections, the Conservative AM Suzy Davies gave an illustrative answer:

I mean any politician who tells you they don't care about what the papers say, is lying. But somebody who is working really, really hard may not be seen as making much impact in regard to what they do. If they are marked for those reasons, that's perhaps a bit unfair. It would be lovely to say, these beauty contests shouldn't matter, but, you know, people do take note of them, don't they? Whether that's fair or not? I know there has been similar discussion about school league tables published by newspapers, which aren't official. They are just sort of snapshots as well. That causes some consternation. So I think it can be entertaining, but I don't think it's always helpful, because it can't be completely fair, can it?

In my MA dissertation, 13 out of the 15 interviewed female AMs of the third Assembly strongly believed that there was a gender issue behind the marking coverage published before the 2007 Assembly election, and that the coverage was anti-women (Ye 2007). Four of them used the word “misogynistic” passionately. What is more, adjectives like “disgraceful”, “pathetic”, “irresponsible”, “sexist”, “shocking”, “meaningless”, “pointless”, “boyish” and “subjective” were not uncommon in their remarks (Ye 2007). These words were not only spoken by those who were marked down, but also by those who were given high marks, such as Helen Mary Jones (eight out of 10) and Kirsty Williams (a mark of seven).

By contrast, in this research, except for “subjective”, none of the above-mentioned adjectives were used by the interviewed AMs who were aware of the marking exercise. In fact, a few of them applied “subjective” more than once. An anonymous Labour Minister said that the marking reports were “entirely subjective”; another anonymous Labour AM thought the coverage was “completely subjective”; and the current Plaid Assembly leader,

Leanne Wood put it in a rhetorical question: “I mean it’s very subjective, isn’t?” Indeed, the word “subjective” is far less critical and derogatory than the adjectives used above, such as “misogynistic” and “sexist”. Obviously, “misogynistic” and “boyish” have a strong implication of a gender issue behind the marking, whereas “subjective” does not. However, subjectivity is opposite to the golden rule in journalism – objectivity, which aims at removing distorting effects of prejudice from whatever source, ensuring fair reporting (Chalaby 1998; Sanders 2003).

Perhaps, the strongest remarks about the *Western Mail*’s scores that were given to the sitting AMs before the 2011 Assembly election were made by two Labour AMs: the Pontypridd Labour AM, Mick Antoniw, who said it “was very superficial”, and an anonymous Labour AM who noted, “It’s rubbish. It’s absolutely rubbish.” In short, all these above presented phrases or expressions are no comparison to those addressed by the female AMs in the third Assembly in 2007.

In terms of the gender issue behind the marking exercise, only four female AMs actually mentioned it this time. For instance, Plaid Cymru South Wales West AM, Bethan Jenkins, passionately stated:

Obviously I was very disappointed, because I’ve been here for four years. I had a really bad experience when I was first elected, lots of personal attacks, a bad experience being doorstepped by a journalist. And over the four years, I really think I’ve matured and changed and worked so hard on various campaigns, and then to get something like five out of 10 by a journalist that never actually engages with politicians at any sort of human level ... Frankly, that’s quite insulting, the type of attack that he gave me. You know, that’s what I didn’t appreciate. Criticise me based on what I haven’t done politically, don’t criticise me based on people’s perception of me as an individual. That’s what I don’t appreciate. And I think, the criticism of women politicians is much stronger by male journalists than that ever it is of male politicians. As you can see I am quite angry about this.

The Lib Dem Assembly leader, Kirsty Williams, also noted:

I think there was still a [small] feeling this time, whereas there was certainly a

[strong] feeling first time they did it that male Assembly Members got scored higher than their female counterparts. And I think there was a feeling that there was a bias towards women in the way that the scores were accumulated... I think they were still biased towards men, perhaps not so obvious in the way they were, the first time the *Western Mail* did it... I think in terms of media, they are often much more likely to pick up and to highlight the failings of weak female politicians than they are for their male counterparts. I do think that often in their coverage they are more forgiving of male politicians than their female counterparts.

What is more, two of these four female AMs pointed out that the coverage was not deliberately anti-women, but the media is male-dominated in general, and that had some influence on the coverage. The Cardiff North Labour AM, Julie Morgan, suggested:

It was pretty bad, wasn't it? ... I thought they marked a lot of the women down, pretty low, didn't they? I just think the *Western Mail's* journalists are often male journalists who are in the world of male press, and they don't appreciate what women do. I think it's a lack of understanding really of what different people do in politics ... I don't think they've got an anti-women agenda subconsciously, but I just think that people who score people tend to be men. And subconsciously, they are looking for people like the Westminster politicians; something like that ... I don't remember the details of those scores, but I know some of the women had very low scores, didn't they, which has to be very dispiriting really if you are doing your best here, you know.

The other female AM who advanced a similar opinion was an anonymous Labour AM, and she noted:

Being philosophical about it, I think really it is about the fact that most journalists are men. They've got some priorities, so it is that, in a way, it's almost making a judgement based on their own expectations of politicians. I think women politicians may be different, so obviously they are not going to appreciate the way that perhaps some women politicians work in politics. And I think the sad thing about it is that sometimes you feel if you ought to be taken seriously, you need to do the things that journalists want... There is a practical issue here, because obviously in the main anyway it's the male politicians who are more likely to network with the male journalists... There is an old boys' network going on. So obviously the more you speak to journalists, they are going to know you more, aren't they?

According to Weaver (1997), Mills (1997), Weaver *et al.* (2007), journalism, like many

other professions, has been dominated by men. As discussed in great detail in Chapter 4, the majority of the 12 journalists who produced the most news stories during the two studied periods were men, and only two were women (see Table 4.15). Chief reporters and political editors were all male. Mills (1997) suggested that female journalists helped bring women as political candidates into mainstream media, and Carroll and Schreiber (1997) noted that more women journalists than men were writing articles about congresswomen. Therefore, the above-mentioned Labour AM's concerns might be true in terms of dominant male journalists' perception of female politicians and that male journalists are more likely to network with male politicians rather than females.

It is worth mentioning that three of these four women AMs were also my interview participants in 2007. Most importantly, the majority of the interviewees for this research did not really appreciate the marking exercise. For example, the Cardiff West Labour AM, Mark Drakeford, noted:

Well, you know, personally I think it is an unfortunate lurch into populism. I think it's a crude and unfair way of trying to sum up the contributions that different Assembly Members make. In my experience, it very often fails to reflect what I've seen at close quarters over the period. It overvalues some sorts of abilities and undervalues others. It is really a pretty ruthless exercise.

According to Thomas (2006), the *Western Mail* changed into a tabloid format in 2004. Sparks noted (2000) that tabloid journalism tends to shift priorities away from news and information towards an emphasis on entertaining coverage. As a result, the content might be sensational and not serious, and might be going in the direction of populist journalism. The former Rural Affairs Minister, Elin Jones, who did not like the system of marking, also asserted:

A lot of it is very subjective to the individual journalists who come up with that mark. If you get a good mark, it's not fair on the other candidates who are possibly standing against you during that election. If you get a really bad mark, then you know it's not very nice for those people who have to face the electorate. But my main concern about it is that that is a very blunt and crude instrument really and is not necessarily a good reflection.

However, a few AMs did not show a strong disagreement towards the marking exercise, such as the former Heritage Minister, Alun Ffred Jones, who said the *Western Mail* was “very generous” to him personally in terms of the scores, and the former Presiding Officer, Dafydd Elis-Thomas, who noted, “It’s very difficult for me to comment on the *Western Mail*, because they have been very kind to me.”

Nonetheless, there are a few possibilities for the different reaction towards the marking coverage. The most obvious one is that journalists from the *Western Mail* did change their attitude towards women politicians in recent years. Apparently, this may be as a result of the large number of women in the Assembly since its creation. Besides, affirmative action was no longer applied to help to elect women AMs in the most recent Assembly election. Most of the key positions in the paper are still held by men and some have been there since the start of the Assembly, but there is not such obvious misogynistic coverage of women AMs compared to several years ago. Therefore, the interviewed AMs were less critical of its coverage of the Assembly women as a whole. Assembly women have gradually gained their recognition in the Welsh press, and journalists’ attitude towards them appears to have changed over the years. Second, even though the majority of the 28 interviewed AMs had been involved in politics for many years, 15 of them were newly elected to the 2011 Assembly. They were cautious about their remarks on the coverage, because they might not want to jeopardise their future relationship with the only widely-recognised Welsh national newspaper. The other possible explanation is the time gap between the 2011 Welsh national election and the interviews. Last time the interviews were carried out just after the 2007 election, while this time the interviews were conducted more than half a year after the fourth Assembly election in 2011. If these interviews had been conducted immediately after the 2011 election, the reactions might have been different from those I received. This perhaps can be summed up by the current Deputy Presiding Office, David Melding’s comment:

I think if you ask me to react to a particular story during the election time, I would have a much more emotional response probably, because you are feeling very stressed and challenged. But if you calmly review things over after many months and years, I think you say that coverage is pretty responsible generally

and pretty fair generally.

Obviously, even as a male politician, Mr. Melding acknowledged that election is actually an emotional time. It is reasonable that after a period of time, some hostile feelings towards certain articles and the journalists who produced them, might be overcome by reasoning and reflection.

II. More than a Decade: Changes in the Press Coverage of the Assembly

Before moving on to discuss the change in media practices, it is important to examine the AMs' thoughts on the changes in the press coverage of the Assembly and its AMs over a period of 12 years since the institution was first established in 1999. This is because the change in media practices is just one of those factors related to change that the interviewees noted. Nevertheless, five main sets of changes were drawn from the interviewed AMs' comments.

First of all, around one-third of interviewees across the political parties mentioned that the press coverage of the Assembly is more mature, and that, to a large extent, the reporting is better informed overall than it was. For example, two anonymous Labour AMs, the Lib Dem AM, Aled Roberts, and the former Presiding Officer, Plaid AM Dafydd Elis-Thomas all believed that there is more regular coverage and acceptance of the Assembly now. The present Deputy Presiding Officer, Conservative AM David Melding also noted:

I think the press is getting to be less accepting of the Welsh Government's lines that devolution is new, and they are out there forging a new consensus, and this is a new form of politics. And I think the Welsh Government now gets treated much more like the UK Government. And again, I think this is a good thing, because you know devolution has been with us for 12 years.

Plaid AM Lindsay Whittle said, "I think there has been more coverage since 1999, and in 1999 the coverage was a little hostile. It is not so hostile now." Mr. Whittle's comment was echoed by an anonymous AM, who suggested, "The attitude towards the Welsh

Assembly has changed over those years. There wasn't a lot of optimism from some quarters of the press when the Assembly was first established." An anonymous Conservative AM also said to me in our meeting:

It has improved. At the beginning, probably because of a confusing perception, there were lots of reluctant reports. That was because people understood Westminster; they understood their MPs. The Assembly was really seen only as a talking shop. It didn't have any real power, so it was often seen as a glorified county council down in Cardiff. So, there was very, very little reporting on what it was and often full of errors about how it actually operated. So, there has been an improvement, and greater recognition of the fact that it is now making decisions which impact on people's day-to-day lives.

Devolution has been widely accepted by the Welsh public after more than a decade's existence. This is evidenced by the resounding "yes" vote in the referendum on direct law-making powers for the Assembly in March 2011. As Tonge put it, "the vote in favour was construed as a declaration of confidence" (2011:9) in the institution. Consequently, it is reasonable that the press coverage of the Assembly has improved.

Secondly, similar to the point made above, some interviewees suggested that there is more coverage of the Assembly in the Welsh press since its function has developed considerably over the years. An anonymous female Labour AM stated, "Increased enormously, I mean it used to be all about the MPs, but now what's happening in the Assembly gets a lot of coverage." The Conservative AM Suzy Davies also suggested:

In the past, it used to just be the Welsh office and more nationally, I mean, as in UK news. So I think there is definitely more concentration on what goes on in the Assembly. But whether it's always done in an engaging way, I am not so convinced.

Of course, the Assembly has gained its recognition and acceptance gradually since its creation. Not surprisingly, as the anonymous Conservative AM noted above, it used to be referred to that "glorified county council". What is more, as mentioned in Chapter 5, before the "yes" vote in the referendum on direct law-making powers in March 2011, the Assembly only had limited powers over areas such as health, education, transport, rural

affairs and economic development. After the referendum, it became a Parliament, so it has more powers than previously. As a result, the Assembly became the most important legislature which makes decisions that affect day-to-day lives of Welsh people. Therefore, it is expected that the media in Wales would pay more substantial attention to their most important political institution than before the change in status. However, as noted previously, overall Welsh press coverage of Assembly politics is still limited, despite the fact that the Assembly has a growing recognition among journalists and the Welsh public.

Thirdly, several interview participants, such as Labour AMs Mick Antoniw, Jenny Rathbone and Lib Dem AM Kirsty Williams, suggested that there has been no significant change of the coverage over time. For instance, an anonymous male Conservative AM noted, “I haven’t seen any significant changes since I was elected in 2007.” The Pontypridd Labour AM, Mick Antoniw, stated:

I don’t think it changes very much at all. I think it’s been predominantly the same more or less all the way through... with the same issues in terms of the variety of coverage of what happens in the Assembly, and the quality of investigative journalism and research journalism.

This reflects a previous point that the UK national media pay little attention to the Assembly activities and the Welsh media coverage of the Assembly is not substantial in general. It has been a widely recognised problem in terms of Welsh political coverage: lack of coverage, lack of analytical analysis and lack of investigative journalists (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; Thomas 2006; Ye 2007).

Fourthly, several interviewed AMs noted that the press coverage of the Assembly has decreased. The former Rural Affairs Minister, Plaid AM Elin Jones believed, “There is less political coverage now in the Welsh press than in ’99. The *Western Mail* gave less analysis of what’s happening in the Assembly and in Welsh politics more widely.” Ms. Jones’ comment was echoed by her fellow party member, the former Heritage Minister, Alun Ffred Jones, who suggested:

The impression I get is that there is less coverage now than there was, at the beginning, mainly because it was novel. But the main problem is not perhaps the reporting; it is the fact that the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post* are losing readership, so obviously what is carried is having less impact.

This is evidenced by scholarly research, such as Franklin and Murphy (1997), Barter (2005), Franklin (2006a; 2006b) and Thomas (2006), who emphasised the declining number of local newspapers, readerships and circulations, and the diminishing quality of editorials. When answering the question of whether there is any significant change in the press coverage of the Assembly, as an insider, the Lib Dem leader Kirsty Williams also pointed out the culture of the Assembly and Welsh politics:

When you are creating a new institution, everybody has to grow up together ... The journalists who cover us have evolved and changed just in the way that the Assembly and politicians have evolved and changed ... growing alongside each other really. I think things probably have changed, but that's not because things were bad before. It is just the institution has changed, and things have developed, and so the coverage has been changed and developed as well. And people continue to change and develop as the institution does.

Finally, according to the Plaid Assembly leader Leanne Wood, the most significant change is that “there is much more online now”, in terms of the ways in which the press reports the Assembly activities since the establishment was created in 1999. Ms. Wood’s claim is backed by the Conservative leader, Andrew RT Davies, who said, “I suppose the one overriding change that there has been is the new IT models of communication you have.” The former Presiding Officer, Plaid AM Dafydd Elis-Thomas, also noted, “You’ve got social media, the Internet and the huge discussion goes on digitally in all sorts of forums about politics and issues. So, that’s really positive.” Indeed, the Internet and other technologies have changed the way people communicate and gain their information.

About half of the interviewed AMs believed that instead of buying a newspaper, more and more people go online for news and information. Williams (2011) pointed out that Cardiff has not yet lost a newspaper, but the future of Cardiff-based newspapers is not promising. Its neighbouring towns, such as Port Talbot and Neath, were among those 60 UK towns that lost their local newspapers between 2008 and 2009 (Greenslade 2009;

Williams 2011). Picard (2003; 2009) and Price (2006) raised concerns about whether and when the effects of the development of the Internet and its advertising capabilities would lead to the disappearance of newspapers. Of course their concern about the vanishing of newspapers would be the worst scenario for the print media, and it is not likely to happen in the near future. However, as Williams (2011) noted, market forces, the Internet or the public's changing news consumption habits cannot be blamed, even though they are the factors that lead newspapers to face their inevitable declining fate. In fact, Bruninx (2007) stressed that young people are accustomed to the free culture of the Internet and do not consider free news less reliable or less accurate than mainstream media (see also Berte and Bens 2009).

Changes in the news industry seem inevitable. However, it seems that the press is still one of the most important media in Wales, and the widely-acknowledged Welsh national newspaper, the *Western Mail*, is relevant to the opinion formation of the broadcast media. Some AMs also pointed out that the Welsh newspapers have given increasingly more attention to their websites in recent years. According to Hall, even in 2006 many of UK's most established newspapers, such as the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, planned "imminent integration of their print and online newsrooms" (2008:216). Hall (2008) also stated that media convergence and the shift online have dramatically changed the way people obtain their news and where they get it from. As noted in the Introduction Chapter, although circulations of almost all daily Welsh newspapers fell, their news websites, such as WalesOnline.co.uk and *South Wales Evening Post*, saw their online audience increase by about 35 per cent during 2013 (BBC News 26th February, 2014). Berte and Bens (2009) suggested that newspapers have paid considerable attention to their websites. Unsurprisingly, Meech (2008) noted that many newspapers "metamorphosed" into well-designed websites which were no longer the "pale imitations" of their print versions. In addition, Hall stated, "the newspaper is now in the process of transforming itself from a print-web artefact to a web-print one" (2008:222).

As Curran argued, the Internet has brought into "being an efflorescence of Web-based journalism, which is compensating for the decline of traditional news media" (2011:25).

Obviously, online media have become more and more important to politicians to voice their concerns. A number of writers and researchers, such as Ingram (2008), Farhi (2009), Posetti (2009) and Hermida (2011), suggested that Twitter has been used by journalists as “a tool to solicit story ideas, sources and facts”. According to Hermida, micro-blogging platforms, such as Twitter, that enable millions of users to communicate instantly, to share and to discuss events are “an expression of collective intelligence” (2011:214). Indeed, such participatory citizen journalism is to fill the void left by the redundant print professional journalism in contemporary society. This is also important to democracy in Wales.

Curran (2011:25) asserted that “a legion of bloggers, contributions from citizen journalists, and proliferating Web-based start-ups” are now “unstoppable” and will only continue to grow. As Vascellaro (2009) stated, only over a period of one year, from April 2008 to April 2009, the number of Twitter accounts increased from 1.6 million to 32.1 million (see also Hermida 2011). In terms of politics, the emergence of Twitter played an important role in organising and spreading information widely during major events, such as the 2008 US Presidential election, the 2008 Mumbai attacks and the 2009 Iranian election protests (Lenhard and Fox 2009; Shiels 2009; Hermida 2011). It is also true that some accounts in the new media, such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook and other social media, do not have a mass market reach. This is because some blogs only have a limited number of readers, and some Facebook accounts only share information among a circle of friends. Therefore, the impact of those blogs or Facebook accounts might not be enormous. But, the Conservative leader Andrew RT Davies mentioned that some politicians on Twitter, for example, have an account of 2,500-3,000 individuals following them. This represents a substantial following in the Welsh context, even though it pales into insignificance compared to some celebrities’ accounts, such as pop stars Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga. However, for some local politicians, social media is an important and useful way of being able to communicate with their electorate (see detailed discussions on shift in media practices in **Appendix V**).

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter is largely drawn from the data generated by the 28 interviews with AMs that I conducted between November 2011 and January 2012. Three sets of conclusions emerge from the analysis.

First of all, as well as supporting the findings revealed and discussed in other chapters, AMs asserted that although the coverage of the Assembly is not significant in the Welsh press, it is even less on the agenda of the UK national media. The notion of neglect of the Assembly in the British national media is supported by some news articles in the Welsh press and by the interviewed AMs' own personal experiences. Unsurprisingly, there was unanimous comment on the UK's national media coverage of the Assembly by the interviewees. For instance, adjectives like "awful", "invisible", "non-existent", "shocking", and phrases such as "virtually zero reporting", "notoriously bad", "lamentably weak", "pretty desperate" were widely used. This indicates that the UK's national media coverage of the AMs and Assembly activities is more or less absent. It implies that those in Wales who rely on the British national media are not likely receiving information of Welsh politics. The fact is that the majority of the Welsh population pays attention to the London-based UK national media (Thomas 2006; Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Delp 2008; Ye 2007).

Second, a number of AMs, both men and women, considered that their voices were only heard by the Welsh press occasionally. That was because they felt that the Welsh press sometimes gave them reasonable coverage, but often the issues and concerns they raised were neglected. Prejudices against women politicians were not commonly viewed as a problem in the Welsh media by the interviewed AMs, because sexist coverage has not been obvious in the Welsh newspapers in recent years. However, several women AMs did note some sexist press treatment that women MPs received from the UK national media.

Furthermore, both the Plaid AM Bethan Jenkins and the Lib Dem leader Kirsty Williams spoke of some negative press experiences they had, when they were first elected into the Assembly. Most significantly, both AMs remarked on changes in the Welsh press

coverage that they received. The positive change towards women AMs recently, to a considerable extent, is perceived as a result of the high level of women's representation in the Assembly since its establishment.

Finally, according to a large number of the interviewees, the most noticeable change in press coverage that has occurred over more than a decade since the Assembly was first founded in 1999 is that people tend increasingly to rely on online and social media for information and sources. This is not only because news organisations tend to devote more energy to their existing websites (Meech 2008; Hall 2008; Berte and Bens 2009), but also more and more online media emerged, especially the micro-blogging platforms like Twitter. Even though newspaper readers are decreasing in number, newspapers still seem to have a major and perhaps growing influence through their websites as well as establishing agenda and interest in the social media and in the radio and TV. Therefore, to study how the Welsh newspapers portray the Assembly and its female AMs is still of great importance and relevance to current gender studies.

Due to technological developments, new media will only continue to expand, change and evolve. Most significantly, in the Welsh context, it is important that politicians can now use Twitter, Facebook and other social media to communicate with their constituents in an environment where conventional print and broadcast media are relatively weak in their coverage of Welsh politics and the Assembly. In addition, as Hermida (2011) noted, micro-blogging platforms enable a large number of people to communicate instantly, which means some problems might be solved more effectively by "collective intelligence". Therefore, it might enable politicians to do their job more efficiently, and it also might enable the electorate to know their representatives better both professionally and personally.

The next chapter will continue to argue that women AMs have often been seen as agents of change in terms of changing the nature of Welsh politics, and shifting the Welsh Assembly to a different kind of establishment than other political institutions, such as the Westminster Parliament.

CHAPTER 8

Women in the Assembly as Agents of Change

Introduction

The National Assembly for Wales has been notable for “the high level of women’s representation” (Russell *et al.* 2002:49) among its membership since the first Assembly election in 1999. The percentage of women elected was then 42 per cent. Four years later, the May 2003 election produced a world record for Wales (Chaney 2004), as women held 30 seats out of 60 in the second Welsh Assembly⁷⁵. Although the number of female Assembly Members went down slightly from 31 to 28 after the May 2007 election, women were still a significant part of the third Welsh Assembly. Similarly, the political representation of women was maintained at a reasonably high level after the 2011 Assembly election; 25 out of the 60 seats are held by women in the fourth Assembly.

