

Public Abstract

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Title:A STUDY OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN THE NEWS COVERAGE OF THE 1984 AND 2008 VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS

This research compared how gender stereotypes were framed during the 1984 and 2008 vice-presidential elections and compared and contrasted the findings from each election. Previous studies have found that the portrayal of male and female candidates in news articles have reflected gender stereotypes, such as associating male candidates with crime, defense, and economic issues and female candidates with healthcare, education, and environmental issues. Allowing gender stereotypes to influence the framing of issues, policies, and elections negatively impacts females'™ viability as candidates.

A quantitative content analysis was performed on articles from The New York Times and The Washington Post for each candidate from the time they were nominated until Election Day. George Bush and Geraldine Ferraro were the candidates in 1984. Joe Biden and Sarah Palin were the candidates in 2008. Three coders analyzed the articles for references to masculine categories, feminine categories, character categories, and tone of quotes categories. Total coverage was also calculated.

The results were as expected in all but two areas. The female candidates received more total coverage and more references within the feminine and character categories than the males, as the research predicted. Palin received more references within the masculine categories than expected and Ferraro received less negative coverage than expected.

Overall, the implications of the research are that gender stereotypes influenced the sources'™ news coverage of executive-level candidates, especially regarding total coverage and feminine and character-related issues and policies. The fact that Palin received more masculine coverage than Ferraro is encouraging. Although Palin received more negative coverage than Biden in 2008, she also received more positive coverage.