2. HAS HILLARY CLINTON SHIFTED THE MEDIA NARRATIVE OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP?

INTRODUCTION

During the 2016 U.S. Presidential campaign, media portrayal of political candidates have become crucial. While women are gaining more leadership prominence than in the past, female candidates in the U.S. still have less visibility and often distorted media coverage compared to their male counterparts (Lawless, 2009; Ryan, 2013; Schlehofer et al., 2011; Thomas, 2016). This discrepancy in leadership opportunities also emerges in a smaller political representation as only 19% of national legislators are women (Smethers, 2016). Women’s chances to become leaders is often undermined by stereotypical media narratives (Lawless, 2009; Ryan, 2013; Schlehofer et al., 2011; Thomas, 2016), which may reflect the fear of emasculation triggered by female leaders (Netchaeva et al., 2015; Beinart, 2016).

Recognizing the importance of providing women with equal opportunities to access leadership roles, and acknowledging the risks of gendered media coverage, scholars have been very active in investigating how media narratives of women leaders unfold. Research points out the need to further investigate the details of media frames, combining qualitative depth and quantitative breadth of results, and dissecting the specifics of different campaigns also through single-candidate analysis (Falk, 2010).

Informed by Goffman’s (1974) approach to framing, we define frames as “schemata of interpretation” that allow readers “to locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms” (Goffman, 1974, p. 21). Selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of issues and events, media frames guide our understanding of reality. For example, journalists often use pre-existing frames of reference to help readers or viewers understand new issues from familiar perspectives. Through the theoretical approach of frame theory, this chapter explores media representation of Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential campaign.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis is a qualitative process that allows for in-depth investigation of frames – or themes – as they emerge in media narratives (Tonkiss, 2014). Through critical discourse analysis, this chapter points out media frames while questioning their neutrality and legitimacy. In our analysis we explore the use of variations and silences in media text (Fairclough, 2010). We pay particular attention to recurring themes, stereotypical assumptions, omissions, and latent content that may reveal important power dynamics. Finally, we look at the connotation of certain words explaining how these words contribute to developing emotionally charged narratives. To control for subjectivity in the interpretation of our findings, we provide several examples of the themes identified. Considering the qualitative nature of our work, we believe such transparency to be pivotal in allowing our readers to more objectively and meaningfully access the results of our study.

Stereotype Threat

Claude Steele developed the term, ‘stereotype threat,’ to “describe the experience of members of a minority group within the context of a majority group” (Dines & Humez, 2015, p. 498). The initial study examined elite female video gamers playing against male opponents pointing out that they were not only playing a game, “but also disproving a number of stereotypes about females and aggressively, technology and willingness to challenge males” (Dines & Humez, 2015, p. 498). Stereotype threat, thus, exists because male gamers see female gamers as a threat in a traditionally male-centered gaming culture.

This concept can easily translate into the political arena – which is also a traditionally male-centered environment. Women in politics become victims of a stereotype threat when judged against their ability to conform to traditional gender appropriate expectations and roles. For instance, a woman running for President of the United States violates traditional gender appropriate expectations and roles. In such a context, media narratives could – explicitly or implicitly – voice this violation. Beinart (2016) explains, “except for her gender, Hillary Clinton is a highly conventional presidential candidate” (para. 1) and adds, “the reaction to her candidacy, however, has been unconventional. The percentage of Americans who hold a ‘strongly unfavorable’ view of her substantially exceeds the percentage for any other Democratic nominee since 1980, when pollsters began asking the question. Antipathy to her among white men is even more