In terms of the ways that women politicians approach politics, researchers such as Norris (1996), Childs (2002; 2004), Withey (2004) and Bird (2005) suggested that most British female MPs tend to practise politics in a “feminine” and “traditional” way. For instance, they often articulate women’s issues and concerns more than do their male colleagues, in general, introducing “a kinder, gentler politics” (Norris 1996; Childs 2004). Is this still the case in the Welsh Assembly as women have achieved an almost equal level of political representation with men? Did it make a difference to Welsh politics when women were the majority in the second Assembly? It is true that there have always been a large number of women in the Assembly. So, do the female AMs accept the notion that there is no significant gender gap in Welsh politics? Does the Welsh press reflect this notion in its coverage? This chapter seeks to answer these questions.

The discourses identified in this chapter are drawn from in-depth interviews with 28 AMs in the current Welsh Assembly; 12 of them are women. This chapter is divided into three

⁷⁵ As mentioned in the previous chapters, there were an equal number of men and women elected to the Welsh Assembly in 2003. In a by-election on 29th June, 2006, Trish Law took the seat of Blaenau Gwent in the Assembly which had been held by her late husband Peter Law before his death. Therefore, women held 31 out of the 60 seats in the second Assembly.

major sections. The first section gives an account of the general view of the men and women in the Assembly which is based on the question of whether women AMs have made a difference to Welsh politics. It is worth noting that as a previous study suggested when there is a critical mass of women, there is space for women politicians to behave like women; they do not have to adopt a “masculine” or macho style in order to be judged as effective politicians (Ye 2007). In addition, the second section attempts to discuss why there have been fewer women elected into the Assembly in the past several years, and how the interviewed AMs felt about the decline in women’s representation in the Assembly. The last section examines whether there have been changes in the Welsh press in recent years in terms of reporting on female AMs.

Most importantly, this chapter argues that women in the Assembly have often been viewed as agents of change by the interviewees in terms of altering the nature of Welsh politics, transforming the Assembly into a different political institution compared to others, especially the Westminster Parliament. What is more, the Welsh press tends to pay more attention to women AMs’ contributions more collectively in recent years, especially the *Western Mail*. This may be credited to the impact and efforts that a large number of women have made in the Assembly since the institution was created in 1999. The general gender parity in the Assembly appears to have gradually helped to change the culture of Welsh journalism in terms of reporting on gender and politics.

The following discussion will now focus on how the interviewed AMs feel about the differences that women AMs have made, in spite of the fact that they have had to struggle to balance their responsibility for their families and their careers.

Women AMs as Agents of Change – Make a Difference

When the newly-elected Labour AM for Cardiff Central, Jenny Rathbone, was asked whether it makes any difference to politics when women are the majority in a political institution, she made a passionate remark:

Oh, definitely, absolutely, undoubtedly, yeah! Because I think that women are much more focused on children, women and old people, you know – vulnerable people. And we bring our experience of raising children with us, and I think that generally we have a more consensual approach towards politics. So, I think it makes for far more civilised politics, generally.

This comment indicates that Ms. Rathbone may align herself with the radical feminist argument that “the building of alternative institutions could generate social change” (Humm 2003:232). As Humm (2003) pointed out, radical feminists claim that all forms of oppression are extensions of male supremacy and that patriarchy is the root of women’s oppression which can be overcome only by eliminating and reconstructing the dominant patriarchal social system (Echols 1989). However, Ms. Rathbone may not necessarily agree with the idea of eliminating and reconstructing the social system. That is because she only suggested that women bring a different perspective towards politics, especially when there is a critical mass of them.

Although the majority of the 28 interviewed AMs shared the view of Ms. Rathbone that gender parity has made a difference in Welsh politics, eight of the participants did not have a strong feeling that gender has any impact on politics. It was their opinion that the differences that female AMs had made in Welsh politics was due to individual AMs’ interests and priorities, not the result of their gender.

For instance, the South Wales West AM Byron Davies suggested that throughout his service in the police he always treated women exactly the way he would treat men. He said the following to me during the interview:

I have the same respect for a woman in line management as I do for men, so I make absolutely no difference whatsoever between male and female... I treat them absolutely the same. And whatever line of attack they want to use in debate in the Chamber, they get the same reaction whether they are male and female as far as I am concerned.

It is obvious that Mr. Davies held a “gender-blind” attitude towards his colleagues in the Assembly. Suzy Davies, the Shadow Culture and Welsh Language Minister of the

Conservatives, also pointed out:

We have different ways of being difficult, should I say, as women. We tend to be just as leary or just as rude to each other as men are... partly by people's expectations, I mean if you are a woman, people tend to think you are interested in children and health rather than guns and foreign offices, if you are talking Parliamentary. But I don't think that's necessarily true. I mean each individual would have their area of interest. And I dare say, perhaps I come across more women who are interested in children's issues, but not specifically. I mean two of my closest political friends, one of them has very keen interest in military affairs. And the other, she is very, very involved in finance and banking, and stuff I would personally find quite difficult to get my head around. But I don't think because she got into that situation because she was a woman and trying to fight the system. That's her interest, and she has the personality to make sure that she could pursue her interest.

Clearly, Ms. Davies made a case against gender essentialism; she believed that individuals' personal interests are more important than gender in terms of making a difference in their work. Similarly, the leader of the Welsh Conservative party, Andrew RT Davies also stated:

... talking about the majority, I don't necessarily look at that on balance, but I do think it is vitally important that you have a good mix of, in our instance it's Assembly Members, but in Westminster, it's MPs, in Europe, it's MEPs, so that you are reflective of the society you seek to represent... I've got four to five female colleagues within the Assembly group here, and you know we all have different priorities whether they be male or female. It's interesting I could have someone come in now from the 1999 intake when the Assembly first started and listing their priorities, and most probably there would be great similarities between the 2011 intake as well as then, because obviously it's the political ideology I would suggest that determines someone's viewpoint, not necessarily the gender. Albeit, I do think that you need a mix in politics to make sure that people are confident that the politicians who represent them do represent the society that is made up of both genders.

This somewhat liberal feminist viewpoint was backed by his fellow Conservative colleagues. Three Conservative AMs, who wished to remain anonymous, advanced a similar viewpoint:

My only practical experience has been in the Assembly, where women have been

roughly 50:50, just under 50 per cent now, still pretty close. And you know we don't see things in terms of that's a man or that's a woman. That's just a politician, who we agree or don't agree with, who is in our party or in someone else's party. It's not an issue, the gender issue. Honestly, it doesn't really cross my mind. If I am having a go at somebody because I disagree strongly, it's not because they are a man or a woman. Or if I am agreeing strongly, it's not because they are a man or a woman. (Anonymous Male Conservative AM)

I don't think women need to be a majority. I think there needs to be a balance. It doesn't have to be a determined balance; it is nice to have political representation that does represent the general population. (Anonymous Female Conservative AM)

When women are the majority? Well, I don't know how it would change, but I definitely feel that women's experience is very relevant to life. We form half of the population, and we are not reflected appropriately in our political institutions. And I think it's really important to have a variety of women from very different backgrounds with very different experiences in our political institutions... I think like any other member of society, you know women bring their experiences from their own background, which is why it is so important to have a wide variety of different people involved. (Anonymous Female Conservative AM)

It seems that AMs from the Welsh Conservative party take a liberal feminist approach to view their position in the Assembly, because liberal feminism seems to be “working in the belief that progressive reforms will lead to the full equality of women”, as Kaplan noted (1992:20). Therefore, its limitation is reformism, “seeking to improve the status of women within the system but not fundamentally contesting either the system's operation or its legitimacy” (Humm 2003:151). Apparently, some of these views can be identified among the Conservative AMs. Furthermore, contemporary liberal feminists advocate the same rights and treatments between men and women, but in pursuit of their goals through “conventional political activities of lobbying, litigation and legislation” (Boles and Hoeveler 2004:192).

In terms of issue concerns, the most common comment was that when the majority of the AMs arrived at the Assembly, they already had a range of personal concerns and agendas. For instance, issues are perhaps related to the work they had previously done or the organisations they had belonged to, or the causes they supported. Therefore, gender

seems not to be an apparent concern. This has been summarised by an anonymous Conservative AM:

For some of the women Members, that might have been feminist issues or the anti-domestic abuse issue. But then, many men in the Assembly also support those issues. If you go to cross-party groups, for example, they cover a wide range of issues. Nearly all of them are caring issues, you know trying to draw positive changes to help people who are vulnerable in one way or another. Just as many male Members as female Members become involved, chair those committees, belong to those committees and take part in those committees... It could be that because there is a mix, it mutually influences each other, I don't know.

The Lib Dem AM Aled Roberts also supported this view, and he stated:

Personally I don't think it makes that much difference. Perhaps the nature of individuals is more important than gender. I think perhaps that there are instances where if there are many women involved, perhaps the institution is less like a bear pit. But I think perhaps increasing numbers of male politicians as well now adopt a rather different style.

As well as Mr. Roberts, Labour AM Keith Davies also did not feel strongly that it is the gender balance that has made the Welsh Assembly different from the other political institutions. The phenomenon of the general gender parity has existed since the Assembly was founded more than a decade ago. As a result, women have been accepted as a normal part of the organisation for many years. Therefore, it is difficult to individualise one person's influence in a specific political decision, because some effects of increased female representation are embedded within the political process (Lovenduski 2005). Whether it is of any significance or not, the other AMs who expressed a similar opinion – that it is not gender that has made an impact on Welsh politics – were all from the Welsh Conservative party.

Nevertheless, it is true that men and women have different experiences in life, and often work professionally in different roles. Obviously, it has been widely noted that women often perform most of the caring for children, and look after the sick and the vulnerable. As previous researchers pointed out, different experiences are likely to give women

perspectives on social and other policy areas which are different from those of their male colleagues (Okin 1990; Norris 1996; Ross 2002a; Ross 2002b; Ross 2002c; Childs 2004). One of the most obvious differences between male and female politicians is that women tend to prioritise certain issues, such as childcare, child poverty, health services and equality (Chaney and Fevre 2002; Chaney 2002; Chaney 2004; Chaney 2006; Ye 2007). Except for some Conservative AMs, issue concern was certainly the one very important aspect that the interviewed AMs mentioned in this research, when they were asked what kind of differences women AMs had made in Welsh politics.

For example, one anonymous female Labour AM and the Pontypridd Labour AM Mick Antoniwi both believed that women have changed in some ways the nature of the Assembly and the interests and the tone of some of the debates. Mr. Antoniwi gave his explanations of how women AMs adopt a particular approach towards issues:

The debates are not quite as male as they were. Equality issues are far more to the front; interest in women and children becomes a much more important element to the debates. And of course its context [equality] went through many of the policies in different ways. So I think it has broadened out the quality of the debates within the Assembly and has influenced the policies in a more positive way... I think what they've done is to broaden out the ways in which certain policies are discussed. So that when particular issues, say maybe it is care – care for the elderly, they've certainly broadened out consideration of disability, access, impact on families and so on; those perspectives which often didn't get the same level of hearing as now. And also they bring different and additional levels of expertise and experience as women in terms of family issues, family rights, family balance etc. So I mean that has impacted quite immensely on the way in which the Assembly has developed its own policy.

Mr. Antoniwi's comment was backed by the former Rural Affairs Minister, Plaid Cymru AM Elin Jones, who said:

I think it's made a difference to the way that we develop the work in the Assembly, because we always have a good gender balance, either a majority of women or close to half and half. And I think on the whole the major difference is in the tone of the Assembly. The politics is not as aggressive; it is not as gladiatorial and as you know First Minister and leaders of the other parties are almost fighting each other in their question time. It's far more involved and more

discussion now rather than just political point scoring, although some of that, obviously. So I think it's about the tone of the politics here that has not got into some of the bad habits of Westminster.

Clearly, Ms. Jones also suggested that Assembly politics has become less confrontational because of a general gender parity. Leanne Wood, who was the first woman elected as leader of Plaid Cymru in the Assembly, also pointed out that a good balance of both genders does change politics. She stated:

I am not sure whether the majority bit counts, but I certainly think that when there is more of a balance of the genders, then it does actually change the politics. Certainly my experience here in the Assembly is that there are more issues around things like caring, children issues, domestic abuse, and funding all those sorts of services than I think would take place if there was a big majority of male politicians. So, I do think it makes a difference.

The former Plaid Heritage Minister Alun Ffred Jones also suggested that women had made a difference to the subjects that were discussed and the way they discussed the subjects, as well as the fact that women did bring certain issues to the fore which men would not likely feel as important. This was backed by his fellow Plaid colleague, Bethan Jenkins, who reflected:

I do think it makes a difference in terms of the issues that are raised, and the different priorities that women may bring to the table, and the diversity of opinions. And you know if you've got four men around the table, you are going to have a very different outlook on policy or life than if you would have a mixture of men and women.

It is apparent that in terms of issue concerns, such as caring, child related issues and family issues, women AMs are often associated with the private sphere that has traditionally limited their ability to participate in politics. However, these concerns may also positively shape how they tackle policy issues, as evidenced by the examples given by the interviewed AMs.

With regard to the uniqueness of the Welsh Assembly, the common comparison that the interviewed AMs made was between the Assembly and the British Parliament in

Westminster. For instance, the former Cardiff North MP, now the area's AM, Julie Morgan, talked about her experience in both of the political establishments:

Women often are dealing with issues that are very practical and affect people's daily lives. And certainly in the Westminster Parliament, issues such as child care, breastfeeding and all those sort of issues were brought for the first time really by women to the floor of the Chamber there. Here, because of many more women, it's much more routine to have those issues brought. And I think they bring up issues important to men as well as women, but the women tend to lead on them. And I think the women are very concerned about things that affect the daily life of families, so you know sometimes they are focusing in a more immediate way than some of the men.

Another two anonymous⁷⁶ female AMs who shared Ms. Morgan's viewpoint pointed out that the large number of women in the Assembly has made the institution different from the British Parliament. Meanwhile, they also suggested that because of a critical mass of women AMs, the Assembly has been a more women-friendly organisation in relation to the difficulties that women MPs face:

If you are a young woman politician in Westminster with small children, you have a big problem with running your life. I mean you shouldn't be a parent of small children, but really in the end, it's the women who end up managing it mostly, I think. So you know, I know a lot of women MPs really struggle. But the Assembly has been set up differently. And to a large extent, I think it has to do with the number of women who were present when it was set up. It had a big influence from then on. (Anonymous Female AM)

I think the problems they have in Westminster we don't have to the same extent here, because the hours are a little friendlier here. It would be very difficult for a woman with a family to be an MP. For example, Jenny Willott, our MP for Cardiff Central, I work with her quite closely. She had a baby last year. It's very difficult for her to manage that. So I think there is a balance that is possible here even if it is not necessarily possible at Westminster. (Anonymous Female AM)

Westminster and Cardiff Bay were often compared side by side by the participants. The former Presiding Officer, Plaid Cymru AM Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas mentioned that if

⁷⁶ In order to differentiate between interviewees, the political party of an AM which he/she belongs to is normally mentioned. But in this case, naming the party would identify the interviewee. So, here the specific parties are not mentioned.

we compared the Chamber of the Parliament at Westminster with the Chamber at the Assembly building, we would see that the Assembly has been a smaller organisation with a large number of women Members from the beginning. It is also different because of a way of working which has been more consensual and less confrontational. The Conservative AM David Melding, who suggested that women politicians address politics in more collaborative ways, asserted:

The Assembly for a while had more women than men and also in Government, so it is very unusual. We are all like that from the start when this was a new institution – it began in 1999. In a way it was just part of how things were. It was not as if we had a long tradition of lady domination and it suddenly ended. We had this balance from the beginning and it's our challenge to keep that balance. I think in a generation or so people will look back and say how unusual and how strange it was to have a Parliament which only had 10 per cent women in it, because the population is 50 per cent, just over 50 per cent. How can you have a good Parliament with less than 20 per cent or 30 per cent [of women]? And we had been a bit ahead of the game getting there, and it has been good to see.

Despite the fact that eight out of the 28 interviewed AMs⁷⁷ did not feel particularly passionate about the gender balance perspective in the Assembly, the rest often strongly believed that the significant representation of women in the institution has made the Assembly different from other political institutions in Western society, even across the world in a much broader sense. In short, the differences that women AMs have made in Welsh politics can be primarily summarised as: issue concerns; subjects brought to the Chamber debates; how cross-party committees work; the way issues are raised and scrutinised in the debating Chamber and in committees; and the hours of operation of the Assembly which makes the institution more women-and-family friendly than others.

As discussed previously, there have always been a large number of women AMs in the Assembly, but the total number of female AMs has dropped to a certain extent in the last two Assembly elections. Why is it the case that fewer women were elected? What are the reasons behind the decrease in the women's membership? What are the AMs' opinions on this and how do they feel about it? In the following section, some insight into these

⁷⁷ Six of the eight participants were Welsh Conservative AMs as mentioned above.

questions and possible answers will be offered.

Why were there fewer women elected to recent Assemblies?

The Welsh Assembly has always had a relatively high proportion of women, and Wales at one point was far ahead of any political institution in the world in terms of its female representation. This was because the Labour party, in the 1999 election to the first Assembly, had a deliberate policy called twinning, which was to ensure that there were at least as many women candidates as male candidates (Squires 2005; Lovenduski 2005; Ye 2007). Moreover, Plaid Cymru approved its election policy of putting female candidates in the first and third places on its five regional lists in 1999 (Lovenduski 2005; Krooka and Squires 2006). As a result, more women were elected into the Labour party and Plaid Cymru in the Assembly. Therefore, to a certain extent, the large number of women elected into the Assembly in the first place was somewhat artificially aided by party policies.

I. Change of Selection Rules

The two major Welsh political parties, Labour and Plaid Cymru, changed their original candidate selection rules in the 2011 Assembly election. Their original selection policies amounted to positive discrimination to help elect more women into the Assembly. In the most recent Assembly election, however, some of the positive actions in favour of women were no longer applied to many seats, resulting in a decline in the number of female AMs. In terms of AMs' responses to the selection policies, almost all the interviewed Labour and Plaid AMs mentioned their parties' positive discriminations for women, which can be summed up by the two AMs' comments below:

The situation in the Assembly was slightly artificial. And it was because some of the political parties, Labour and Plaid Cymru especially, had made great efforts to try and bring women to the fore as candidates. (Alun Ffred Jones, Plaid Cymru, AM)

It mainly depended on the Labour party, because the Labour party was the

biggest party by far. And we had this process called the twinning process, whereby each constituency was twinned with another and with one man and one woman. So we were introducing equal numbers of men and women. In order to get that situation, there was a huge battle within the party, because there was a very traditional sort of feeling that this was not the way to go, people had to get things on merit, they said. And this was the slippery slope. There was a huge amount of opposition to this policy, but then actually we finally had a conference where we won the vote for twinning by a tiny amount. But there has always been resistance to it, and it's never been totally accepted within the party, the all-women shortlists. (Julie Morgan, Labour, AM)

Similar to Ms. Morgan's concern, Alun Ffred Jones also suggested that Plaid's policy of reserving its top places in its regional lists for women has been "a rather confrontational matter". Two Labour AMs also extended a similar opinion that there has been ambivalence towards their parties' candidate selection policies:

The rule caused a lot of problems back in 2003, because Trish Law's husband, Peter was not going to be selected. They were going to parachute a woman in from London or somewhere to come and be able to stand, so he decided to stand as an independent. That was because of the all-women shortlists. (Keith Davies, Labour, AM)

It's still not accepted. I know from speaking to Members, a lot of people are still very, very unhappy with the idea of all-women shortlists. We've almost convinced them, but I think we haven't really had the argument. Every time, there've been debates; it's just that people got very, very angry. (Anonymous Female Labour AM)

If it had not been for the two main political parties' positive discrimination policies, there would not have been a large number of women in the first Assembly. However, consequently, the question is why there were fewer women elected into the third and fourth Assemblies? The first and foremost common explanation was that positive actions in favour of women had been changed, to a certain extent, if not totally abolished. Why have the candidate selection rules changed? How did the interviewed AMs respond to the new selection rules? The Plaid AM Alun Ffred Jones explained further:

The political parties tried to skew the system to favour women, to a certain extent, not to a very huge extent. And that certainly allowed more women to

come to the fore. It also created certain resentment then as a sort of backlash, especially with the regional lists, to what was seen as almost a job for life for somebody. And that is why Plaid changed its policy, because of the pressure from within its own party.

Mr. Jones' viewpoint was echoed by his colleagues. For instance, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas argued that the voting system has changed, because it became a party political issue again. He also said when that system was dismantled by Plaid and Labour, an opportunity was lost. In addition, Elin Jones also asserted:

The two main political parties that had gender balance in their election process were Labour and Plaid Cymru. The political parties have sort of gone back on that. Plaid Cymru did in particular, so the policy that we did have, to have women on top of the regional lists was reversed to allow men or women on top of the regional lists. So now we have two men, who would have been two women if we kept the original policy. So you know if the political parties don't keep quite sound and affirmative selection processes, then what we are seeing is that the political parties select men.

The Lib Dem Assembly leader Kirsty Williams noted that Labour and Plaid Cymru, which had positive measures⁷⁸ wired into their selection systems, then changed the way in which they selected their candidates, so it resulted in a dropping off in the level of female representation. She said:

Whether there was a twinning arrangement in the Labour party or Plaid ensuring women on the top of the list for their regional lists, it helped deliver that many women. The decision by both parties to get rid of that... what we saw was that after a number of women Assembly Members stepping down from constituency seats, for instance, Cardiff South and Penarth, and Pontypridd both returned a male Labour candidate. What we saw in terms of Plaid, North Wales regional list Member, a male replacing a female; Mid-Wales regional list, again, a male replacing a female, so the changed selection criteria that were applied by both Plaid and Labour were responsible for the drop off in the numbers.

Why is that? Why has there been resentment and disagreement over the positive discrimination in favour of women within the two political parties? Is this because

⁷⁸ As mentioned above, the Labour party in the 1999 Assembly election had a deliberate twinning policy which helped to elect a good number of women AMs. Similarly, Plaid Cymru approved its election policy of reserving the top places for women candidates in their five regional lists.

politics is still considered as a male domain in Wales? Are women still seen as more suitable to remain responsible for household duties in the private sphere? These questions will be addressed further in the following sections.

II. Women do not put themselves forward for elections.

The second common reason is that women do not tend to put themselves forward for selection as party candidates for elections, even though, as two female AMs suggested earlier, the Assembly has been friendlier to women than the Westminster Parliament.

