

Public Abstract

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Title:A Study of Newspaper Treatment of Male and Female Political Candidates

Following the 2008 Democratic Presidential Primaries, in which an African-American male vied for the presidential nomination against a Caucasian female, there is a greater need for insight into the effects of gender on coverage of political candidates in newspapers. A political candidate's campaign is partially shaped by the editorial choices made by print journalists, whose decisions shape the discourse around that candidate. In order to avoid the possibility of unfairly affecting a candidate's campaign, journalists need to understand the ways in which gender can affect their coverage of political candidates.

This study conducted a content analysis of articles in the New York Times or Chicago Tribune that mentioned Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton. Statistical analyses found that in comparison with Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton received more negative coverage, more coverage on her personal characteristics, and less total coverage. Obama received more positive coverage, more coverage on his issue stances, and more total coverage.

The results show specific areas in which journalists need to be careful when covering political races that involve male and female candidates. Balanced coverage requires that, at the least, male and female political candidates should receive similar amounts of issue coverage and personal coverage. This research will help journalists re-evaluate the ways in which they may unfairly think or write about political candidates based on their gender.