For instance, eight AMs across political parties particularly mentioned that less women were putting themselves forward and seeking nominations for senior positions in politics than men, because of a reluctance to risk defeat and because of family matters. For example, the Labour AM Keith Davies noted:

The Labour party made sure that when we had shortlists that we would have an equal number of women and men, but sometimes it didn't work like that, because when I was elected in Llanelli, there were seven or eight candidates and only one was a woman. So, women didn't put themselves forward ... One of the reasons is, for example, we've got a couple of AMs now who've got young families. And it's very, very difficult, especially if their husbands have jobs which take them away. For them to be here when husbands are away, they have to have strangers to look after the family. So, it is difficult for young women with young families. As the children grow older, then it's easier. So that's the problem I think. It's not that there are no able women there, but family circumstances rule against it.

Similarly, one of Mr. Davies' female colleagues, an anonymous female Labour AM, said to me:

Because I think if you don't help women to stand for election, they don't. In a way that traditional politics is set up, it doesn't suit a lot of women. To go to a political meeting for example, you often have to go about seven o'clock at night. It's the time when most women who have children can't go. They are not able to come out the house in that way; they are not able to be active. They don't get selected; they don't get involved in local politics in that way. Lots of women are involved in local politics, but they tend to be involved at weekends during the

day or whatever, that doesn't suit the political structure.

Clearly, this reflects realities of women politicians taking on caring roles in the private sphere. There is almost a universal acknowledgement that female politicians have to work harder than their male colleagues in order to achieve the same degree of success (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Thomas 1994; Burrell 1994; Darcy *et al.* 1994; Witt *et al.* 1994; Watson *et al.* 2005). For instance, as pointed out by two anonymous female AMs above, some female MPs in the UK's Parliament really struggle in order to create a balance between family lives and careers. What is more, van Zoonen suggested in her study of the Dutch MPs and their families in the country's gossip press that "the families of male politicians sacrifice, the families of female politicians suffer" (2000:115). She also explained:

Whereas the price female politicians pay is higher (the work not simply frustrating family life but making it completely impossible), their plight is also constructed as somewhat pathetic rather than as heroic as for their male colleagues (van Zoonen, 2000:115).

This is still similar in the Welsh context. Family responsibilities have a much more severe impact on female AMs' career than on their male colleagues (Ye 2007). According to Plaid AM Elin Jones and an anonymous female Conservative AM, not enough women are interested in getting involved in politics:

In the Mid and West selection which I knew better, there were far more men candidates. I can't remember whether there was a woman candidate actually in the selection. That's always a part of the problem. We don't have enough women putting their names forward for selection. (Elin Jones, Plaid Cymru, AM)

You've got to have the women that want to stand. At the moment, there doesn't seem to be an abundance of women coming forward and wanting to go into politics. As an interest, politics just seems to be more male dominated. (Anonymous Female Conservative AM)

It seems that Welsh politics is still a male domain, even though the Assembly has been a gender-balanced institution. Due to family issues, women are often reluctant to pursue a

political career. Welsh women politicians seem more influenced by family obligations and duties in the private sphere than their male counterparts. In addition, many women tend to need help to get involved in politics, but the Welsh political parties no longer have any implemented positive discrimination policies to help women candidates to stand for elections. As Blomeley (2011) noted, there is currently no overwhelming party support in Wales for affirmative action which helps to achieve the gender parity⁷⁹.

III. Defeat in the Elections

The third possible explanation is that some former women AMs were not re-elected or simply defeated. This happened to the former Lib Dem AM Eleanor Burnham. The newly-elected Lib Dem AM, Aled Roberts who won the election instead of Ms. Burnham, said, “I am probably not the best spokesperson to speak with, because I actually defeated a female AM in selection process. But I would say that it was done on the basis of who was the stronger candidate.” A comment of regret was made by Plaid AM Lindsay Whittle, who noted, “I think that’s probably simply down to the electorate and the electoral system. We lost some of our very able women, but that was merely down to the election results. We lost Helen Mary Jones; we lost Nerys Evans – two exceptionally good candidates, you know exceptionally good Assembly Members...”

According to the Conservative AM Suzy Davies, it was probably the seats they were standing for, she said:

Obviously there were some women who went for more elections, and they just didn’t get elected. Certainly, in the area, for example, Angela Burns stood and won again this time. Her two main opponents were two other women politicians... both women had been Assembly Members previously. They maybe could spread out a bit more, so we would have more of them. I think it’s more accidental than it used to be. I don’t think it’s about particular prejudices any more.

Similarly, the Lib Dem AM William Powell also pointed out:

⁷⁹ Blomeley (2011:69-70) also made some recommendations, such as education, removing barriers and implementing affirmative action, to help to improve female political representation and participation.

For example, I'll quote the May 2011 election. We had a seat, Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire, where you had three major significant women in one seat. And in the system, only one woman, um, one person could win. We had a substantial character, such as Angela Burns who was re-elected as it turned out. Nerys Evans was not successful, and neither was the former Agriculture Minister Christine Gwyther. So, you had three, but it was the circumstances – it was a lead choice to stand in one seat. If one of them had stood in a different seat, then they would have been potentially elected.

Maybe the answer to Ms. Davies and Mr. Powell's suggestion is a "yes". However, sometimes the election results are entirely unpredictable when the vote margin is narrow. For instance, Keith Davies of the Labour party had won the Llanelli seat just by a majority of 80 over the former Plaid deputy leader, Helen Mary Jones, after a recount in the 2011 Assembly election.

IV. Sitting AMs' Retirement

Another reason why fewer women were elected in the last two Assembly elections is that some sitting women AMs stood down or simply did not seek re-election. For instance, one anonymous Labour AM, who spoke from his own experience, said, "Some of that is about people that are retired and change in seats. For example, the predecessor to me was a woman and I am obviously a man ... And there are a couple of other seats where men have been selected." Labour AM Jenny Rathbone also stated:

In some cases, when women politicians retired like Jane Davidson, unfortunately their constituency reverted to type and chose a man. You know it was not that committed to have another woman. I think there was sort of token support for it, but they didn't really change that much you know. They thought, "Oh, well, we had a woman, now we will have a man!"

This brings us back to the first commonly mentioned reason why there were fewer women elected. After Labour and Plaid Cymru changed their candidate selection policies, more male candidates were selected and then elected. Likewise, when women AMs were retired and stood down, more men were selected. Even though equal gender representation has almost been achieved and maintained for many years, and Assembly

women have played a significant role in Welsh political life, politics seems still dominated by men at national level in Wales, in terms of leadership, party structures and candidate pool.

Overall, it seems difficult to speculate and to find some analytical consensus. However, one possible explanation would be that this is a trend away from women, and business as usual is slowly being re-established. There is an alternative explanation that this is not something systemic; this is not necessarily a sign that a new pattern is emerging. As Professor Mark Drakeford argued:

You can't expect to have a perfect 50:50 balance. Sometimes there will be more women than men, and there have been; sometimes there will be more men than women, but so long as it remains within, you know I don't know what the reasonable figure would be... but so long as it remains within a band around the 50:50 – that is something that we can afford to reflect about. Remember that although there are fewer women in this Assembly, there are more black Members. There hadn't been in any Assembly... so you could argue that there is some way in which the current Assembly is slightly more diverse than the previous ones.

It is reasonable to suggest that it does not have to be exactly half men and half women in any institution in order to achieve a gender balance. But the high level of women's representation in the Assembly has affected the AMs' views of women politicians in Wales. Has it changed the media's perception of the Assembly women as well? Does the Welsh press acknowledge that there is no wide gender gap in Welsh politics? Have there been any changes in the Welsh press in terms of portraying women AMs in recent years? These questions will be addressed in the following section.

Women AMs as Agents of Change – Women in the Assembly Speak

Differing from the previous section which was drawn from interview data, this section is primarily based on media portrayal of Assembly women. As discussed in the previous chapters, women AMs did receive somewhat negative and less substantial attention from the examined Welsh newspapers than their male colleagues. However, in more recent Welsh national press coverage, there have been more articles concentrating on women

AMs' contributions to Welsh politics and their achievements as individuals.

The Western Mail has run articles in order to acknowledge the Assembly women's contributions. For example, in 2007 amongst the three-month election coverage that has been examined in this research project, there was only one news story which collectively praised Assembly women. The article was an almost two-page exclusive interview with the then Minister for Assembly Business, Equalities and Children, Jane Hutt, who stated, "the nation has benefited from the ground-breaking 50:50 ratio of men and women at the Assembly" (30th March, 2007: 22). Despite that, as far as the article's headline is concerned, Welsh politics is still dominated by male politicians. The headline goes, "The old boys' network does still very much exist in Wales, but today's young women are more likely to front up to it" (Western Mail 30th March, 2007: 22-23).



Another two articles were not written in a totally positive tone, but they did send out a message that women in the Assembly do get their voices heard in the national press. The event was that four female Plaid Cymru AMs went public and expressed their disagreement about forming "a rainbow coalition" with the Conservatives after the 2007

Assembly election. The coverage in the *Western Mail* of this unexpected occurrence was in a somewhat positive tone. The headline was a quotation from the leading coalition opponent, then Plaid Cymru AM Helen Mary Jones – “It’s not the what, it’s the how that would be the big difficulty, but I’ll back Ieuan if the majority wants it” (*Western Mail* 24th May, 2007:6-7). Nevertheless, it accompanied a positive subheading – “Plaid’s Gang of Four fear party’s core principles will be betrayed” (*Western Mail* 24th May, 2007:6). The literal meaning of the phrase, “Gang of Four”, sounds somewhat derogatory, but actually it shows the four AMs’ loyalty to their party and their sense of responsibility for their nation. What is more, the most prominent image of the four was that of Helen Mary Jones. She was pictured in her office while talking to somebody. Ross and Sreberny noted:

To emphasize their essential femininity, women politicians are usually photographed in their offices and shots will take in various feminine accoutrements – comfortable sofa, kettle and flowery mugs, tasseled lampshade – which subtly privilege gender over profession (2000:94).

However, this picture is none of these, even though it was taken in her office. It was a close-up of Ms. Jones and the camera angle included a pile of files in the foreground on her office desk. Her hand gestures and facial expressions present the viewer an absolutely solid and professional politician. Another picture of her was published a few days later (*Western Mail* 30th May, 2007:13) and provided exactly the same photo situation, except for the camera lens’ angle.

Jobs axe 'will hit Assembly policies'

The main union representing Assembly Government staff is warning of policy failures if planned job cuts go ahead.

According to the PCS, administration budgets have been slashed, with senior managers forced to reduce staffing numbers.

In July last year Rhodri Morgan denied a claim by the unions that 1,200 jobs would be axed, despite the figure appearing in an Assembly Human Resources briefing.

PCS general secretary Mark Smeaton will lead the Wales TUC conference. "We understand plans to cut staff numbers are well advanced and the numbers are significant."

"With the Assembly taking on new legislative powers, which will result in additional work for Assembly staff, a question of maintaining staff levels is crucial."

"There is a real danger that manifesto promises will not be delivered because there are simply not enough staff to deliver them."

"It will be Ministers who will pay the price if their policies fail because of insufficient staffing."

An Assembly spokeswoman said: "We do not have, and never have had, a target for job cuts."

"This quest for efficiency savings will continue, but will need to be informed by any additional demands which may arise when the new Assembly Government is established."

'It's not the what, it's the how difficulty, but I'll back leuan if that would be the big the majority wants it'



CONSTITUENCY FEARS Plaid Cymru AM Helen Mary Jones at the Senedd in Cardiff Bay

Plaid's Gang of Four fear party's core principles will be betrayed

PLAID CYMRU'S leading opponent of forming a rainbow coalition said First Minister - if she still on the table and a majority want it.

Lleuelli AM Helen Mary Jones, together with colleagues Leanne Wood, Nerys Evans and Bethan Jenkins, have formed the Gang of Four who are against a coalition with the Tories and Liberal Democrats.

But asked whether she would shake up what she saw as the party's core values, and back an alliance, if it gets majority support, Ms Jones said the democratic decision of the party.

"I can certainly say that I will vote for leuan to be First Minister if it is the party's decision. In many ways it will be a wonderful and historic event."

Party that could be further pinned it has to be said that the Labour Party is very backward in coming forward, very slow in putting their ideas forward, which makes things very difficult for our negotiating team.

The Gang of Four

Helen Mary Jones AM for Llanelli, a unionist, is a member of the Gang of Four.

Leanne Wood AM for South Wales Central since 2003 from the Rhondda and education in Torfaen.

Nerys Evans AM for Mid and West Wales from 2003 until this month, when she dramatically resigned.

Bethan Jenkins AM for Carmarthen and Gwent since 2003, a former member of the Welsh Language Society.

Ms Jones said she would not shake up what she saw as the party's core values, and back an alliance, if it gets majority support.

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It's important to recognise the difference between the arrangement that was on offer from Labour, which basically only tied us to supporting the measure in the document.

"Of course there would be systems, but if you don't have shared values the best protocols and systems in the world can break down, and we believe that's a high risk."

"There are obviously excellent risks for Plaid Cymru in forming an arrangement with any other party."

"Where you've got parties that have got broad areas of commonality, but not the same values and principles, we believe that negotiating these difficulties would not be difficult, therefore working with the Liberal Democrat, those issues would be difficult."

"If you haven't got that shared basis of principle and value, we're concerned about how that would be addressed."

"If you're forming the government as opposed to a very specific deal to support on certain issues, things will come up that you haven't planned for. Issues will come up that are not in that written document."

"We're talking about a full programme here, obviously, and that's important to recognise the difference between the arrangement that was on offer from Labour, which basically only tied us to supporting the measure in the document."

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Labour must react out to us for support, says leading Plaid AM

David Williamson Senedd Correspondent david.williamson@wme.co.uk

'The ball is very much in Rhodri Morgan's court'

A MINORITY Labour government ready to work with Plaid Cymru would be a better deal for Wales than a coalition with the Conservatives, high-profile opponents of three-party government insisted yesterday.

Helen Mary Jones, one of four Plaid AMs to publicly oppose a link-up with the Tories and the Liberal Democrats, believes her party can avoid a formal alliance but still gain support for core policies.

Plaid members will debate three-way meeting at a national council gathering in July. Some on the party's left favour an alliance with Labour in the form of a stability pact.

They argue the necessary legislation for a referendum on a Scottish-style parliament in Wales will not be introduced without the support of Labour.

Ms Jones envisages 'creative but cooperative' opposition. She said: "We'll support the Government where we think they are right but oppose them where we think they are wrong. The ball is very much in Rhodri Morgan's court. They are the ones who have to demonstrate good faith. A big issue for me is the future of our hospitals."

"I think that's one area I'd expect (the Government) to look at what other parties have said and respond creatively."

Labour MP for Ogmore Huw Irranca-Davies agreed that the left-leaning nationalist party had much to gain from working with his party in the Assembly and that no formal agreement may be needed.

But he added, "I think they have to do the reaching out more than



OPPOSING VIEW Plaid Cymru AM Helen Mary Jones at the Senedd in Cardiff. She is against a rainbow coalition. Picture: Andrew James



NO RAINBOW

Nerys Evans, Leanne Wood and Bethan Jenkins

[Labour leader] Rhodri Morgan," Plaid and the Lib-Dems, he said, had for years asked traditional Labour to vote tactically for them as a way of blocking Conservative candidates.

He said that stance would become "ludicrous and untenable" should the parties help the Conservatives back into power

through a rainbow coalition deal. "As parliamentarians we talk to the Liberal Democrat and Plaid Cymru members and they are split right down the middle. You have Plaid MPs who have built their careers appealing to Labour members as pseudo-socialists. If they do enter an alliance, how can they knock on a door again?"

Mr Irranca-Davies was adamant that voters would not accept a cabinet without a Labour presence, saying, "I really think they will deal a hammer blow to the legitimacy of the Welsh Assembly Government."

He added, "If the Assembly is to gain the confidence of the people who voted for it - and the many people who didn't - it has to fire way forward that recognises a number of significant realities. One is that Labour took the largest number of seats."

"[Scottish National Party] leader Alex Salmond with a one-seat majority can say he has the moral [mandate] to govern, then Rhodri Morgan clearly does."

"Labour got 26 seats. Okay, they are a minority, but they are by far the largest party. It is right to have them out of Government?"

The Ogmore MP believes divisions are emerging in Plaid between language nationalists in the North and southern socialists.

"You can see the immense struggle going on within Plaid," he said. "At the minute they seem ready to sacrifice a little of their heart and soul for power."

Ms Jones rejects the accusation, saying, "People in the party have strong views on both sides of the discussion but that isn't about geography or right or left wings."

She acknowledged that Welsh Conservatives had moved away from the right-wing policies of the 1980s, but wanted further proof in the Assembly that they had embraced a centrist stance.

"They have shown willingness, in fairness, in the document agreed between the three parties," she said.

wales newsbulletin

Councillors cut their own pay

MONMOUTHSHIRE County Council's elected members have decided to slash their allowances to save £60,000.

A council spokeswoman said they faced a "very tight budget situation".

The council leader, Conservative Andrew Crang, has given up more than £5,000. Cabinet members and chairmen will make savings of £3,000 each.

Others, including the opposition leader, will go without part of their allowances. All members have given up a minimum of £500 each.

'Home raffle' court case delay

A WOMAN charged with contravening lottery laws after allegedly attempting to raffle her £150,000 house failed to appear in court yesterday due to illness.

Angela Jones, 36, allegedly sold tickets at £30 each in a bid to raise the asking price for her house in Chester Road, Oakenholt, Flintshire, it is claimed.

She was arrested in December after the draw for the house was cancelled.

Jones, from Tany-Coed, Prestatyn, was due to appear at Mold Magistrates' Court charged with selling lottery tickets contrary to the Lottery Act. The case was adjourned until June 5.

'Extras plan extra Welsh gig

STEREOPHONICS have announced a second Welsh date as part of their UK tour this autumn.

The band will play an extra gig at Cardiff International Centre on November 19. Tickets for a concert on November 18 have sold out. Call the box office on 029 2022 4488.

In addition to these three articles, the contributions of women in the Assembly have been acknowledged more frequently in the *Western Mail* in the past few years than before. This might be attributed to the high proportion of women at the Assembly, as well as the fact that the Assembly elected its first female party leader, Kirsty Williams, on 8th December, 2008. For instance, at the dawn of the announcement of who would be the leader of the Welsh Lib Dems, an article was written by the then Senedd correspondent, David Williamson, entitled, “A woman has to be twice as good as a man to be judged a success” (*Western Mail* 8th December, 2008:11). As the article’s title suggests, Mr. Williamson used a positive tone in this piece. The headline is a quotation from Professor Laura McAllister, who specialises in governance and Welsh politics. It could have been either Jenny Randerson or Kirsty Williams to be elected as the first female political party leader in the Assembly, so Mr. Williamson put it, “today’s announcement of the new leader of the Liberal Democrats could really change things” (*Western Mail* 8th December, 2008:11).

Monday, 8 December 2008

NEWS

Western

A woman has to be twice as good as a man to be judged a success

IT FEELS somewhat strange to burden a Liberal Democrat leadership election with such a weight of importance. But in the corridors of the Senedd – traditionally a leading forum for gender equality by the standards of British politics – there’s a sense that today’s announcement of the new leader of the Liberal Democrats could really change things.

Throughout their campaigns, candidates Jenny Randerson and Kirsty Williams have pledged to work together for the good of the party and Wales, regardless of who won.

But when one of them prevails, the Assembly will have its latest “Obama moment” – of sorts, anyway.

Not that the victor will be blessed with a smooth transition into power.

“Women are judged much more harshly,” says Laura McAllister, professor of governance at the University of Liverpool and an expert on Welsh devolution.

“A woman has to be twice as good as a man to be judged a success.”

She added that the victor will face a “tough job” dealing with “subtle inequality” which still exists in organisations.

But that did not discredit the importance of the achievement.

“I think this is a breakthrough – there is no doubt about that,” she added.

Twenty-eight of the Assembly’s 60 AMs are women.

John Osmond of the Institute of Welsh Affairs said this number could fall if gender equality initiatives were dropped.

The Assembly famously has a less confrontational atmosphere than Westminster. He believes this may be because it has less than a tenth of the members, instead of a result of gender balance.

He said: “It’s difficult to get really angry and cross with each other if you run into them every day in the corridor.”

For her part, Ms Randerson, who was a minister in the first and only Labour-LibDem coalition cabinet, said her campaign recognised that the party was entering uncharted territory.

She said: “We’ve been well aware since the start we were making history. I’m very proud of the Welsh Liberal Democrats that we are blazing a trail.”

She added: “It’s the only female Liberal in history who has ever been a minister so I have this sense of history. The final step will be a female First Minister.”

The climax of the campaign also marks the end of Mike German’s time at the helm of the party. He has led the Lib-Dems in the Assembly since 1999.

Mr German welcomed the arrival of a female successor, saying: “I believe it will be very significant and should bring a change of character to the Assembly.”

And the response has been favourable from other parties as well.

Of course, the new leader will play an integral part at First Minister’s Questions – giving a separate voice to traditionally bias proceedings.

Piaid Cymru AM Noreen Evans said it was “fantastic” that a woman would take the helm.

Ms Evans said it was striking that that was not the result of special measures to promote women but a reflection of their talents.

Regardless of who is announced today as the new leader of the Liberal Democrats, the National Assembly will have its first female leader. Senedd Correspondent **David Williamson** explores the implications of an historic moment in Welsh political history



She said: “It’s just two AMs who have obviously got the ability and the attributes to be leader.”

“That’s organic and that’s to be congratulated.”

She added: “I think both of them are good politicians and both would be a credit to the Liberal Democrats.”

In the past Plaid has had a policy of placing women in the top slots of the regional lists in Assembly elections. A new policy will be introduced for the 2011 vote.

She said: “We are still having internal discussions about it but it’s a positive debate. The membership will have the final say.”

Her Assembly colleague Helen Mary Jones said: “If you look back before the National Assembly when we had very few women MPs and less than a third of councillors – and most of those not in prominent positions – I think it shows we have moved on.”

However, she added: “There aren’t many Welsh companies with women managing directors and there aren’t many council leaders who are women, and there aren’t many women MPs.”

A very positive campaign

Each of the candidates for the leadership of the Welsh Liberal Democrats said the campaign had been a firing ball inspiring experience.

Jenny Randerson said: “I didn’t realise how much I’d enjoy it. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed going around Wales meeting old friends and making new ones.”

She added: “It has not exposed rifts. It’s always been a very positive campaign.”

“We’ve both been concentrating on the future and doing so very much with the good of the party in mind.”

Kirsty Williams said her three daughters – the eldest of whom was born in 2001 – were aware that a major event was under way.

She said: “They know there is an election going on. They don’t quite understand why it’s different from a usual election.”

Ms Williams said that regardless of the result her immediate priority would be ensuring their school uniforms and lunches would be ready for the next day.

Ms Randerson and her campaign team look forward to ending the day by going out for a curry.



THE CONTENDERS: Kirsty Williams, above, and Jenny Randerson, top

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Whether it has changed things or not, is another question altogether. But, there has recently been more follow-up reporting on the collective achievements of Assembly women in the Welsh press, if not more reports on individual female politicians. In terms of the 2008 Lib Dem leadership election itself, the *South Wales Argus*, like many other examined newspapers, reported almost nothing germane to the event. But it did perhaps do a little bit better than the weeklies by publishing an extremely short note, saying “Kirsty Williams spoke of her pride at being appointed Wales’ first female party leader” (9th December, 2009:2). Meanwhile, the *South Wales Evening Post* also produced three articles, which were about the Lib Dem leadership election. Apart from the two short stories, there was a one-and-a-half page in-depth interview with Ms. Williams by the paper’s reporter Emma Judd. The article was written after Ms. Williams became the Lib Dem leader in the Assembly, with a heading, “I am confident we’ll make a difference” (13th December, 2008:20-21).



Similarly, the *Daily Post* printed two short articles on the Lib Dem leadership election. But Tom Bodden, the paper’s Welsh affairs correspondent, contributed a half-page article

on page two, just the next day after Ms. Williams was announced as leader, entitled, “Kirsty is voted Lib Dem leader – First ever woman to head party in Wales” (9th December, 2008:2). In addition, there was an editorial by Mr. Bodden on Ms. Williams’ performance about two months after she was elected as the Lib Dem leader. Mr. Bodden described Ms. Williams as a leader who had “clearly settled enthusiastically into her new role” (28th January, 2009:14).

December 9, 2008 DAILY POST

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WEBSITE: www.dailypost.co.uk
PRICE: 45p

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Recycling paper made up 86.6% of the news material for the UK newspapers in 2006

More help promised for carers

PLANS to increase support for carers who look after frail and disabled relatives will be announced today by the Welsh Assembly Government. Deputy social services minister Gwenda Thomas will unveil a bid to transfer powers from Westminster to the Assembly Government to legislate on carers.

Wales has the highest proportion of people in the UK with a limiting long-term illness – almost one in four of the population.

The Welsh rate for permanent sickness and disability in the economically inactive population at 9% is also the highest rate in the UK. Unpaid carers provide around 70% of care in the community and forecasts suggest that the pool of potential carers is likely to decrease over the next few years.

Wales already has more than 140,000 carers, with almost 12% of the population having some form of a responsibility for care of a relative, a higher proportion than elsewhere in the UK.

If the Legislative Competence Order is approved, the Assembly Government will introduce Assembly Measures to support carers and promote their well-being.

These could, for example, place a 'duty of care' on agencies – such as the local NHS – to provide more support to unpaid carers.

Agencies could be required to develop carers' information strategies, as exist in Scotland, which ensure that staff at hospitals and GP surgeries offer carers more support.

Gwenda Thomas said: "Many people are now balancing work and childcare as well as caring for an ageing parent.

"Carers' assessments and services for carers vary greatly and are patchy across Wales. We need to improve the support for those who provide this valuable role, to ensure that they themselves enjoy good health."

Kirsty is voted Lib Dem leader

First ever woman to head party in Wales

By TOM BODDEN
Welsh Affairs Correspondent

THE new leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, Kirsty Williams, last night promised to re-ignite the flame of liberalism across Wales.

The 37-year-old Brecon and Radnor AM secured victory by 59.0% of votes to Cardiff Central AM Jenny Randerson's 40.1% in a postal ballot of the membership.

She became the first woman to lead a mainstream political party in Wales.

"We have broken the mould today by electing a woman and I am incredibly proud I have been a part of that process," she told a gathering for the announcement of the result in Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff Bay.

Her greatest challenge now was to build the party up in Wales and she made a direct appeal to voters who felt let down by Labour, the Conservatives and Plaid Cymru, she said.

Her campaign for the leadership, following Mike German standing down, was based on a platform of change, to improve what the party did and how it did it.

She appealed immediately to voters who felt let down by Labour since devolution, or by the Conservatives attitude of the way Plaid had "abandoned its principles".

"Come here and join us. There is a party in Wales on your side," she said.

"I want our party to be the voice for those communities, for those people who don't have a stake, who feel let down.

"I promise to take our message out to all of Wales, and we will re-ignite the flame of liberalism that once burned brightly in this country."

She promised swift action in the first week to bring about change within the party, by using electronic communications to engage with people, announcing a new team within the Assembly and travelling to Westminster to talk to colleagues there about using all the talents within the party.

"I am confident that this party will come together behind my leadership."

And she warned her political opponents in other parties: "We are coming to get you!"

Ms Williams paid tribute to her "formidable opponent" Jenny Randerson who made her fight for every vote and said that she would have a big role to play when she drew up her team in the coming days.

The all member ballot saw a turnout of 69.44%.

Christine Humphreys, president of the Welsh Lib Dems said: "I know that Kirsty is ambitious about bringing some major changes to Wales – I can't wait to start working with her to make it happen."

First Minister Rhodri Morgan said: "I congratulate Kirsty on her victory in the Lib Dem leadership election. Not only is she the first woman to be elected as a party leader in Wales, she has already shown her abilities as a feisty campaigner back in the referendum campaign in 1997, and in the Assembly."

Plaid Cymru leader Ieuan Wyn Jones congratulated Ms Williams: "I'm sure that she will be a worthy opponent in the Assembly chamber."

Conservative leader Nick Bourne said: "This is an important moment for the National Assembly and for Wales in general, representing as it does a significant breakthrough in the representation of women in frontline Welsh politics."

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'I believe Cheryl was murdered' says Opik

By CARL BUTLER

AN MP has claimed that Pte Cheryl James, the 18-year-old Llangollen army recruit who was shot dead at the Deepcut Army training barracks in 1995, was murdered.

Lembit Opik, Liberal Democrat MP for Montgomeryshire, believes there has been a conspiracy of silence about the death of Cheryl and three other recruits at the now-closed barracks.

He told the Commons the police reports into the deaths at Deepcut, should be published.

The MP wants more police accountability written into the proposed Police and Crime Bill.

He said:

"The extreme difficulty that I have had in obtaining reports in the past few years from both Devon and Cornwall Police and Surrey Police relating to the deaths of Deepcut Army recruits, has raised serious issues in my opinion over the accountability of police forces everywhere.

"In fact the level of secrecy I've faced regarding the reports into the deaths have now caused me to believe that these recruits were murdered.

"To put it bluntly, there appears a conspiracy of silence between the Ministry of Defence and police authorities to keep these reports from the public. If it takes legislation to release these reports, then I'm in favour of it.

"As things stand, there seems a brick wall between us and the truth. When it comes to speculating about brick wall, it's natural to fear the worst. Only openness will now change my opinion."



Cheryl James

'I WILL RE-IGNITE THE FLAME OF LIBERALISM'



New Lib Dem leader in Wales Kirsty Williams

Having discussed other newspapers' coverage of the Lib Dem leadership election, therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that the *Western Mail* was the one single newspaper among the examined press which paid the Lib Dem leadership election the most extensive attention. Another example is that just a day after the leadership election, it published an almost one-page news story on Kirsty Williams, the newly-elected leader (9th December, 2008:7). What is more, it ran an editorial with a heading, "First female party leader marks generational shift". It considered the event of electing a female leader as marking "a pleasing historical landmark" (9th December, 2008:16).

Again, the paper ran another article by the Cynon Valley Labour AM, Christine Chapman, who looked at the role of women in the Assembly and challenges which women politicians have faced in Wales. The essay was entitled, "Work still to do if politics is to be fair to women" (12th February, 2009:24). Most significantly, alongside the article, there was a large photo of the Lib Dem leader, Kirsty Williams, who was photographed when she was first elected as leader. This clearly indicates that women are somewhat empowered in Wales in terms of being reported and their voices being heard by the press. The Welsh press at least started addressing the difficulties that women politicians are facing in Wales; and it began acknowledging more frequently the contributions that women politicians have made in Wales.

24 Western Mail 

Thursday, 12 February 2009

COLUMNIST

Work still to do if politics is to be fair to women

AS the tenth anniversary of devolution approaches it is a good time to evaluate where we are in terms of the representation of women within the Welsh Assembly following the dramatic breakthrough in 1999.

The Welsh Assembly is a leader among legislatures in terms of its gender balance, not just in the UK, or in Europe but across the world. When the first Assembly was elected in 1999, 24 of the 60 members were women. At the 2003 election the record was even better with equal numbers of men and women being elected, and a 2006 by-election led to a simple majority. All Welsh Assembly Government Cabinets have had excellent ratios of women to men. In December 2008, Kirsty Williams was elected as the first female leader of a Welsh political party. As a comparison, women make up just under 20% of MPs at Westminster.

But in what ways does politics in a gender-balanced legislature differ? Does it make a difference? One of the reasons for establishing the All Party Women and Democracy Group, the Assembly group which I chair, was to mark the achievement of having so many women now in crucial positions to affect policy making in Wales. However, the group, which is open to men and women AMs, also debates emerging academic research on the subject. It also acts as a focal point for the worldwide interest Wales is attracting in terms of its National Assembly. The Assembly has hosted many visits from women parliamentarians from across the globe. During these visits it has been great to share common experiences. Although the cultures and geography may be different, the similarities can unite us.

A recent meeting of the group, Assembly Members and staff, with Laura McAllister, Professor of Governance at the University of Liverpool, reflected on the last 10 years of gender representation. We noted a significant finding from the book written by Laura, Cardiff University academic Paul Chaney and Edinburgh University's Fiona Mackay which analysed specific, themed contributions by Assembly Members during plenary and committee debates.

This research showed that the majority of all contributions on equal pay, domestic abuse and the need for better childcare were by women Assembly Members. Of course these are often dismissed as "women's issues", but they are problems that affect men and women in every community the length and breadth of Wales.

Equality of representation is vital, not simply for numerical reasons, but because the involvement of women within the political process can lead to better politics and governance even in what is often regarded as traditionally "male" areas such as the economy. Support for this comes from some unlikely quarters.

The centre-right Industry Minister of the Norwegian Government introduced a quota to ensure that a minimum of 40% of the membership boards of all private companies were women, arguing that quotas make sound economic sense.

The investment company Goldman Sachs published a paper in 2007 arguing that the reduction of gender inequality would increase economic growth. The World Bank suggests that poverty cannot be eradicated unless parity of gender is achieved.

The Assembly was born from the Government of Wales Act 1998, which contains an equality clause bestowing a duty on government to take a proactive stance and promote equality for all persons and in respect of all government functions.

We need political structures that are truly reflective.

For governments and political institutions to be credible and representative and to help bridge the gap between politicians and voters, they need to be drawn from all of the population, regardless of gender, disability, sexuality or race.

Political structures also need to be reflective of the people, so that they can make appropriate policy. People need to be able to identify with those who represent them.

Unfortunately we cannot rest on past success. Laura McAllister argued not so long ago that although there was cause to celebrate the gender balance in the Welsh Assembly, it was nevertheless still a very "fragile" situation.

At the 2007 elections, the percentage of female Assembly Members slipped to 47%. It should be remembered that the success in Wales did not just "happen". It came about after great effort and indeed angst within the political parties. For example, Labour's policy of "twinning" led to the excellent gender parity that followed the 1999 election.

Plaid adopted a policy of "zipping" for the 2007 elections, whereby women automatically received first place on the regional lists. But this policy will undergo some modification for the next election, and women will no longer automatically be allocated the top slot. Liberal Democrats and Conservatives have yet to adopt a policy of guaranteeing female candidates, and only one of the 12 Conservative AMs is a woman. It is recognised that positive action such as quotas and all-women shortlists are the only effective method in the medium term of ensuring gender balance.

Local councils in Wales (whose services most closely affect communities) also show a stubborn resistance to becoming more balanced in terms of gender. Marginal increases in some areas are mitigated by a total lack of progress in others. For example, just two councillors out of the 33 who compose Merthyr Tydfil Council are women. Women are also dramatically under-represented among council leaders. Anecdotal evidence suggests women politicians still face greater hostility and, more damningly, personal criticism by elements in the media than their male counterparts, which could serve as a powerful deterrent to aspiring female politicians.

Is the future female? Not unless all parties make a deliberate, conscious effort to continue the excellent progress recently made, and to encourage women to take their rightful places as candidates, elected members and lawmakers.

Diversity is vital, as it leads to the confluence of different viewpoints and the challenging of preconceived attitudes. Diversity is also a process. As boundaries shift to include one group within the political community, it becomes more difficult to justify the exclusion of other groups. It is also about fairness. The Welsh Assembly, can, and should, reflect this.



PROGRESS: In December 2008 Liberal Democrat Kirsty Williams was elected as the first female leader of a Welsh political party

AM Christine Chapman looks at the role of women in Welsh politics and asks 'is the future female?'



the thursday essay

the Government of Wales Act 1998, which contains an equality clause bestowing a duty on government to take a proactive stance and promote equality for all persons and in respect of all government functions.

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Similarly, in January 2009, the paper printed another article, which shone a light on the role that women politicians play. The article was headlined, "Women have a vital role in ending the threat of conflict" with a picture of the then Deputy Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler in the Senedd (2nd January, 2009:19). This examined article focused on Ms. Butler's experience in an international conference. It reported that she believed that women are the key to avoiding conflicts between countries and "strengthening the role of women in politics is an important step towards creating governments which are less confrontational and meet the basic need of the population" (2nd January, 2009:19).

Friday, 2 January 2009 Western Mail 19

NEWSROUND

Women have a vital role in ending the threat of conflict



PROMINENT WOMAN: Deputy Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler in the Senedd in Cardiff Bay PICTURE: Andrew James ©

David Williamson
Senedd Correspondent david.williamson@medwales.co.uk

AM tells conference women are key to avoiding violence between countries

WALES' deputy presiding officer Rosemary Butler believes lessons learned in Wales can help bring stability to one of the world's most volatile regions.

The Newport West AM has visited Georgia – the scene of fierce military confrontation last summer between the country's armed forces and Russian troops.

Relations between neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan remain tense following the 1988-1994 conflict over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Mrs Butler is convinced that strengthening the role of women in politics is an important step towards creating governments which are less confrontational and meet the basic needs of the population.

Representatives from the three countries came together in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi as part of a British Council effort to build a network of politically active women across the region.

She described the tactics Welsh parties had used to ensure the Assembly had one of the world's highest levels of female representation.

Describing the impact of women on politics, she said: "You get a much more consensual government and you find things like social services really come to the fore.

"I just really believe you have a different style of politics when women are elected.

"I think in areas like Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, that's absolutely essential."

Mrs Butler believes women are more likely to vote when there are more female candidates standing.

She said women at the conference were fascinated to learn how the Assembly's petition system allowed members of the public to force politicians to look at an issue.

"They just found that absolutely mind-blowing," she said.

"I said it's hard work for the electorate, they don't just vote us in – they have to be consulted on things."

The conference began with a tense atmosphere.

She said: "The body language on the first day was very formal. We had the different national groups sitting in their different areas."

But that evening at a reception in the

"I just really believe you have a different style of politics when women are elected, think in areas like Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia that's absolutely essential"

British embassy, the ice finally melted away when one of the women began playing the piano and singing began.

"When they went home, they all piled into the one minibus.

"The next day the conference was totally different," she said.

"It was relaxed. They were really interested in what everybody was saying."

She hopes that the region will not dissolve into the type of ethnic warfare which devastated the Balkans in the 1990s. A first step to improving stability is encouraging the women of the different countries to talk to one another.

Mrs Butler said: "I think the more people can talk to their neighbours and the more they can understand each other, the more likely there is to be peace... It was a real privilege to go and experience how these women live and share what we have done."

Arguing that in a civilised society women must be represented in politics, she said: "Women are not better than men. We are just very different."

During the course of the conference, she talked about the achievements of women who have shaped British society, praising the contributions of the suffragettes and the anti-nuclear protestors at Greenham Common.

Newport is twinned with Kutaisi, Georgia's second city. The friendships which have formed between people in each community made the violence of last summer more alarming.

Mrs Butler said: "It's very worrying when people you know are in a conflict situation."

Describing the current tensions between Russia and Georgia – focused on Russia's support for independence for the enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia – she said: "I think there is a huge amount of distrust; that's the issue. People just don't trust the Russians."

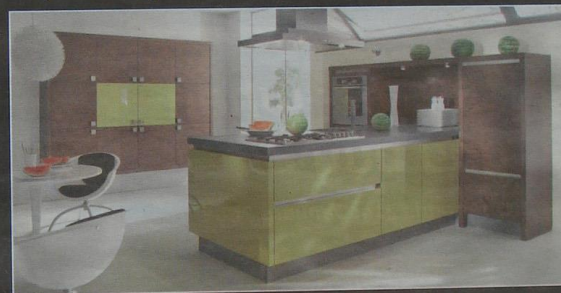
"Hopefully there will be some sensible compromises and it won't happen again."

The experience of the conference has strengthened her appreciation of the Assembly.

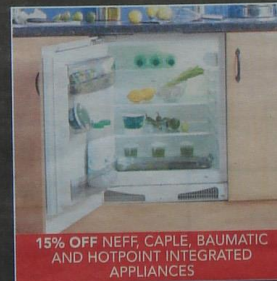
She said: "It's not until you go away and talk about it. It's really very different from Westminster, even – it really makes you think we're doing well."

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Furthermore, in my interview, when the Cardiff West Labour AM Mark Drakeford was asked what kind of differences women AMs have made to Welsh politics, he provided an excellent example in respect of his personal experience during the coalition negotiation period after the 2007 Assembly election:

I think it does matter to the culture of the place. It was most apparent to me, during the 2007 post-election period, you know, in 2007 election, Labour won

only 26 seats. And there were protracted negotiations about what sort of government might follow. And I was lucky enough in a job⁸⁰ that I had to be part of all of that and in the room most of the discussions were going on. The discussions were led on all sides by women. And it seems to me, looking at it that women do bring, at some level, a different basic approach to some political problem solving. Men faced with very difficult and you know tense negotiations tend to stand back and shout at each other a little, whereas women seem to me to be more adept at spotting pieces of common ground and wearing away issues, talking and talking and talking until finally you manage to find a way of agreeing about a difficult issue. And that sense of consensus building and determination to find common positions I find is a characteristic of women politicians that I witnessed.

Coincidentally, the *Western Mail*'s now political editor, David Williamson produced an article about a month before the 2011 Assembly election, entitled "Women key to the One Wales coalition" (8th April, 2011:15). This article also quoted Prof. Drakeford as the leading source in praising the women AMs' contribution during the coalition talks. Mr. Williamson wrote at the beginning of the article, "Labour and Plaid Cymru's historic 2007 coalition would not have happened if the negotiations had not been driven by women, one of former First Minister Rhodri Morgan's closest advisers has revealed" (*Western Mail* 8th April, 2011:15).

All the articles listed in this section have shown that the Welsh press has gradually paid more attention to female AMs' role in Welsh politics, and often in a positive tone. This, to a large extent, is a result of the high level of female representation in the Assembly since its establishment. The presence of a large number of women over a time period seems to have gradually made gender parity a norm. Subsequently, the coverage of female AMs as a whole may have changed in line with an acceptance by journalists of women politicians' ongoing involvement and contributions to Welsh politics. The gender issue has become not as obvious as it used to be. This is also evidenced by Kirsty Williams' and Bethan Jenkins' personal experiences with the Welsh press (see discussions in Chapter 7).

80 Prof. Mark Drakeford was the former First Minister Rhodri Morgan's chief special adviser for nearly all his time as leader. In 2011 Assembly election, he was elected as the Cardiff West AM succeeding Mr. Morgan after his retirement.

Conclusion

In summary, three sets of conclusions can be drawn from this chapter. First, that the Assembly women are viewed as agents of change, because their presence and contributions have transformed Welsh politics and have made the Assembly a unique political institution in terms of the issues and concerns addressed, the way in which they are raised and discussed in the Chamber debates and in cross-party committees. As some interviewees pointed out, the large proportion of women's representation in the Assembly and within the Welsh Government has changed in some ways the nature of the institution and the interests and the tone of some of the debates.

Unsurprisingly, just as was found in previous studies, due to different experiences, women AMs tend to make a priority of certain issues more than do their male colleagues, issues such as health, education, childcare, equality and child poverty (Okin 1990; Norris 1996; Ross 2002a; Ross 2002b; Ross 2002c; Childs 2004; Chaney and Fevre 2002; Chaney 2002; Chaney 2004; Chaney 2006; Ye 2007). These issue concerns tend to make female AMs more connected with the private sphere than male AMs, but their different experiences positively affect how they tackle policy issues.

Some interviewed AMs also suggested that the difference that women AMs have made in the Assembly is not because of their gender, but because of individual AMs' interests and priorities that they had had before they became an AM. In addition, there was a wide acknowledgement during the interviews that female politicians often struggle to balance their family lives with their careers as people's representatives much more than their male counterparts. This echoes the findings of previous research (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Thomas 1994; Burrell 1994; Darcy *et al.* 1994; Witt *et al.* 1994; Watson *et al.* 2005; van Zoonen 2000).

This leads to the second conclusion, relating to the questions of why there were fewer women elected into the last two Assemblies and what the subsequent implications were. One of the possible explanations is that women often do not put themselves forwards for

selection for elections. Family responsibilities or concerns are the primary reason. However, in regard to the decline in the number of women AMs in recent elections, the change of candidate selection rules in the Labour party and Plaid Cymru has had a major impact on candidature. Just as Plaid AM Elin Jones stated above, if the political parties do not keep positive selection processes, what will likely happen is that the political parties will select men. There are other possible explanations for the drop-off in the number of women AMs. For instance, some women politicians stood for election, but they were simply defeated; in other cases, some sitting AMs were just no longer seeking re-election and their successors became men. This indicates that Welsh politics is still a male domain if there are not enough measures to help women to get elected. However, whether the declining situation of women's representation has any significance or not, women AMs remain a considerable percentage of the current Assembly (25 out of the 60 seats are held by women). Most importantly, as the Cardiff West Labour AM, Mark Drakeford, suggested, the current Assembly, to a certain extent, is more diverse than any previous ones, because it has more AMs from ethnic groups.

Finally, the high level of female representation in the Assembly since the legislature was first established has, to a marked degree, affected the media's perception of women AMs. In recent years, the Welsh press, especially the *Western Mail*, has tended to publish articles acknowledging women AMs' contributions and achievements more frequently than it previously did. As mentioned in previous chapters, women AMs did receive some negative and sexist coverage during the 2007 election period, but in general there was almost no perceived bias against women AMs in the examined routine coverage period between December 2008 and February 2009. More positive coverage of women AMs recently might be credited to the large proportion of women in the Assembly since the creation of the institution. It seems that the Welsh press is catching up with the reality of the influx of women politicians, and the culture of journalism has gradually been changed over time by the progress of positive discrimination of ensuring equal female representation in the Assembly.

Wales elected its first female party leader in December, 2008. This is not only of great

significance in Welsh political history, but it also highlights women's role in Welsh politics. Interestingly, the *Western Mail* again has been shown to be the first newspaper to shed positive light on Assembly women. However, most of these articles were written by one journalist, the newspaper's then Senedd correspondent and now political editor, David Williamson. Therefore, one journalist's writing style and possibly his own personal views might direct the content of the press coverage of the Lib Dem leadership election and Assembly women. Nonetheless, there have only been a limited number of political journalists in the Welsh press, and Mr. Williamson is the current *Western Mail's* political editor.

It is also worth noting what is evidenced by some of the explicit examples given by the interviewees: the Conservative AMs clearly favoured the liberal feminist approach, such as not having any favourable treatment, and having a mixture of men and women participating in the political process at all existing aspects.

In the following chapter, an overall picture of this research project will be outlined: what has been investigated, and what has been learned. It will provide a thorough summation of what is new, what we know now and what may still be lacking in our understanding of the role of the Welsh press in affecting the representations of women AMs. It will also offer some insights into future research topics.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusions

Overview

This research project is a thorough examination of the representation of Assembly women in the Welsh newspapers. Almost half of the 60 seats in the Welsh Assembly⁸¹ have been gained by women in each election since the institution was founded in 1999. As a result, there may have been an expectation that traditional gender-biased media coverage would cease. Previous academic studies have shown that clear gender biases existed in media reporting of female politicians. The purpose of this research has been to establish the extent of gender-biased reporting in the Welsh press when Assembly Members are covered.

This research is a detailed and comparative study of how 12 Welsh English-language newspapers portrayed male and female AMs during the third Assembly election period from March to May 2007 and during the routine press coverage period between December 2008 and February 2009⁸². The research also compares coverage of AMs in the Welsh national newspapers with the local newspapers⁸³. It sets out to answer a number of questions concerning the difference in reporting male and female AMs, and extensive analysis of over 3000 newspaper articles in approximately 1000 editions has been accomplished to answer these questions and to establish the extent and nature of gender bias during the two three-month periods studied. It draws on content and discourse analyses of the press coverage of the AMs. It is also based on data generated by in-depth interviews with 28 AMs from the current Assembly in 2011 and early 2012. The interview participants' personal experiences with the Welsh press and their thoughts on how the media portray the Assembly and themselves are also an important part of this study.

⁸¹ In 1999, the first Assembly elected 25 women AMs. Four years later, the 2003 Assembly election produced a world record, an equal number of men and women were elected, which became a majority of women after the June 2006 by-election (31/29). 28 women were elected in the 2007 election and 25 in 2011.

⁸² See detailed discussion of why these two periods were chosen in the Methodology Chapter, p57.

⁸³ See why a comparative study of the Welsh national and local press was conducted in Chapter 3, p61.

The research shows that women AMs do not enjoy an equal voice with their male counterparts in the Welsh press, in spite of the fact that there has been relatively equal participation of women in the Assembly since its creation. However, Welsh press coverage of Assembly women has undergone a noticeable change in recent years, but not enough to achieve equity of all existing perspectives and levels with male AMs, such as the same level of visibility. In-depth analysis of the 2007 election period coverage demonstrates “business as usual” in regard to gender bias in the press, even though 31 out of 60 AMs were women in the second Assembly. But the face-to-face interviews conducted four years later, after the artificial stimulus of affirmative action which aided more women to be elected had ceased, reveal that press reporting was more balanced in criticism, and gender bias was no longer seen as an issue by most AMs interviewed.

With regard to gender balance, the Welsh Assembly is a unique and deliberate creation, compared to other political institutions, especially to those devolved legislatures, such as the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly. I hope that my study of the gender-balanced Welsh Assembly can provide broader insights into other political establishments which have similar achievements regarding the level of female representation, as well as those that lack women representatives.

Achieving a gender balance in the Assembly and within the Welsh Government has brought some significant changes. First, Assembly women play an important role in present day Welsh political life. They are often seen as agents of change, not only because their presence and contributions have made the Assembly a unique legislature, but also because they have helped to transform the nature of contemporary Welsh politics, when it comes to issues raised and the tone of Chamber debates and cross-party committees. Second, according to several interviewed AMs, the Assembly is a far more female-friendly political institution than male-dominated ones, such as the British Parliament in Westminster. Third, the high level of female presence in the Assembly sends out a message to younger women, which inspires and encourages them to become involved in politics and even to run for office at national level. This observation is based

on some of my younger interview participants' personal experiences. However, this needs to be further verified in future research to see whether women really need to be given special support in order to come forward for political office at the local government level. Finally, in recent years, women AMs have enjoyed more positive press coverage than their female counterparts in the Westminster Parliament. It can be concluded that the positive change in the media depictions of women AMs may be partly as a result of the notable female presence since the very beginning of the Assembly.

The fact that a large number of women were elected into the Assembly in the first place was due to the two major Welsh political parties' election rules that favoured women: Labour party's all-women shortlists and Plaid Cymru's policy of reserving the top places for women on its five regional lists. But, this was followed by an antagonist attitude towards these candidate selection policies within the two parties. Therefore, the media coverage of the women AMs in the early days of the Assembly was somewhat affected by the way some women were elected. Since the creation of the institution, the general gender parity in the Assembly has gradually been accepted as a norm. Besides, even after positive discrimination policies were abolished by both parties before the 2011 Assembly election, there were still as many female AMs elected as in 1999. Consequently, more recently, reports and remarks of a positive, complimentary and praising tone towards female AMs are often found both in the Welsh press coverage and in colleagues' perception of women politicians.

This concluding chapter now summarises what I have observed, discovered and detailed in the previous main chapters.

Findings and Discussions

Seven sets of conclusions have emerged from analyses of the collected 3065 news articles and interview data. First of all, one of the most important findings is that the Assembly and its AMs were not intensively and extensively covered by the Welsh press during the two selected periods; in fact the coverage was fairly thin and limited. This study

examined the exact extent of Assembly and AM press coverage that occurred during these two periods studied. This is supported by data generated from the analysis of the total number of copies of the newspapers, the average number of relative articles each issue printed, the length of the news articles, and the space occupied by and the location of each of these articles and their accompanying images within the newspaper. The data are also complementary to previous research. For instance, Thomas *et al.* (2004a; 2004b; 2004c), Jeffery (2004), Thomas (2006) and Ye (2007) found that the Welsh media paid little attention to the Assembly elections, but they did not demonstrate exactly how little this coverage actually was.

It is true that the majority of Welsh people do not read the Welsh national newspapers (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Thomas *et al.* 2004b; Thomas 2006). For those who do read the Welsh newspapers, far more people read their local newspapers than they do the national ones, such as the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post*. The Welsh press coverage of the Assembly as a whole was not substantial, and the local press coverage was particularly limited. Even though the *Western Mail* stood out in giving more extensive and intensive coverage to the Assembly, its readership is low and its circulation is behind even that of the *South Wales Evening Post*, a local newspaper based in Swansea. Moreover, analytical coverage of the Assembly activities in the *Western Mail* has been shown to be lacking. This may be partly the result of only a small proportion of the Welsh population reading the *Western Mail* and the Welsh newspapers generally, and partly because the majority of the public is not particularly interested in Welsh politics. After all, the newspapers have to sell to be profitable, so this likely forces the press to devote more space to other topics besides politics, such as sports and celebrity culture. It is widely acknowledged that more people in Wales read the London-based British national newspapers than read the Welsh ones (Thomas *et al.* 2004a; Thomas 2006). A prevailing view among the AMs that were interviewed is that the UK national media give almost zero attention to devolved Welsh politics. This suggests that more substantial and analytical coverage of Welsh politics is needed both in the Welsh national and local newspapers. This is because the press still plays an important part in a democracy in providing information for the public, to shape its understanding of citizenship, and to encourage its participation in political processes,

such as elections⁸⁴. In addition, the UK's national media coverage of the Assembly seems more problematic than that of the Welsh press. Therefore, I would argue that an urgent improvement is needed in the way that the UK national media cover the Assembly and Welsh politics, if the media and their readers or audiences are to play a fuller role in democracy.

The second major set of conclusions is that there were obvious differences in the press coverage of male and female AMs. Even though equality of political representation of men and women has almost been achieved in the Assembly, women AMs were still far less visible in the Welsh press as a whole, especially in the Welsh national press. This reflects what numerous previous researchers have found: women politicians are less visible in the media than are their male counterparts. However, content analysis data demonstrate that the main press coverage of the Assembly was heavily concentrated on the four political party leaders and the high-profile Ministers. Both content analysis data and interviewed AMs' opinions suggest that the Welsh press tended to report those Ministers more because of their ministerial roles in the Assembly Government, regardless of their gender. Furthermore, all four party leaders in the Assembly were male until the election of the first female leader, Kirsty Williams of the Lib Dems, on 8th December, 2008. However, in the local newspapers, despite there being very little coverage of the Assembly, they paid more attention to their local AMs than party leaders, regardless of their local AMs' gender. As Jackson (1971) noted, the local community leaders' views often had great effect on the content of their local newspapers. Apart from the national newspapers, the *Evening Leader* and *Penarth Times* (the local newspapers) provided special columns, such as "Scribblings from the Senedd" and "News from the Assembly", for AMs to voice their concerns and to express their views. Unsurprisingly, the local AMs were often given the most press coverage by the newspapers that are based in their ridings.

Third, no overtly sexist coverage of Assembly women was found during the two studied

⁸⁴ Even though much of the Welsh public does not read the Welsh newspapers, as mentioned in the Introduction chapter, the Welsh press still plays a vital role in the Welsh political landscape for at least three important reasons. See detailed discussion in p8.

periods. But stories on male AMs were more likely to be placed in business sections than those on females, and articles on women AMs were more likely to be placed in style sections than those on males. This suggests that stereotypical depictions of men and women in politics are still common in the Welsh press, and that women AMs may be treated less seriously than males. In addition, some interviewed female AMs believed that their voices were heard both in the Senedd debating Chamber and in the media just as often as some of their male colleagues were. Some AMs, both men and women, felt that their voices were only heard occasionally. That was because the issues they raised were often neglected by the Welsh press. Regarding the role of women politicians in the public sphere, it was apparent that effective female AMs tended to have their voices heard by the Welsh press. For example, high-profile women, such as Edwina Hart, Elin Jones, Jane Davidson and Helen Mary Jones, frequently received coverage.

However, several interviewed AMs' viewpoints reflected what a number of researchers noted: women politicians have to struggle to balance their family lives and their careers much more than do men (Dodson and Carroll 1991; Thomas 1994; Burrell 1994; Darcy *et al.* 1994; Witt *et al.* 1994; Watson *et al.* 2005; van Zoonen 2000). This, to a certain extent, demonstrates that women politicians in contemporary times are still more affected by their responsibilities in the private sphere than are their male counterparts, even in the gender-balanced Assembly. Most of the interviewees believed that Assembly women prioritised certain issues, such as health, education, child related issues and equality. Female AMs' experiences perhaps affect the way in which they tackle policy issues positively as evidenced by the explicit examples given by the interviewed AMs. However, concentrating too much on private sphere issues is often perceived as a negative characteristic which affects their ability to participate in politics in the public sphere. Nonetheless, interestingly, when the comments on AMs from others in the articles were examined, female AMs were given a much greater percentage of positive remarks and a much smaller percentage of negative remarks than were male AMs.

The fourth important finding is that even though there were no notable prejudices against Assembly women in the Welsh press, certain reports did shed some negative light on

them. For example, the *Western Mail's* exercise of marking all sitting AMs out of 10 before the 2007 Assembly election carried a lot of negativity, and the piece that was published by the same newspaper featuring the former Conservative AM Laura Anne Jones and the other five celebrity Welsh bachelorettes after Prince William broke up with his then girlfriend Kate Middleton was blatantly flippant (*Western Mail* 17th April, 2007:6-7). This echoes what other researchers have found (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000). However, support in my research is limited for some of the accusations of discrimination against women and marginalisation that have often been made against the media, and no strong evidence suggests that the *Western Mail* was particularly anti-women during the two studied periods.

However, photos of male AMs were treated in a somewhat more positive and respectful manner than their female colleagues when the angles of camera shots were examined. Female AMs were photographed in a more “feminine” way, while their male colleagues were represented in more “masculine” scenes. For example, a larger number of male AMs were pictured in rural, office, Senedd, factory and construction scenes, and far more photos of women AMs were taken in arts and recreation events. It is worth noting that the numbers of these images are small compared to the total number of the collected articles. Therefore, the different treatment that AMs received based on image and gender is not of great significance. In short, the press coverage is still in favour of the male AMs and is still somewhat sexist, but the bias is more subtle and less obvious than in the early days of the Assembly.

This leads to the fifth main conclusion. Apart from the aforementioned negative coverage that female AMs received, the Welsh press did treat Assembly women less seriously than their male colleagues in the past in terms of giving them more sexist and negative attention. This claim is also based on the Lib Dem leader Kirsty Williams' and Plaid AM Bethan Jenkins' personal experiences. However, by 2012, the Welsh press coverage of Assembly women was not commonly seen as problematic by the majority of the interviewed AMs. Both male and female AMs believed that sexist coverage has not been really noticeable in Welsh newspapers in recent years. Unsurprisingly, several women

AMs noted that women MPs in the British Parliament have to deal with more sexist attention from the UK national media than do Assembly women. This claim on media coverage of women MPs is also evidenced by Ross and Sreberny's study (2000). As mentioned, Kirsty Williams and Bethan Jenkins spoke of some negative press attention they received in their earlier days at the Assembly. Their experiences reflect what other researchers have found: if a story is trivial or sounds "less *realpolitik*" or sounds "sexier", women politicians are more likely to be in the spotlight (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn and Gordon 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000). It also signals a message that when considering careers and appearances, women politicians are often measured against the view that beauty can never be successfully matched with brains (Ross and Sreberny 2000). Nevertheless, the large number of female AMs in the establishment since its creation has somewhat affected the media's perception of Assembly women. In recent years the Welsh press, especially the *Western Mail*, has published articles acknowledging women AMs' collective contributions more frequently than it did previously. Women AMs did receive negative and prejudiced coverage during the 2007 election period, but there was almost no perceived bias against them during the second studied period from December 2008 to February 2009.

The sixth set of conclusions is that a few points emerged from the analyses which are different in substantive theme from the other sets of conclusions. First, Carroll and Schreiber (1997) suggested that the press coverage on women politicians tended to focus on issues related to women more than their male colleagues. However, there was no clear evidence to support that claim in the case of Welsh press coverage of women AMs. The Assembly possessed limited devolved legislative powers over areas such as environment, finance and rural affairs, so the Ministers who were responsible for these areas were often featured in the press. These positions which are not traditionally associated with women, have been held by female AMs. As a result, a greater number of newspaper reports focusing on women AMs were about rural affairs and environment than those on male AMs. Second, male AMs received greater and even more negative coverage on their attire than did their female counterparts in the Welsh press during the two periods studied. Interestingly, Wales' former well-known First Minister Rhodri Morgan was singled out

and was ridiculed on his dress sense on several occasions. This is different from a number of other researchers' findings that female politicians often receive more media attention regarding their appearance and their personal relationships than do male politicians (Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Ross and Sreberny 2000; Witt *et al.* 1994; Greenberg-Lake; Congressional Record 1993). The Welsh press might have received the message that discussing female politicians' attire and personal affairs was not appropriate, because such complaints have been voiced in numerous previous studies. Moreover, there have been a large number of strong female characters in the Assembly, and journalists would now think twice before they reported on female AMs as they did Kirsty Williams a decade ago, for fear of an angry backlash from the women. Furthermore, this might be one of the consequences of particular measures of ensuring equal female participation in the Assembly over a period and that has gradually changed the culture of media reporting on gender and politics in Wales.

The final major conclusion is that as a number of the interview participants pointed out, the most noticeable change in media coverage that occurred since the creation of the Assembly is that increasing numbers of people tend to rely on online and social media, such as Twitter and other micro-blogging platforms, for information. It is significant that AMs can now use Twitter, Facebook and other social media to communicate with their constituents in an environment where conventional mainstream media are relatively weak in their coverage of devolved politics. What is also significant is that AMs' gender seems less relevant in online communication, such as among Facebook friends and their followers on Twitter.

Directions for Future Research

The "shifting ground" of the Welsh newspaper coverage of the Assembly women during the research periods leads to some interesting possibilities for future academic research.

First, this research examined, among other matters, the Lib Dem leadership election in order to gain insight into the Welsh press coverage of the Assembly women. When the

first female party leader was elected in December 2008, it was not only of great significance in Welsh political history, but it also highlighted women's role in Welsh politics. Noticeably, the *Western Mail* shed positive light on this event and published several articles featuring this leadership election. It is worth mentioning that most of these articles were produced by one journalist, the newspaper's then Senedd correspondent and now political editor, David Williamson. As pointed out in the previous chapters, political reporters in any Welsh newspaper are limited both in numbers and in resources. This indicates that a reporting bias might exist: a few journalists' personal views might dominate the newspapers' political and gendered viewpoints, in spite of the fact that press coverage should be directed by the journalistic aim of neutral and objective coverage where personal views are excluded from the news. Nonetheless, Mr. Williamson is, after all, the political editor of the *Western Mail*. In terms of future research, it might be interesting to examine how political news has been reported in the Welsh press from political journalists' point of view; why there has been limited coverage of Welsh politics; and whether Assembly women have been treated differently to Assembly men by them.

Second, it would also be interesting to audit the press coverage of the Labour party leadership contest between October and December 2009, when Edwina Hart stood against Carwyn Jones and Huw Lewis to become the leader of the Welsh Labour party. It would be compelling to do a comparative study of the press coverage of Ms. Hart and her two male opponents. Kirsty Williams was running against a woman for her leadership position, while Ms. Hart was running against two men. What is more, it is possible that there might have been more coverage of women AMs' political contributions both individually and collectively in 2012. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the coverage of the Plaid Cymru leadership election, when Leanne Wood became the second female party leader in the Assembly on 15th March, 2012.

Third, even though the pendulum of gender equality in Welsh politics was given an artificial push by the candidate selection policies of the Labour party and Plaid Cymru for just a few years, the effect has been to equalise the number of men and women in the Assembly, and this equal representation still persists after the stimulation has ceased. As

noted above, although these policies were dismantled by both political parties before the 2011 Assembly election, there were still as many female AMs elected as in 1999 when the policies were applied. I would argue that the political culture in the legislature has shifted to become cooperative rather than assertive, competitive and aggressive – as seen in male dominated Parliaments. Moreover, I would suggest that the press has slowly changed its ways of perceiving and reporting on women after the shift in gender balance, now focusing on the capabilities, strengths and contributions of women AMs.

Furthermore, future study is required on a number of other issues – for example: to establish whether the anecdotal evidence of the more recent period, concerning balanced and complex press coverage because of the general gender parity, is in fact true; the extent to which other forms of media coverage of politics, other than the press, are gender-biased; the extent to which newspapers, in spite of decreasing circulation, still “lead” opinion, through newspapers themselves, the websites they generate, the social media which examine the press to ascertain newsworthiness and start discussions and so forth; and the nature of gender bias in reporting Members of the Scottish Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly and the UK Parliament.

Finally, other legislatures could take advantage of the findings in this research, to propose short periods of affirmative action to ensure gender balance. The benefits of such a rebalancing seem evident from this study, but would need further verification in future studies.

Conclusion

Whether or not there is any significance in the decline in the number of women AMs in the recent Assemblies, women remain at a high level of political representation in the current Assembly (25 women compared to 35 men). What is more, the present Assembly is more diverse than any previous ones, because it has more AMs from ethnic backgrounds. Most importantly, this comprehensive examination of how the press reports on Assembly women in a geographically focused Wales, sends out a message: when there

are a large number of female politicians in legislatures for a relatively short period of time, more complex media representations of male and female politicians may be observed and the gender issue may gradually become less obvious than before. It also sends a message to the media in general that a fairer and more equal depiction of men and women in politics is one of the requirements for any democracy in today's world.

If a policy is agreed that ensures more women are elected, then the participation of female politicians is gradually normalised over a period. Consequently, it would appear that the political culture changes both in terms of the culture of press reporting on women and in terms of male and female politicians' perception of the role of gender in the political process. This has been articulated through ideological discourses that suggest the differences between the Conservative and the Labour AMs' points of view⁸⁵. However, ultimately they all seem to have experienced some kind of transformation taking place both within the Assembly and in the Welsh press. This is evidenced both in terms of how women politicians are now treated in the Senedd and by the press; and how the nature of debate, consultation and cooperation within the Assembly has shifted over this time period in positive ways following the advent of significant numbers of female politicians.

This study associates with the liberal framework, as liberal feminism stresses women's entitlements to be in politics on the same terms and in the same numbers as men (Lovenduski 2005). Liberal feminism seeks to improve the status of women within the system (Humm 2003) and seeks to change public opinion by formal networks and via changes in legislature, working in the belief that progressive reforms will lead to full equality of women (Kaplan 1992; Boles and Hoeveler 2004). Therefore, this research is aligned with the liberal view of supporting positive discrimination legislation in order to help more women to be elected. However, in terms of methodology applied to analyse the newspaper texts and images, this study does not necessarily take a liberal feminist stand.

⁸⁵ As discussed in Chapter 8, some of the explicit examples given by the Conservative AMs clearly suggest that their view is somewhat aligned with liberal feminist thinking, such as not having any favourable treatment, and having a mixture of men and women participating in the political process. Whereas, some Labour AMs' view indicates a tendency towards radical feminist viewpoint.

Nevertheless, having limited affirmative action in favour of women has resulted in changing the gender balance in the Welsh Assembly, and it has encouraged women's democratic participation in the public sphere. Maybe, therefore, it is important to put the progress noted in this study against a backdrop of a broader culture of introducing policies in other legislatures to ensure gender equality. In the Welsh context, it seems to have changed the culture of how women in politics are reported by the press, and it seems to be having a longer term impact on the culture of journalism, the experiences of female politicians and the attitudes of the public towards women legislators in that women continue to be elected despite the withdrawal of positive discrimination in favour of women.

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Appendix I

Coding Sheet: Quantitative Analysis of Representations of Female Assembly Members in the Welsh Press

Section One

Part I Location and Subject

1. Newspaper:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <i>Western Mail</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>South Wales Echo</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Daily Post</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>South Wales Argus</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>South Wales Evening Post</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Evening Leader</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Wales on Sunday</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Western Telegraph</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Cambrian News</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>Llanelli Star</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>North Wales Pioneer</i> <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Penarth Times</i> <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Name of Journalist: _____

(Or Guest Writer (Member of the Public)/Guest Writer (AM)/Guest Writer (Other Politician in General)/Two or More Reporters/Anonymous)

3. Journalist's Main Specialism:

- Political Editor Other Editor Political Reporter Education Reporter
Health Reporter Finance Reporter Leisure & Entertainment Reporter
Science Reporter Crime Reporter Chief Reporter General Reporter
Environment Reporter Columnist Feature Writer None
Welsh Affairs Correspondent

4. Time Period of the Story:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| March 2007 <input type="checkbox"/> | April 2007 <input type="checkbox"/> | May 2007 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| December 2008 <input type="checkbox"/> | January 2009 <input type="checkbox"/> | February 2009 <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. Location of the Story:

- Front Page Feature Article Opinion Piece/Editorial
News Business Section Review Letters
News Brief Leisure & Entertainment Political Advertising
Elsewhere (Specify) _____

6. Placement of the Story:

FP, Top FP, Middle FP, Bottom FP, Top Corner
 FP, Middle Edge FP, Bottom Corner IP, Top IP, Middle
 IP, Bottom IP, Top Corner IP, Middle Edge IP, Bottom Corner
 IP, 1 or More FP, Full Page Number _____

7. Space the Story Takes up on a Page, Plus Visuals:

FP, Full or 1 FP, 1/2 – 2/3 FP, 1/3 FP, 1/4 FP, 1/5
 FP, Notice/In Brief FP, Less than 1/5 IP, Full or 1 IP, 1/2
 IP, 1/3 IP, 1/4 IP, 1/5 IP, Notice/In Brief IP, 3/5 – 2/3
 IP, Less than 1/5 IP, 3/2 or More IP, 2 FP+ IP (continue on), 2/3
 FP+ IP (continue on), Full or more FP+ IP (continue on), 1/2 IP, 2/5
 FP+ IP (continue on), 1/3 FP+ IP (continue on), 1/4 IP, 5/4
 IP, 3/4 – 4/5 Other (Specify) _____

8. Headline:

AM Mentioned by Name/Title AM Mentioned AM Not Mentioned

9. Story Primarily Focuses on AM(s):

Yes No

10. Name of the Main Focus AM: _____

11. Gender of the Main Focus AM:

Male Female N/A

12. Subject of the Story:

General Election Coalition Talks Lib Dem Leadership Election
 The Welsh Assembly Public Reaction Election/Opinion Poll
 Plaid's Policies Tory's Policies Labour's Policies
 Lib Dem's Policies Labour Leadership Election First Minister Stepping Down
 NHS & Hospital Matters/Health Individual Healthcare Education
 Climate Change & Environmental Issues Childcare Energy & Resources
 Public Construction & Housing Transportation Welsh Language & Heritage
 City Planning Credit Crunch & Economy Crisis iPod Gate
 Employment & Unemployment Poverty & Child Abuse Equality
 Crime/Social Justice/Policing Leisure & Entertainment Office Expenses
 Voluntary Work & Charity Economic Development Constituency Surgery
 Communication & Information Services Comments on People Devolution
 Other (Specify) _____

13. Length of Story in Paragraphs:

1-2 3-6 7-12 13+

14. Length of Story in Words:

0-100 (Section One Only) More than 100 Words (Sections One & Two)

Part II Image: Cartoon/Photo

15. Is the story accompanied by an image?

Yes No

16. Is the image a portrait of an AM? (See Code Book **Appendix II**)

Yes Group Photo A Group Photo B Group Photo C
Group Photo D Group Photo E Group Photo F No or N/A

17. Name of the AM in the Picture/the Most Dominant Picture: _____

18. Gender of AM in the Picture/the Most Prominent Image:

Male Female Both (Group Photo) N/A

19. The Most Prominent Image Displayed:

AM(s) Welsh Labour Leader Plaid Cymru Leader
Welsh Tory Leader Welsh Lib Dem Leader Explanatory Diagram
Other Politician(s) Election Logo Journalist Celebrity
Member(s) of the Public Constituency Scene Election scene
Group Photo Hospital/Ambulance Welsh Lib Dem Leader Williams
The Senedd N/A Other (Specify) _____

20. Size of the AM Portrait Displayed:

Similar Size as the Article Big than the Article's Size
1/2 of the Article's Size 1/3 of the Article's Size 1/4 of the Article's Size
1/5 of the Article's Size Less than 1/5 of the Article's Size Group Photo
N/A

21. Form of the AM Portrait Displayed:

Close-up Office Background Senedd Background
Home background Casual Scene Group Photo N/A

Factory/Construction Scene Rural Background (eg Farm; Market)
Conference & Office-based Constituency Meeting School Scene
Cartoon Arts & Recreation Event

22. Angle of the Camera of the AM Portrait Displayed:

Face Close-up Close-up Distant Approach High Angle Shot
Low Angle Shot Group Photo N/A

Section Two

Part I News Article

23. Main Subject on Election Coverage:

AMs'/Candidates' Profiles AMs' Contributions AMs'/Candidates' Policies
Comments on Other Party's/Parties' Policies Comments on Politicians
Comments on the Election Personal Statement Public Reaction
Election Poll Coalition Talks Plaid's Policies Tory's Policies
Labour's Policies Lib Dem's Policies Impact on the Public N/A
Other (Specify) _____

24. Party of the Main Focus AM:

Labour Plaid Cymru Conservatives Liberal Democrats
Independent Forward Wales N/A

25. Subject of the Main Focus AM:

In-depth Portrait Contributions Policies Impact on the Public
Comments on Other Party's Policies Comments on Other Politicians
Comments on the Election Comments on Public Services Speech
Personal Behaviour Personal Interests Constituency Surgery in General
N/A Office Expenses Other (Specify) _____

26. Personalised Aspects of the Main Focus AM:

Appearance Dresses Personal Interests (e.g. Hobbies) Policies
Relationship with Other Political Parties Relationship within Political Party
Relationship with Individuals Relationship with the Public
Relationship with Family N/A Other (Specify) _____

27. Main Policy Area the Main Focus AM Referring to:

Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry & Rural Development

Ancient Monument & Historic Buildings Education & Training
Culture, Tourism, Sport, Recreation & Communications Environment
Economic Development & Employment Fire & Rescue Services
Housing, Highways & Transport Local Government & Public Administration
Social Welfare Town & Country Training Water Services & Flood Defence
Welsh Identity & Welsh Language Equality Coalition Social Justice
Energy & Resources Devolution Food & Health Services N/A
Other (Specify) _____

28. Comments on the Main Focus AM:

Positive Negative Neutral Mixed N/A

29. Gender of the Second Main Focus AM:

Male Female N/A

30. Name of the Second Main Focus AM: _____

31. Party of the Second Main Focus AM:

Labour Plaid Cymru Conservatives Liberal Democrats
Independent Forward Wales N/A

32. Personalised Aspects of the Second Main Focus AM:

Appearance Dresses Personal Interests (e.g. Hobbies) Policies
Relationship with Other Political Parties Relationship within Political Party
Relationship with Individuals Relationship with the Public
Relationship with Family N/A Other (Specify) _____

33. Main Policy Area the Second Main Focus AM Referring to:

Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry & Rural Development
Ancient Monument & Historic Buildings Education & Training
Culture, Tourism, Sport, Recreation & Communications Environment
Economic Development & Employment Fire & Rescue Services
Housing, Highways & Transport Local Government & Public Administration
Social Welfare Town & Country Training Water Services & Flood Defence
Welsh Identity & Welsh Language Equality Coalition Social Justice
Energy & Resources Devolution Food & Health Services N/A
Other (Specify) _____

34. Comments on the Second Main Focus AM:

Positive Negative Neutral Mixed N/A

35. Gender of the Third Main Focus AM:

Male Female N/A

36. Name of the Third Main Focus AM: _____

37. Party of the Third Main Focus AM:

Labour Plaid Cymru Conservatives Liberal Democrats
Independent Forward Wales N/A

38. Personalised Aspects of the Third Main Focus AM:

Appearance Dresses Personal Interests (e.g. Hobbies) Policies
Relationship with Other Political Parties Relationship within Political Party
Relationship with Individuals Relationship with the Public
Relationship with Family N/A Other (Specify) _____

39. Main Policy Area the Third Main Focus AM Referring to:

Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry & Rural Development
Ancient Monument & Historic Buildings Education & Training
Culture, Tourism, Sport, Recreation & Communications Environment
Economic Development & Employment Fire & Rescue Services
Housing, Highways & Transport Local Government & Public Administration
Social Welfare Town & Country Training Water Services & Flood Defence
Welsh Identity & Welsh Language Equality Coalition Social Justice
Energy & Resources Devolution Food & Health Services N/A
Other (Specify) _____

40. Comments on the Third Main Focus AM:

Positive Negative Neutral Mixed N/A

Part II Source

41. The Most Important Source:

AM Female AM Male Government Spokesperson Other Politician(s)
Journalists Editor Analyst/Commentator Member(s) of the Public
Assembly Staff Publication Police/Police Spokesperson N/A
NHS Chiefs/Staff Chairman/Chief of a Business/Organisation
Other (Specify) _____

42. The Second Most Important Source:

AM Female AM Male Government Spokesperson Other Politician(s)
Journalists Editor Analyst/Commentator Member(s) of the Public
Assembly Staff Publication Police/Police Spokesperson N/A
NHS Chiefs/Staff Chairman/Chief of a Business/Organisation
Other (Specify) _____

43. Length of Direct/Indirect Main AM Quotes:

0-30 31-50 More than 51 Words N/A

44. Length of Direct/Indirect Additional AM Quotes:

0-30 31-50 More than 51 Words N/A

Notes about the Article _____

Appendix II

Code Book

1. Introduction:

This Code Book contains explanatory notes for the coding sheet (**Appendix I**) which was designed for content analysis of this research project.

A data set of the content analysis process consists of any news item that mentioned any AM who was from the first, second, and third Welsh Assemblies, in the studied 12 newspapers, during an election coverage period between March and May 2007 and a routine coverage period between December 2008 and February 2009. It is also based on all images displayed alongside these articles.

In terms of genre types of the news items, it depends on the story's location in the newspaper. If it was placed under "In Brief" or "News Brief", then the story was categorised as News Brief. Sometimes, to describe the 3065 news items collectively, I have used the phrase "news articles or stories", even though not all news items, such as political ads, are news articles.

Stories which primarily focus on AM(s), the 2007 Welsh national election and coalition negotiations are the main focus of this study. This study only does basic analyses of news items which are less than 100 words in length. The majority of news briefs belong to this category.

If a story is less than 100 words, then it has been only coded under variables in Section One of the coding sheet. Any story is over 100 words, it goes through the entire coding sheet, including Sections One and Two.

2. Name of Journalist (Variable 2):

Names of journalists whose work has been examined in this research:

Martin Shipton	Tomos Livingstone	Matt Withers	David Williamson	
Chris Henwood	Robert Lloyd	Anthony O'Connell	Arthur Williams	
Jason Evans	Mary Vancura	Shaun Greaney	Chantelle Rees	
Laura Davies	Geraint Thomas	Helen Keates	Alexis Burns	
Emma Jones	Allison Thomas-Mears	Ruth Davies	Becky Hotchin	
Lee Day	Anwen Humfrey	Suzannah Hills	Sara Cannon	
Katy Woodhouse	Derek Rees	Kirsty Jones	Jody Houton	Fraser Watson
Rhiannon Llewellyn	Nichole Sarra	Debbie James	Patrick O'Brien	
Norman Williams	Antony Gedge	Sion Morgan	Dylan Davies	
Julie MacNicholls	Lowri Davies	Dave Bradney	Will Grant	Ian Bebb
Phil Tibballs	Tom Simone	Andrew Boyd	David Waddington	Matt Jones
Bethany Bennett	Rachel Mainwaring	Jon Harry	Matthew Aplin	Tim Lewis

Madeleine Brindley	Angharad Mair	Stefan Jarmolowicz	Amy Illingworth
Daniel Davies	Steve Graves	Robin Henry	Hayley Maguire
Iain St. John	Sarah Hulme	Kate Forrester	Laura Jones
Michael Youds	Phil Robinson	Natalie Jones	Garth ApThomas
Darren Evans	Ben Payne	Andy Doyle	Daniel Lombard
Jane Helmich	Rebecca Thomson	Laura Evans	Andy Rutherford
Jon Doel	Hannah Mlatem	Mike Buckingham	Alison Sanders
Ben Frampton	Faye Dickson	Ailsa Chalk	Alex Cinus
Harry Hawkins	David Deans	Kath Skellon	Natalia Crockett
Hana Callard	Liz Perkins	Bede MacGowan	Chris Davies
Gary Baker	Richard Youle	Rob Green	Spencer Feeney
Cathryn Ings	Gareth Davies	Emma Judd	Gill Roberts
Caroline Wheeler	Sion Morgan	Chris Peregrine	Emma Denholm
Alex Brown	Tom Bodden	Andrew Forgrave	Mark Hookham
Ian Parri	Rachel Williams	Alan Jones	Carl Butler
Roland Hughes	David Banks	Eryl Crump	David Jones
Steve Bagnall	Sam Lister	Abbey Roberts	Ed James
Gareth Llewellyn	Martin Williams	Owen Hughes	Sara Thomas
Ronnie Parry	Paul Scott	David Simister	Greg Tindle
Gareth Rogers	Gavin O'Connor	Gerry Holt	Abby Alford
Ben Glaze	Moira Sharkey	Mark Stead	Katie Norman
Dan O'Neill	Jackie Bow	Kathryn Williams	Jonathan Evans
Aled Blake	Ian Caleb	Hayley McMillan	Sarah Miloudi
Andrew Bagnell	Clare Hutchinson	Paul Rowland	Abbie Wightwick
Steve Dube	Chris Jones	Tryst Williams	Catherine Jones
Denis Balsom	Rin Simpson	Steve Brooks	Rhodri Clark
Emma Gunby	Sion Barry	Emily Woodrow	Mike Jones
Darren Devine	Guest Writer (Member of the Public)	Guest Writer (AM)	
Ben Wright	Guest Writer (Other Politician in General)	Two or More Reporters	Anonymous

Two or More Reporters: 1) An article was written by two or more reporters; 2) An article is about candidates' personal statements during election campaign period, including AMs.

Member(s) of the Public: this can be a professor/a researcher/an expert from a university/a school; young people and school children; civil servants other than politicians; a small business/organisation's spokesperson.

Guest Writer AM: If the article is written by an AM in first person, then the AM is the main focus. The main source is the AM. This is different from those letters, opinion pieces/editorials which are written by journalists or others. See notes on sources: Letters, editorials etc. do not quote others directly or indirectly, but merely the writers' own opinions. Those news articles are treated as unsourced.

3. Journalist's Main Specialism (Variable 3):

If an article is written by more than one journalist, then only the first journalist's specialism is taken into consideration.

- 1) **Political Reporter** includes Council Correspondent; Parliamentary Correspondent; Senedd Correspondent.
- 2) **Other Editors** include Rural Affairs Editor; News Editor; Acting News Editor; Magazine Editor; Health Editor; Business Editor etc.
- 3) **Finance Reporter** includes Business Correspondent;
- 4) **General Reporter** means other than the mentioned reporter titles on the list. This includes Senior Reporter.

4. **Location of the Story** (Variable 5):

The measurements under this variable very much depend on where the items were published by the newspapers. For instance, if an article was placed under the label “News” in the paper, it was categorised as News (whether it is a feature article or not). **News** means any news which excludes News Briefs, and this also includes the news about international affairs.

News Brief: articles that appear under the title “News Brief”; articles that have less than 100 words; news stories that take up less than 1/12 space of the newspaper.

5. **Placement of the Story** (Variable 6):

FP stands for front page; **IP** stands for inside page.

There are articles which start from the front page and extend to one or more inside pages. In these cases, only the part which is on the front page is considered under this variable.

6. **Space the Story Takes up on a Page, Plus Visuals** (Variable 7):

Similar to Variable 6, here **FP** stands for front page; **IP** stands for inside page.

Sometimes an article along with its accompanied image(s) does not take up the exact space that the measurements described under this variable. Therefore, the closest measurement is chosen.

7. **Length of Story in Paragraphs** (Variable 13):

This variable does not exactly reflect the length of the article, because it depends on the wordage of every single paragraph. However, if it is combined with other variables, e.g. Variable 7 (Space the Story Takes up on a Page, Plus Visuals) in the coding sheet, it does signal a sense of importance of the story.

It is common that paragraphs in news articles are rather short; sometimes they only contain one or two sentences. Due to the large number of news items for this study, the question of how long paragraphs exactly are in different newspapers was not considered. For the same reason, there are only two measurements for word count (Variable 14): less than 100 words and over 100 words.

8. Story Primarily Focuses on AM(s) (Variable 9):

Yes: The article is a description of the AM's profile, personal interests, contributions, and so on

No: 1) AM was just mentioned or just quoted in the article;

2) This also includes the articles that feature comments of an AM on Assembly or constituency matters.

9. Main Focus AM:

1) If the report is based on interviews with AMs, and the interviewees are given similar attention or they produce similar wordage, the main focus refers to the interviewee who is given the most wordage; the second main focus refers to the one who is given the second most wordage; the third main focus refers to the one who is given the third most wordage.

2) If the report is rather short, or AMs are merely mentioned a couple of times in the article, then the main focus refers to the first mentioned AM; the second main focus means the second mentioned AM; the third main focus likewise.

3) If the article is about other people's opinions of a politician, and the politician himself/herself doesn't express any views, then the politician is still the main focus.

10. A list of AMs that were reported by the studied press, who were from the first, second and third Welsh Assemblies:

Rhodri Morgan Ieuan Wyn Jones Nick Bourne Mike German
Kirsty Williams Carwyn Jones Jenny Randerson Dafydd Elis-Thomas
Edwina Hart Brian Gibbons Helen Mary Jones Jane Davidson
Jonathan Morgan Leighton Andrews Peter Black Alun Ffred Jones
Janet Ryder Leanne Wood Nerys Evans Bethan Jenkins Elin Jones
Jane Hutt Joyce Watson Dafydd Wigley Lesley Griffiths John Griffiths
Eleanor Burnham Gareth Jones Huw Lewis Dai Lloyd Val Lloyd
David Melding Darren Millar Trish Law Christine Chapman
Mohammad Asghar Lorraine Barrett Rosemary Butler Alun Cairns
Jeff Cuthbert Alun Davies Andrew Davies Angela Burns
Andrew RT Davies Jocelyn Davies Paul Davies Chris Franks
William Graham Janice Gregory Mick Bates Brynle Williams
Mark Isherwood Irene James Ann Jones Sandy Mewies
Lynne Neagle Nick Ramsay Carl Sargeant Karen Sinclair
Gwenda Thomas Rhodri Glyn Thomas Denise Idris Jones Tamsin Dunwoody
Ron Davies Peter Law Sue Essex Christine Gwyther David Jones
Alun Pugh John Marek Tom Middlehurst Alison Halford Peter Rogers
Brian Hancock Richard Edwards Geraint Davies Delyth Evans
Alun Michael Cynog Dafis Glyn Davies Lisa Francis Owen John Thomas
Laura Anne Jones Rod Richards Pauline Jarman Phil Williams
Catherine Thomas David Davies Janet Davies Christine Humphries

If an article only mentioned AM but not by name (e.g. one male Labour AM), then the name of the main focused AM will be categorised as N/A.

If an article mentioned AMs collectively, but did not specifically point out which AM, then the article is not taken into consideration in this research.

11. **Subject of the Story** (Variable 12):

- 1) If a story is about a party's policies, and it is not about: NHS & Hospital; Matters/Health; Individual Healthcare; Education; Climate Change & Environmental Issues; Childcare; Energy & Resources; Public Construction; Transportation; Welsh Language & Heritage; City Planning; Credit Crunch & Economy Crisis; Employment; Poverty & Child Abuse; Equality; Crime/Social Justice/Policing; Leisure & Entertainment; Economic Development, then it is under Plaid's Policies; Tory's Policies; Labour's Policies; Lib Dem's Policies measurements.
- 2) If a story is about the 2007 Assembly election, but its focus is other than Plaid's Policies; Tory's Policies; Labour's Policies; Lib Dem's Policies; Election Poll; it belongs to the General Election measurement.
- 3) **Public Reaction:** Public opinion on elections/other matters.
- 4) **Coalition Talks:** This mainly refers to the stories which focused on coalition talks after the 2007 Welsh Assembly election.
- 5) **Constituency Surgery:** This measurement includes constituency surgery events; as well as those adverts about an AM's surgery.
- 6) **Labour Leadership Election:** Rhodri Morgan was standing down and other politicians' reactions and other events are noted here.
First Minister Stepping Down: Articles mainly focus on Rhodri Morgan.
- 7) **Lib Dem Leadership Election:** Articles which appeared between December 2008 and January 2009 and focused on the leadership contest between Jenny Randerson and Kirsty Williams in the Welsh Lib Dem party.
- 8) **iPod Gate:** Nick Bourne's office expense claim on his iPod and other things, along with his fellow AM Alun Cairns; except for this, stories on AM expenses are coded under the **Office Expenses** measurement.
- 9) **The Welsh Assembly:** Stories on the Assembly in general; and articles which AMs are also the main concerns.
- 10) **Comments on People:** An article is an in-depth portrait of a politician or a celebrity or a member of the public in general. Usually, a few or several people comment on him/her. Eg. An obituary or colleagues/friends' comments on a retired someone, but mostly these news stories are comments on politicians.

12. Image(s):

- 1) There can be more than one image displayed alongside the article, especially during the election period. Sometimes the first displayed image is not the most prominent one. If the images are similar sizes, the most prominent image means the first one.
- 2) If there is more than one image of an AM, then only the first/most prominent AM image is taken into consideration.

- 3) Group photo: AM(s) with other politician(s) or member(s) of the public. If the group photo is a picture of one AM with other politicians or members of the public, then name and gender of the pictured AM are still identifiable. These group photos are treated as portraits of AM. See detailed explanations in the following variables.

13. Is the image a portrait of an AM? (Variable 16)

The main intention of this variable is to find out how many images the Welsh press used are photos of AMs. The group photos are further divided in order to find out whether male AMs are more often photographed with others than female AMs, as follows:

Yes Group Photo A Group Photo B Group Photo C
 Group Photo D Group Photo E Group Photo F No or N/A

Notes:

- Group Photo A (AM Male with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)
- Group Photo B (AM Female with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)
- Group Photo C (AMs: Same Gender)
- Group Photo D (AMs: Both Genders)
- Group Photo E (AMs Same Gender with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)
- Group Photo F (AMs Both Genders with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)

14. Name of the AM in the Picture/the Most Dominant Picture (Variable 17):

- 1) If there is no image accompanied by the article, then it is categorised as **N/A**
- 2) **Group Photo:** AMs or AMs with Other Politicians or Members of the Public
 If it is one AM with others in the picture, the name of the AM is still identifiable.

15. Gender of AM in the Picture/the Most Prominent Image (Variable 18):

This variable was mainly used to find out whether photos of male AMs were more frequently printed than those of females by the Welsh press.

Male Female Both (Group Photo) N/A

- 1) **Group Photo** (AMs: Both Genders; AMs Both Genders with Other Politicians or Members of the Public)
- 2) If there is more than one AM in the picture of the same gender, the gender of the AMs is still identifiable or identified.

16. The Most Prominent Image Displayed (Variable 19):

- 1) Here **Group Photo** means any image of an AM (this includes party leaders) or AMs with Other Politicians or Members of the Public.

- 2) **Welsh Lib Dem Leader:** Before 8th December, 2008, it was Mike German; since the party leader election, it has been Kirsty Williams. Therefore, there are separate measurements for the two Welsh Lib Dem party leaders under this variable.
- 3) Carwyn Jones was categorised as an AM since he hadn't been elected the Labour party leader during the two studied periods. As for other former leaders of different parties, they are all treated as AMs.
- 4) **Other Politicians:** If a photo is other politician(s) with member(s) of the public, then the photo is still coded under this measurement.
- 5) **Other:** Other than those photos which can be categorised under the mentioned measurements under this variable. Mostly, they are newspaper logos/pictures of animals/pictures of a part of a newspaper/lab objects etc.

17. **Size of the AM Portrait Displayed** (Variable 20):

- 1) Here **Group Photo** means a picture of AMs; AMs with Other Politicians or Members of the Public
- 2) Size of the AM portrait is similar to the article's size, including the headline; or it is about 1/2 or 1/3 or 1/4 or 1/5 of the article's size.

18. **Form of the AM Portrait Displayed** (Variable 21):

- 1) Under this variable, the measurement of **Group Photo** means an image of AMs (more than one AM in the image); or an image of AMs with Other Politicians or Members of the Public.
- 2) **Close-up** includes Face Close-up and a close shot of the AM or the AM with others, if the background of the photo can not be identified by the measurements listed under this variable.

19. **Angle of the Camera of the AM Portrait Displayed** (Variable 22):

- 1) Under this variable, **Group Photo** means an image of AMs (more than one AM in the image); or an image of AMs with Other Politicians or Members of the Public.
- 2) If the image is a close-up shot, but it is obvious that the camera's angle is from a high angle, then it belongs to the measurement of High Angle Shot; similarly for Low Angle Shot.
- 3) If an image is shot from a distance, but one can identify whether it is a High Angle Shot or Low Angle Shot, then it is coded under High Angle Shot or Low Angle Shot, the measurement Distant Approach becomes the second noted.

20. **Main Subject on Election Coverage** (Variable 23):

- AMs'/Candidates' Profile AMs' Contributions AMs'/Candidates' Policies
 Impact on the Public Comments on Other Party's/Parties' Policies
 Comments on Other Politicians Comments on the Election Personal Statement
 Election Poll Coalition Talks Plaid's Policies Tory's Policies
 Labour's Policies Lib Dem's Policies Public Reaction

- 1) This variable mostly suits the Assembly election coverage period between March and May 2007; the Lib Dem Leadership Election and Labour Leadership Election are also included here. NB: If news articles are less than 100 words but they focus on election, then this variable is not included. That is because articles less than 100 words are only coded under the variables in Section One of the coding sheet.
- 2) If it is one AM's statement explaining his/her party's election manifesto, then this means AM's Policies; if it is more than one AM's statement explaining their party's election manifestos, then this means a political party's Policies, e.g. Labour's Policies
- 3) **Personal Statement:** During the election period, if a candidate's personal statement is talking about more than just his/her party's policies, then it is categorised under this measurement.
- 4) **Public Reaction:** If more than three members of the public (experts/politicians excluded) have been quoted in the article.

21. **Main Policy Area the Focused AM Referring to** (Variables 27, 33 and 39):

Social Welfare: This measurement includes more than one issue that is listed under this variable. It can be any two or more of the issues here: e.g. health services; housing; crime; policing; domestic abuse; childcare; poverty; child abuse, etc.

22. **Party of the Focused AM** (Variables 24, 31 and 37):

Former AMs who stood for the 2007 Assembly election, are considered to be in the party which they were in at the previous Assembly.

E.g 1) Ron Davies was a Labour party member in the first Assembly, but he stood for the Independent in the third Assembly election. Here he is still considered as a member of Labour party.

2) John Marek as a Member for Forward Wales party.

23. **Comments on the Focused AM** (Variables 28, 34 and 40):

Positive: The mentioned AM's action or speech was praised, and comments on him/her were complimentary or in a praising tone. For example, a thank-you note to an AM from a member of the public or an organisation was published; or the sources in the news story praised an AM's constituency work or his/her support to education, health facilities etc. in the local community.

Negative: Comments on the concerned AM's action or speech were somewhat critical or cynical or condemning or reproachful or disapproving. For instance, the sources criticised an Assembly Minister's ministerial portfolios or a local AM's responsibilities in his/her constituency.

Neutral: Source(s) mentioned AM(s), but the comments on the AM(s) were neither critical nor in a praising tone.

Mixed: The comments on the mentioned AM were both positive and negative. This includes all sources' opinions on the concerned AM.

N/A: There is no comment on the mentioned AM by any source.

24. **Main Source(s)** (Variables 41 and 42):

Sources are ideas and general information for the news story. A source can be a person, or an organisation, or a publication etc. A source is often a direct or indirect quotation here.

Main Source can be an AM; a government spokesperson; other politician(s); journalists; editor(s); analyst/commentator; member(s) of the public; Assembly staff etc.

There can be more than one "Main Source". For example, if the article is based on interviews which were conducted with more than one interviewee, then the main source refers to the source which is given the most wordage; additional source refers to the second source which is given the second most wordage.

For those letters (except for those written by AMs), opinion pieces/editorials which did not quote others directly or indirectly, but merely the writers' own opinions. Those news articles are treated as unsourced.

- 1) **Publication:** This can be a study/a report/a survey/a newspaper/a website/a party's manifesto/a programme/a film etc.
- 2) **Other Politicians:** These can be councillors/MPs/MEPs; a joint statement by more than one politician.

Appendix III

Interview Questions

Personal Information

- (1) Why did you become a politician?
- (2) Do you have any role models? Was there anyone who inspired you to get involved in politics?

The 2011 and 2007 Welsh Assembly Elections

- (1) Do you think it makes any difference to politics when women are the majority in a political institution? If so what difference does it make?
- (2) What are your thoughts on the second Assembly when women held 31 seats out of 60? Do you think women politicians are empowered in Wales?
- (3) What do you think are the reasons that there were less female AMs in the third Assembly? And fewer women were elected in this year's Assembly election?
- (4) Are there any differences in experiences of campaigning between you and your male/female colleagues?
- (5) Why do you think you were elected?
- (6) Do you agree with the *Western Mail's* exercise of marking all AMs out of 10 before this May's election? Are those marks fair? Do you agree with the scoring system? Do you remember the marking coverage before the 2007 Assembly election?
- (7) Do you think the *Western Mail* has an anti-Labour agenda?

Relations with the Welsh Press

- (1) What do you think about the media coverage of the AMs and Assembly activities in general in the UK national media? What do you think about the Welsh press?
- (2) Are there any differences in the coverage of male and female AMs? Are there any similarities?
- (3) How about the coverage of this year's Assembly election? How about the coverage of the 2007 election?
- (4) Do you think your voice is heard as an individual politician in the Welsh press? How about the local newspapers?
- (5) Could you talk a bit about the coverage you got during this May's election? How did you feel about it?
- (6) Would you say your party has a good working relationship with the Welsh press in advance of the election? Would you say your party has a good working relationship with the Welsh national and local press in general? How about yourself as an individual politician?

- (7) What do you think about the routine press coverage of the AMs? Have you noticed any changes in the press coverage of the Assembly over time since the Assembly was first established in 1999? Are there any differences in the coverage of male and female AMs? Are there any similarities?
- (8) Could you talk a bit about the coverage you've got during the election campaigns? How did you feel about it?
- (9) What do you think about the local newspaper reporting of the AMs? How about the major community newspaper in your constituency?

Note: Please find enclosed the interview records and transcripts on DVD.



Topic of Project: Experiences of Assembly Members with the Welsh Press

Name of Investigator: Weihua Ye – PhD student at School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies
Cardiff University Email: yew3@cardiff.ac.uk

My PhD supervisor: Dr. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen
Reader and Director MA Journalism, Media and Communications and MA Political Communications
Email: wahl-jorgensenk@cardiff.ac.uk Phone: +44 (0)29 208 79414

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The research project examines how the Welsh press portrayed the Assembly Members during 2007 election period as well as a routine coverage period from December 2008 to February 2009.
2. **Your participation:** You will be interviewed about your knowledge and opinions on your experiences as an AM and your relationship with the Welsh press.
3. **Statement of Confidentiality:** If you wish your participation in this research can be confidential. The data will be stored and secured at Cardiff University. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared if you wish to remain anonymous.
4. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact me at the above email address with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call or email my supervisor, Dr. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, if you feel this study has harmed you.
5. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

If you agree to take part in this study and understand the information outlined above, please tick a confidentiality option and sign your name and indicate the date below.

Confidentiality:

- I am content to be named in any publications that result from this research
- I would prefer it if my contributions were anonymised in any publications resulting from this research

Participant Name and Signature	Date
--------------------------------	------

Person Obtaining Consent	Date
--------------------------	------

Western Mail's 2007 Exercise of Marking All AMs out of 10

Saturday, 21 April 2007

Western Mail 25

FEATURE

End of term report ... we score each of our AMs out of 10

SOME AMs from all parties have been a credit to the National Assembly and to Wales, but too many have not performed as well as we have a right to expect.

As we approach the third Assembly election, we have decided to give readers an indication of how, in our opinion, their AMs have performed. In many cases, people will have made their own judgements, based on personal contact, what they have read and what they have seen on TV. There will, however, be some AMs whose names and faces are unfamiliar.

In awarding marks out of 10

to every AM, we have tried to take a broad view of their performance, based not simply on what they say and how they say it in the debating chamber and committees, but on their effectiveness in representing their constituents and the way they communicate with the media and others. In the case of Cabinet Ministers, there has also been an assessment of how they have handled their portfolio.

We have pulled no punches. When we think individuals are not up to the job we have said so. Here we start with 10 AMs. Watch out for our verdict of the other 50 each day next week.

The scoring system

- 10 The best AM in Wales
- 9 Very high standard of performance – certainly in Assembly terms
- 8 High standard of performance
- 7 Above average
- 6 Average
- 5 Below average
- 4 Will need to do more to justify being there
- 3 Very doubtful whether should be there
- 2 Definitely should not be there
- 1 Was never there



bring forward its own legislation and not just alter existing laws made in Westminster

for people much more



DEMOCRACY The Senedd will host more significant debates

minister, a relationship that will develop in ways no one can yet predict. The days when MPs could comfortably ignore an institution

they were a little uncomfortable with are almost at an end. The Western Mail will keep you up to date with all the changes and

all the issues. We'll be doing profiles on the party leaders and, telling you who really makes the decisions behind the scenes. We'll tell you what it all means for you, and for the major players who are staking their careers on the result.

We'll be looking at who really wants to spend more on the NHS, and whose plans for education really add up. If you want to know which party is the greenest, or which will do more for transport, the Welsh language or farming, we'll have the answers.

The Assembly has changed Wales since it first met in 1999. But on May 3 you'll be voting for people who'll be able to do much, much more in a year than was done in the previous eight. It's Wales' most important election, and we'll bring you everything you need to know.

will either be putting forward their own laws, space for people who aren't up to the job

<p>Leighton Andrews, Rhondda, Labour</p> <p>Comment: Articulate if sometimes bumptious backbencher who is surely Ministerial material.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 8</p>		<p>Eleanor Burnham, North Wales, Liberal Democrat</p> <p>Comment: Not shy in putting her views across, but seen by many as off the wall.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 4</p>	
<p>Lorraine Barrett, Cardiff South & Penarth, Labour</p> <p>Comment: Better than some, has improved, but struggles to make a national impact.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 4</p>		<p>Rosemary Butler, Newport West, Labour</p> <p>Comment: Does a reasonable job as chair of the culture committee.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 6</p>	
<p>Mick Bates, Montgomeryshire, Liberal Democrat</p> <p>Comment: Tries hard but is often difficult to take seriously.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 5</p>		<p>Alun Cairns, South Wales West, Conservative</p> <p>Comment: Very good at holding the Assembly Government to account.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 8</p>	
<p>Peter Black, South Wales West, Liberal Democrat</p> <p>Comment: A political anorak, matured into AM who is invariably worth listening to.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 8</p>		<p>Christine Chapman, Cynon Valley, Labour</p> <p>Comment: Although a Deputy Minister is not up to being promoted to Cabinet.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 6</p>	
<p>Nick Bourne, Mid & West Wales, Conservative</p> <p>Comment: Does a very good job in the debating chamber.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 8</p>		<p>Jeff Culbert, Caerphilly, Labour</p> <p>Comment: Worthy but dull – former far-left militant activist who is now too New Labour for own good.</p> <p>Marks Out of 10 5</p>	

NEWS

End of term report ... we score each of our AMs out of 10

Jane Davidson, Pontypridd, Labour

Comment: Can come across as patronising, but undoubtedly an effective performer.



Marks out of 10 **8**

Andrew Davies, Swansea West, Labour

Comment: Lacks charisma, but presides over a department that has effectively trumpeted Wales' economic success while downplaying less positive statistics.



Marks out of 10 **8**

David Davies, Monmouth, Conservative

Comment: Shrewd maverick and populist who draws in support even from non-Tories. Stepping down to concentrate on the parliamentary seat he won in 2005.



Marks out of 10 **8**

Glyn Davies, Mid & West Wales, Conservative

Comment: Thoughtful consensual Tory who arguably would have had wider appeal as leader than Nick Bourne.



Marks out of 10 **8**

Janet Davies, South Wales West, Plaid Cymru

Comment: Former council leader who is not a good communicator and who could give the impression of lacking confidence. Standing down.



Marks out of 10 **5**

Jocelyn Davies, South Wales East, Plaid Cymru

Comment: Feisty AM good at local campaigning.



Marks out of 10 **7**

Tamsin Dunwoody, Preseli Pembrokeshire, Labour

Comment: Hard-working and approachable AM who is a presentable Deputy Minister.



Marks out of 10 **7**

Lord Elis-Thomas, Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, Plaid Cymru

Comment: Has done a superb job as Presiding Officer. Has quietly achieved an immense amount in driving forward devolution.



Marks out of 10 **10**

Sue Essex, Cardiff North, Labour

Comment: Very popular and effective Finance Minister who unfortunately is standing down.



Marks out of 10 **9**

Lisa Francis, Mid & West Wales, Conservative

Comment: Hardly dynamic, but has made a fair attempt to get to grips with some important issues.



Marks out of 10 **6**

Martin Shipton

Chief Reporter
martin.shipton@wme.co.uk

AS WE approach the third Assembly election, we have decided to give readers an indication of how, in our opinion, their AMs have performed.

As we showed in Saturday's paper when we focused on the first 10 AMs, some have been a credit to the Assembly – others have fallen woefully short of expectations.

In awarding marks out of 10 to every AM, we have tried to take a broad view of their performance, based not simply on what they say and how they say it in the debating chamber and committees, but also on their effectiveness in representing their constituents and the way they communicate with the media and others.

In the case of Cabinet Ministers, there has also been an assessment of how they have handled their portfolio.

We have given our honest opinion – where AMs have performed well we have said so. Where AMs are not up to scratch, we have also said so.

Watch out for our verdict of the remaining 40 each day this week.

The scoring system

- 10** The best AM in Wales
- 9** Very high standard of performance – certainly in Assembly terms
- 8** High standard of performance
- 7** Above average
- 6** Average
- 5** Below average
- 4** Will need to do more to justify being there
- 3** Very doubtful whether should be there
- 2** Definitely should not be there
- 1** Was never there

Morgans celebrate their ruby wedding

HELEN MORGAN and her husband, Sir Peter, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary...

The great political survivor who will have a key role to play in any future coalition

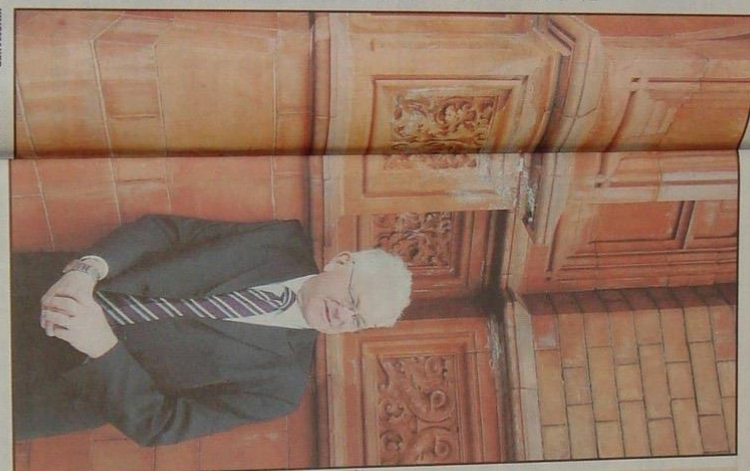
IT IS BRITAIN'S most experienced politician, a man who has seen it all... Sir Peter Morgan is the man most likely to be in government after next week's Assembly elections.



Sir Peter Morgan, leader of the Liberal Democrats, is seen here with his wife Helen at their 50th wedding anniversary party.

When Robert Morgan backed Sir Peter to lead the coalition... Sir Peter Morgan has been a key figure in Welsh politics for decades...

When the Assembly was re-elected last year... Sir Peter Morgan's role in the coalition government is expected to be significant...



Sir Peter Morgan, leader of the Liberal Democrats, is seen here with his wife Helen at their 50th wedding anniversary party.

Italy's Mediterranean Riviera, The Cinque Terre & Tuscany. 18, 19 June & 18 Sept 8 days from £599. Return flight from Bristol to Pisa...

Labour running to form a coalition, says Morgan

HELEN MORGAN insisted her husband Sir Peter Morgan was not running the biggest party... Sir Peter Morgan has said that Labour is running to form a coalition government...

Special Offer Sardinia from Cardiff Airport 12 May 8 days B&B Allocated on Arrival from £259. Special Offer Sorrento and The Bay of Naples from Cardiff Airport 25 May 8 days from £259.

End of term report... we score each out of 10

End of term report... we score each out of 10. Includes ratings for David Davies, Glyn Davies, Janet Davies, and other politicians.

ELECTION 2007

End of term report ... we score each of our AMs out of 10

Mike German, South Wales East, Liberal Democrat

Comment: Experienced political operator who punches above his party's weight.



Marks out of 10: **8**

Brian Gibbons, Aberavon, Labour

Comment: As Health Minister has tried to get a grip on the NHS, but it still has massive problems.



Marks out of 10: **6**

William Graham, South Wales East, Conservative

Comment: Patrician, old-style Tory who often fails to convince.



Marks out of 10: **5**

Janice Gregory, Ogmere, Labour

Comment: Well below par performer by our reckoning.



Marks out of 10: **4**

John Griffiths, Newport East, Labour

Comment: Principled politician who probably deserves to be a Minister.



Marks out of 10: **7**

Christine Gwyther, Carmarthen West & Pembrokeshire South, Labour

Comment: Sacked by Rhodri Morgan as a Minister, she has failed to inspire as chair of the enterprise committee.



Marks out of 10: **5**

Edwina Hart, Gower, Labour

Comment: An assertive Social Justice Minister whose abrasive approach is not endearing.



Marks out of 10: **7**

Jane Hutt, Vale of Glamorgan, Labour

Comment: Disastrous Health Minister who is doing a better job now.



Marks out of 10: **6**

Mark Isherwood, North Wales, Conservative

Comment: Tory with a conscience who should lighten up.



Marks out of 10: **6**

Irene James, Islwyn, Labour

Comment: Useless nonentity as far as we are concerned. Has added nothing to the Assembly that we can see.



Marks out of 10: **2**

Martin Shipton

Chief Reporter
martin.shipton@wrme.co.uk

WE have decided to give readers an indication of how, in our opinion, their AMs have performed.

As we approach the third Assembly election some of our politicians have performed well, others have been average, while a worryingly large proportion have been either largely invisible or seriously below calibre.

In awarding marks out of 10 to every AM, we have tried to take a broad view of their performance, based not simply on what they say and how they say it in the debating chamber and committees, but also on their effectiveness in representing their constituents and the way they communicate with the media and others.

In the case of Cabinet Ministers, there has also been an assessment of how they have handled their portfolio.

We have given our honest opinion – where AMs have performed well we have said so. Where AMs are in our view not up to scratch, we have also said so.

We are now half way through our report card, watch out for our verdict of the remaining 30 throughout this week.

The scoring system

- 10 The best AM in Wales
- 9 Very high standard of performance – certainly in Assembly terms
- 8 High standard of performance
- 7 Above average
- 6 Average
- 5 Below average
- 4 Will need to do more to justify being there
- 3 Very doubtful whether should be there
- 2 Definitely should not be there
- 1 Was never there

Meet Bourne - Wales' least likely political big-hitter

In the second of our profiles of Wales party leaders, Political Editor Tomos Livingsome looks at Labour's bogeyman, Welsh Conservative leader Nick Bourne



Nick Bourne

It is not surprising that the Welsh Conservative leader, Nick Bourne, has been described as the 'bogeyman' of the Welsh Labour party. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power. Bourne is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.

Bourne is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.

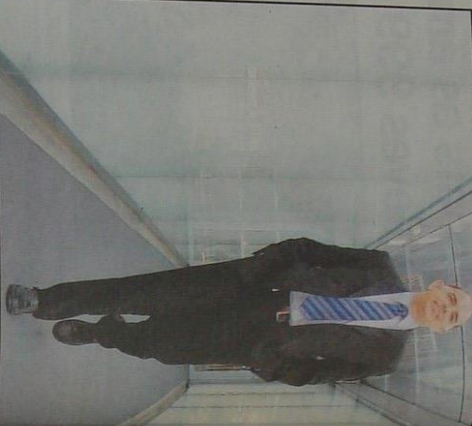
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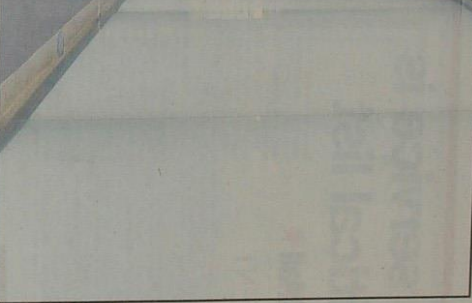
01656 7222122



PROFILE: Welsh Tory leader Nick Bourne. The last time of him turning Wales to being described as 'bogeyman' was in 2005 when he was elected as Conservative MP for Cardiff Central.

Bourne is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.

Coalition could be a success in Wales, says Tory candidate
A Tory Assembly candidate has said that a coalition government between Labour and the Conservatives would be a success in Wales. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.



PROFILE: Welsh Tory leader Nick Bourne. The last time of him turning Wales to being described as 'bogeyman' was in 2005 when he was elected as Conservative MP for Cardiff Central.

Bourne is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power. He is a former Conservative MP for Cardiff Central, and has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.

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End of term report ... we score each of our AMs out of 10

<p>Mia Gorman, South Democrat Comment: Experienced political member who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 8</p>	<p>Pia Chibana, Labour Comment: Labour AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 6</p>	<p>William Glyn, South Conservative Comment: Former Conservative AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 5</p>	<p>Janet Egey, Labour Comment: Labour AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 4</p>	<p>John Griffiths, Newport East, Labour Comment: Labour AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 7</p>
<p>Chris Davies, Conservative Comment: Conservative AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 5</p>	<p>Emma Hart, Gower, Labour Comment: Labour AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 7</p>	<p>Jan Hill, Vale of Glamorgan, Labour Comment: Labour AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 6</p>	<p>Mark Iwanford, North Wales, Labour Comment: Labour AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 6</p>	<p>Ben James, Llwyn, Labour Comment: Labour AM who has been a vocal critic of Labour's record in power.</p> <p>Marks out of 10: 2</p>

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NEWS

End of term report ... we score each of our AMs out of 10

Ann Jones, Vale of Clwyd, Labour

Comment: Poor performer noted only for her obsessive support for Rhyl FC.



Marks out of 10: **3**

Alun Ffred Jones, Caernarfon, Plaid Cymru

Comment: Competent former council leader, though hardly inspiring.



Marks out of 10: **7**

Carwyn Jones, Bridgend, Labour

Comment: Could be next First Minister if he puts his back into it.



Marks out of 10: **8**

Helen Mary Jones, Mid & West Wales, Plaid Cymru

Comment: Very good communicator.



Marks out of 10: **8**

Elin Jones, Ceredigion, Plaid Cymru

Comment: Intelligent and dependable contributor to debates.



Marks out of 10: **7**

Laura Anne Jones, South Wales East, Conservative

Comment: Has raised her game after a callow start, but will never set the world on fire intellectually.



Marks out of 10: **5**

Denise Idris Jones, Conwy, Labour

Comment: Very low calibre. How on earth did she get the party nomination in the first place?



Marks out of 10: **2**

Ieuan Wyn Jones, Ynys Môn, Plaid Cymru

Comment: While no Dafydd Wigley, he has upped his performance considerably since the disaster of 2003.



Marks out of 10: **8**

Trish Law, Blaenau Gwent, Independent

Comment: Not the shrewd politician her late husband was, but is doing her best to stand up for her area.



Marks out of 10: **6**

Huw Lewis, Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney, Labour

Comment: Thoughtful contributor who winds up the Nats, even if his Hero of the Valleys persona is hard to swallow.



Marks out of 10: **7**

Martin Shipton

Chief Reporter
martin.shipton@wme.co.uk

WITH just over a week to go before the third Assembly elections we are giving readers an indication of how, in our opinion, their AMs have performed.

Some of our politicians have performed well but a number have been below par and in some cases barely noticeable.

In awarding marks out of 10 to every AM, we have tried to take a broad view of their performance, based not simply on what they say and how they say it in the debating chamber and committees, but also on their effectiveness in representing their constituents and the way they communicate with the media and others.

In the case of Cabinet Ministers, there has also been an assessment of how they have handled their portfolio.

We have given our honest opinion.

If AMs have performed poorly we have said so, but where they deserve praise we have been equally honest.

We are now more than half way through our report card; watch out for our verdict of the remaining 20 throughout this week.

The scoring system

- 10 The best AM in Wales
- 9 Very high standard of performance – certainly in Assembly terms
- 8 High standard of performance
- 7 Above average
- 6 Average
- 5 Below average
- 4 Will need to do more to justify being there
- 3 Very doubtful whether should be there
- 2 Definitely should not be there
- 1 Was never there

Survivor who raised his game to convince his party he can deliver

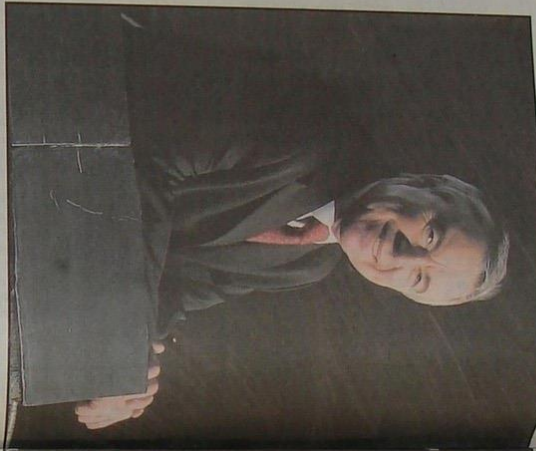
In the third of our profiles of Wales' party leaders, chief reporter Martin Shipton ponders the rejuvenation of Plaid Cymru's Ieuan Wyn Jones

PLAID Cymru's new leader, Ieuan Wyn Jones, was at his best not just last but five weeks ago when he was elected to the party's leadership. He was the only candidate to have a 50 per cent majority, a feat that has not been achieved since the 1960s, and he was elected at the first assembly.

Ieuan Wyn Jones
Born 1961, Denbigh
Job title: Plaid Cymru leader
Education: The Arts Council
Political party: Plaid Cymru
Previous employment: Solicitor
Political achievement: Elected

He is a former member of the Conservative Party and has worked for the Labour Party. He was elected to the party's leadership in 2005, and was re-elected in 2006.

When Ieuan Wyn Jones was elected leader of Plaid Cymru, he was seen as a man who had raised his game to convince his party he could deliver. He had spent the previous year as a member of the Conservative Party, and had worked for the Labour Party. He was elected to the party's leadership in 2005, and was re-elected in 2006.



Ann Jones, Wife of Cheryl, Labour
Comment: Prol performance needed only for her party to support the PM's bid.

Marks out of 10: **3**

Alan Ffyn Jones, Ceannwrn, Plaid Cymru
Comment: Disappointing home council leader through heavy inactivity.

Marks out of 10: **7**

Cherri Jones, Bridgend, Labour
Comment: Could be a good councillor if she puts her back into it.

Marks out of 10: **8**

Helen Mary Jones, Hwlford, Plaid Cymru
Comment: Very good councillor.

Marks out of 10: **8**

Elin Jones, Ceredigion
Comment: Intelligent and committed councillor.

Marks out of 10: **7**

End of term report... we score each of our AMs out of 10

Maria Eiddon
Comment: Strong performance in the last few weeks.

Marks out of 10: **5**

Ieuan Wyn Jones, Ynys-y-wydd, Plaid Cymru
Comment: Excellent performance in the last few weeks.

Marks out of 10: **8**

Theri Law, Blaenau Gwent, Independent
Comment: Not the strongest performance in the last few weeks.

Marks out of 10: **6**

Helen Lewis, Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney, Labour
Comment: Thoughtful and committed councillor.

Marks out of 10: **7**

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Some things in life you just don't attempt without expert advice!

NEWS

End of term report ... we score each of our AMs out of 10

Dai Lloyd, South Wales West, Plaid Cymru

Comment: Effective representative who deserves another term, though is endangered by Plaid's policy of reserving top regional list placings for women.



Marks out of 10: **7**

Val Lloyd, Swansea East, Labour

Comment: By our reckoning has not made the transition from being a councillor to being a national politician.



Marks out of 10: **3**

John Marek, Wrexham, Forward Wales

Comment: Sometimes off beam, but brings tremendous experience to the job.



Marks out of 10: **7**

David Melding, South Wales Central, Conservative

Comment: Urbane, consensual Tory who wrote the manifesto and is one of his party's main supporters for full lawmaking powers at the Assembly.



Marks out of 10: **8**

Sandy Mewies, Delyn, Labour

Comment: Undoubtedly intelligent, though has made very little impact.



Marks out of 10: **4**

Martin Shipton

Chief Reporter
martin.shipton@wme.co.uk

WE ARE entering the final stages of our guide to how our Assembly Members have performed.

Some have scored well, while others have deservedly registered just a few marks.

With just over a week to go before the third Assembly elections we are giving readers an indication of how, in our opinion, their AMs have done.

In awarding marks out of 10 to every AM, we have tried to take a broad view of their performance, based not simply on what they say and how they say it in the debating chamber and committees, but also on their effectiveness in representing their constituents and the way they communicate with the media and others.

In the case of Cabinet Ministers, there has also been an assessment of how they have handled their portfolio.

We have given our honest opinion.

If AMs have performed poorly we have said so, but where they deserve praise we have been equally honest.

Watch out for our verdict of the final 10 tomorrow.

The scoring system

- 10 The best AM in Wales
- 9 Very high standard of performance – certainly in Assembly terms
- 8 High standard of performance
- 7 Above average
- 6 Average
- 5 Below average
- 4 Will need to do more to justify being there
- 3 Very doubtful whether should be there
- 2 Definitely should not be there
- 1 Was never there

Jonathan Morgan, South Wales Central, Conservative

Comment: High-flying and articulate. A credit to his group.



Marks out of 10: **8**

Rhodri Morgan, Cardiff West, Labour

Comment: Despite the occasional blunder, is a larger-than-life national leader who defies the boring norm. We will miss him when he has gone.



Marks out of 10: **8**

Lynne Neagle, Torfaen, Labour

Comment: Consistently fails to impress.



Marks out of 10: **3**

Alun Pugh, Clwyd West, Labour

Comment: A truly bad Culture Minister who managed to alienate virtually the entire artistic community in Wales. Will not be missed if, as widely expected, he is defeated next week.



Marks out of 10: **4**

Jenny Randerson, Cardiff Central, Liberal Democrat

Comment: Hardworking and greatly experienced, if somewhat short of the highest level.



Marks out of 10: **7**

Office quits after drink-drive crash

An official professional... who had been driving... received from her job...

Maverick who reshaped post-devolution politics

In the last of our profiles of Wales' political leaders, Political Editor Tomos Llyngstone focuses on the man who has run Wales for seven years - First Minister Rhodri Morgan

WHATEVER the odds, victory on him in a week's time. Rhodri Morgan has been the face of the Welsh political landscape since he was elected in May 1999...



Rhodri Morgan, First Minister of Wales, is seen in a meeting with other officials.

Written of their twice being... by the differences with New Labour... Michael was elected in February 2000...

FROM OF STUDENT... the traditional Labour voters... the ambition of chair...

Rhodri Morgan Job Title: First Minister, Welsh Assembly Government... Political Affiliation: Labour

He is a... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour...

But he can justify... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour...

When Mr Morgan... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour...

Mr Morgan was... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour...

Mr Morgan was... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour...

Mr Morgan was... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour...

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End of term report... we score each of our AMs out of 10

Who shall I turn to? We are specialist Solicitors in: • Care proceedings • Child • Resolutions orders • Adoption cases

What is Rhodri Morgan's... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour... the Welsh Labour...

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ELECTION 2007

be our Wales



EARLY LEARNERS
It is vital to improve the quality of education for young people, but there is little point in forcing them to stay at school

One person's extra expenditure becomes another person's additional income, and industries buy more products from each other, triggering greater demands from yet other industries in turn.

Immensely useful as a bargaining device for attracting financial support, this method is equally capable of demonstrating the economic development advantages of an earthquake.

It ignores the displacement of other activities in an economy with low unemployment and that must raise project funding ultimately from taxation.

Nonetheless there are genuine economic advantages from travel and time cost improvements conferred by a good airport and rapid access to it. Cardiff Airport looks as if it may gain from the road links required by the St Athan Metrix Defence Training Academy. Better connections must increase the number of viable routes and flights to and from Cardiff International.

This in turn improves the profitability of business location in the area. With two million passengers in 2006 Cardiff has some way to go to match even Bristol airport's 5.7 million passengers. However Cardiff's traffic grew faster than Bristol's; 14% compared with 10%.

In addition, if Bristol environmental campaigners have their way, Cardiff may capture some of the extra business currently forecast for Bristol Airport.

Plaudits for proportion of women elected — but low standards are disappointing

WHEN we embarked on our exercise of marking all AMs out of 10, we did not know what statistical conclusions would be thrown up.

We had a general concern about the calibre of AMs, but until we evaluated all 60 politicians on a systematic basis, we had no preconceptions about what the results might yield.

Now that all our assessments have been published, we have worked out averages on the basis of party affiliation, region and gender.

Partly thanks to the 10 out of 10 score we gave to Dafydd Elis-Thomas, the Presiding Officer, Plaid Cymru has the highest average with 7.3 marks. The Conservatives came second on 6.8, with the Liberal Democrats and Independents both on 6.5. The Labour group had the worst average score with 5.5.

In terms of the five electoral regions, AMs from South Wales Central had the highest average with 7.2, closely followed by their counterparts from

Mid and West Wales on 7.1, South Wales West AMs scored an average of 6.2, with South Wales East on 5.8 and North Wales bottom on 5.1.

The 29 male AMs had an average score of 7.1 out of 10, noticeably higher than the 31 female AMs, whose average was 5.8.

What should we conclude from these figures? One of the most obvious results is the relatively low scores achieved by quite a few Labour women.

This is perhaps the down side of the positive gender discrimination that the party embarked on before the first National Assembly election in 1999.

The Assembly has received many plaudits for the high proportion of women elected to it — a higher proportion than any other legislature ever. Incidentally, there is some irony in the fact that since the election of Irish Law in last year's Blaenau Gwent by-election, the Assembly has actually had a female majority.

Those who chastised her late husband Peter for not accepting the imposition of an all-women shortlist on the local Labour Party should perhaps bear that in mind.

What is disappointing is that the calibre of quite a few of the women selected by the Labour Party has been low. We certainly do not take the view

that men are inherently better politicians than women — far from it.

What does appear to have happened, though, is that the best Labour women have not necessarily come through.

Perhaps the Labour Party needs to revisit its selection procedures, or at least to introduce some kind of quality check on its candidates.

Labour, of course, is not the only party to have introduced discriminatory measures that favour women.

Plaid Cymru's policy of insisting that women should have top placing on its regional lists could well prevent one of its finest politicians from returning to the Assembly next week.

If Plaid does as well in the constituency votes as today's opinion polls suggest, it is doubtful whether Dafydd Wigley's number two slot on the North Wales regional list will be sufficient to send him to Cardiff Bay.




TOP MARKS Lord Elis-Thomas

The scoring system

- 10 The best AM in Wales
- 9 Very high standard of performance — certainly in Assembly terms
- 8 High standard of performance
- 7 Above average
- 6 Average
- 5 Below average
- 4 Will need to do more to justify being there
- 3 Very doubtful whether should be there
- 2 Definitely should not be there
- 1 Was never there


Janet Ryder, North Wales, Plaid Cymru



Comment: No more than an average performer as Shadow Education Minister. Should not have precedence over Dafydd Wigley on North Wales regional list in our view.

Marks out of 10: **6**

Carl Sargeant, Alyn & Deeside, Labour



Comment: Genial traditional Labour representative who injects a much needed working class perspective into the Assembly.

Marks out of 10: **7**

Karen Sinclair, Clwyd South, Labour



Comment: Very poor Cabinet member by our reckoning who was swiftly dumped by Rhodri Morgan.

Marks out of 10: **3**

Catherine Thomas, Llanelli, Labour



Comment: A good constituency AM, but has failed to make an impression at national level.

Marks out of 10: **6**


Gwenda Thomas, Neath, Labour



Comment: Pleasant approach, but out of her depth in the Assembly in our view.

Marks out of 10: **4**


Owen John Thomas, South Wales Central, Plaid Cymru



Comment: Brought something distinctive to the Assembly with his passionate love of his home city Cardiff.

Marks out of 10: **7**


Rhodri Glyn Thomas, Carmarthen East & Dinefwr, Plaid Cymru



Comment: Very good debater. One of Plaid's best speakers.

Marks out of 10: **8**

Brynle Williams, North Wales, Conservative



Comment: Former fuel price protester who has not shone in a group with much greater talents.

Marks out of 10: **5**

Kirsty Williams, Brecon & Radnorshire, Liberal Democrat



Comment: Is commanding increasing respect. Widely tipped as a future group leader.

Marks out of 10: **7**

Leanne Wood, South Wales Central, Plaid Cymru



Comment: Has matured into more than the megaphone politician she used to be.

Marks out of 10: **7**

Appendix V

Change in Media Practices: From Print Media to Social Media

As mentioned, the Welsh national newspapers are not read by the majority of the Welsh people (Thomas 2006; Ye 2007); more people in Wales tend to read their local newspapers, and in general the local press does not pay much attention to Welsh politics. Although the *Western Mail* has given more coverage to the National Assembly and Welsh politics than any other Welsh newspaper, its readership is relatively small, even smaller than that of the *South Wales Evening Post*. However, according to an anonymous male Labour AM, the *Western Mail* has some influence on the broadcast media, and he noted:

Lots of people who are voting in my constituency don't read the *Western Mail*. Even in marginal seats, like Cardiff Central, lots of voters in Cardiff Central don't read the *Western Mail*. But the *Western Mail* does have an impact on the way that the BBC and ITV report daily. So they affect headlines in the way that TV and radio report things. Certainly that has a wide impact on a wide number of voters.

This Labour AM stated the importance of the broadcast media, and the Welsh press is very much relevant to the broadcast media. It seems that the press is still one of the most important media in Wales, and the widely-acknowledged Welsh national newspaper, the *Western Mail*, is relevant to the opinion formation of the broadcast media.

About half of the interviewed AMs believed that instead of buying a newspaper, more and more people go online for news and information. This is evidenced by the viewpoint of an anonymous Labour Minister, who believed that technological change is happening to the media all the time. The Conservative AM, Suzy Davies, also pointed out that now people often turn on their computers and read news online rather than read an actual copy of a newspaper, and that they may pick up a copy of a UK national newspaper at a store sometimes. Picard (2003; 2009) and Price (2006) raised concerns about whether and when the effects of the development of the Internet and its advertising capabilities would lead to the disappearance of newspapers. Of course their concern about the vanishing of

newspapers would be the worst scenario for the print media, and it is not likely to happen in the near future. However, as Williams (2011) noted, market forces, the Internet or the public's changing news consumption habits cannot be blamed, even though they are the factors that lead newspapers to face their inevitable declining fate. The Conservative Assembly leader, Andrew RT Davies, suggested:

Whether in today's world you can look at the newspapers in isolation, when there are so many avenues of new technology, is a debatable point, because a lot of youngsters, for example, seek all their information on the Internet. They just wouldn't pay 60 pence to buy a newspaper or a pound for the *Times*, you know. I am perhaps one of an older generation. I am only 43, but I am one of an older generation who actually like to have a newspaper in my hand when I read it.

In fact, Bruninx (2007) stressed that young people are accustomed to the free culture of the Internet and do not consider free news less reliable or less accurate than mainstream media (see also Berte and Bens 2009). The Pontypridd Labour AM, Mick Antoniwi, who suggested that the Welsh local newspapers are becoming little more than advertising sheets and focusing more on their websites, noted:

Well, journalism is secondary to the advertising. And the resources are less and less, that's probably partly because they are selling fewer copies and they are giving most of their information away for free on the Internet at any event.

Changes in the news industry seem inevitable. Mr. Antoniwi's colleague, an anonymous male Labour AM, also pointed out that the Welsh newspapers have given increasingly more attention to their websites in recent years:

If you look at the *Western Mail* website in 2007 compared to now, there is a big difference. If you look at the *Argus* website or the *South Wales Evening Post* which covers Swansea and surrounding area, the website is very different. There is more time and energy that has gone into those websites, because they know more people are using them. So I think that's a big difference. Even the *Penarth Times*, a very local paper, more people are looking at their website.

As noted in the Literature Review Chapter, although circulations of almost all daily Welsh newspapers fell, their news websites, such as WalesOnline.co.uk and *South Wales*

Evening Post, saw their online audience increase by about 35 per cent during 2013 (BBC News 26th February, 2014). Berte and Bens (2009) also suggested that newspapers have paid considerable attention to their websites. Unsurprisingly, Meech (2008) noted that many newspapers “metamorphosed” into well-designed websites which were no longer the “pale imitations” of their print versions. In addition, Hall stated, “the newspaper is now in the process of transforming itself from a print-web artefact to a web-print one” (2008:222).

Furthermore, Williams (2011) pointed out that Cardiff has not yet lost a newspaper, but the future of Cardiff-based newspapers is not promising. Its neighbouring towns, such as Port Talbot and Neath, were among those 60 UK towns that lost their local newspapers between 2008 and 2009 (Greenslade 2009; Williams 2011). Similarly, the Plaid AM, Bethan Jenkins, noted that apart from the *Western Mail*, her region only has one major newspaper, the *South Wales Evening Post*, because the *Port Talbot Guardian* was closed. However, she also noted:

We’ve got online *MagNet* website, so I can send more things to that... that *Golwg360*, the Welsh online, which grows in strength, shows how people are changing the way that they get access to news on different platforms now; I suppose not just to stick to the conventional television and radio.

As Curran argued, the Internet has brought into “being an efflorescence of Web-based journalism, which is compensating for the decline of traditional news media” (2011:25). Obviously, online media have become more and more important to politicians to voice their concerns. Another anonymous female Labour AM asserted, “People read things online now, don’t they? There is a lot of online journalism. And I think the other thing is that the journalists are picking up people’s tweets and everything now.” A number of writers and researchers, such as Ingram (2008), Farhi (2009), Posetti (2009) and Hermida (2011), suggested that Twitter has been used by journalists as “a tool to solicit story ideas, sources and facts”. According to Hermida, micro-blogging platforms, such as Twitter, that enable millions of users to communicate instantly, to share and to discuss events are “an expression of collective intelligence” (2011:214). Indeed, such participatory citizen

journalism is to fill the void left by the redundant print professional journalism in contemporary society. This is also important to democracy in Wales.

An anonymous female Conservative AM pointed out, “I do think it’s important for us to have an avenue to communicate with our constituents. I think social media plays a role, like Twitter and Facebook.” The Conservative leader in the Assembly, Andrew RT Davies, noted:

Even when I came here in 2007, Twitter, for example, was a relatively new phenomenon. It might even not have been around in 2007, I am not quite sure when Twitter came in to being. But certainly the last two or three years, Twitter has come into its own. And there are very few AMs now who don’t tweet. For example, some of them have got a very good account, you know. They’ve got 2,500-3,000 people following them. And all AMs or certainly the majority of them would look to have a website as well, which again even only as recently as 2007, might not have been the case. But now, it’s almost the accepted norm... Facebook as well, MySpace, things like that as well. So, it’s all those new media outlets people can use.

Similarly, the anonymous male Labour AM also stated:

I opened a Twitter account before the election as a candidate, and I now have got over 1000 followers. Lots of those people are campaign groups; lots of those people are journalists... There are a number of people that are living in the constituency, so they look occasionally at what you are saying and doing. That didn’t happen before. Clearly, there was Facebook in 2007. It wasn’t the same level and the same number of people as now. And I think that will only continue in the future.

Curran (2011:25) asserted that “a legion of bloggers, contributions from citizen journalists, and proliferating Web-based start-ups” are now “unstoppable” and will only continue to grow. As Vascellaro (2009) stated, only over a period of one year, from April 2008 to April 2009, the number of Twitter accounts increased from 1.6 million to 32.1 million (see also Hermida 2011). In terms of politics, the emergence of Twitter played an important role in organising and spreading information widely during major events, such as the 2008 US Presidential election, the 2008 Mumbai attacks and the 2009 Iranian election protests (Lenhard and Fox 2009; Shiels 2009; Hermida 2011). It is also true that

some accounts in the new media, such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook and other social media, do not have a mass market reach. This is because some blogs only have a limited number of readers, and some Facebook accounts only share information among a circle of friends. Therefore, the impact of those blogs or Facebook accounts might not be enormous. But as the Conservative leader Mr. Davies mentioned, some politicians on Twitter, for example, have an account of 2,500-3,000 individuals following them. This represents a substantial following in the Welsh context, even though it pales into insignificance compared to some celebrities' accounts, such as pop stars Justin Bieber and Lady Gaga. However, for some local politicians, social media is an important and useful way of being able to communicate with their electorate.