

Running head: GENDER STEREOTYPES IN CABLE NEWS DURING 2018 ELECTION

The Role Gender Stereotypes and Gender Schemas Played in Cable News's Framing of
Candidates in the 2018 Midterm Election

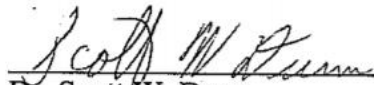
by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of Radford University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in the School of Communication

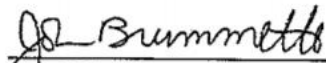
December 2019

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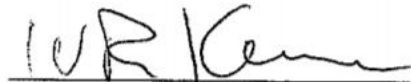
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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate whether major cable news outlets presented female candidates in a different light compared to male candidates during the 2018 midterm election news cycle. Previous research has shown a gradual change in the representation of females. However, past research has focused on representation of female candidates in local television shows and local newspapers. The objective of this content analysis was to understand how cable news outlets represent female candidates. To understand how cable news outlets represented female candidates, this study used a content analysis to analyze transcripts from the two top-rated shows from FOX News, CNN, and MSNBC. The variables used to determine the representation of female candidates in cable news outlets included quantity of coverage, gender issue coverage, gender traits used in association with a candidate, and the viability coverage associated with a candidate. This study contributes to the political communication field by exploring cable news outlets, a medium that has not been explored in as much depth as newspaper and local media stations. Additionally, this study contributes to existing research by suggesting that female candidates are receiving better representation in media during election news coverage.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Dr. Scott Dunn, Dr. John Brummette, and Dr. Bill Kennan, my thesis committee,
for your guidance through this journey.

I would like to give a special thank you to Dr. Scott Dunn. I appreciate your dedication and
guidance throughout this whole process.

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Introduction

“Some women get erased a little at a time, some all at once. Some reappear. Every woman who appears wrestles with the forces that would have her disappear. She struggles with the forces that would tell her story for her, or write her out of the story, the genealogy, the rights of man, the rule of law. The ability to tell your own story, in words or images, is already a victory, already a revolt.”

—Rebecca Solnit (2015)

Women have had to rewrite the rules of the historically restrictive political arena and push their way into representation in American politics. The battle for equal representation of female politicians started with the swearing in of Jeannette Rakin, from Montana, into the 65th Congress (1917-1919) (Center for American Women and Politics, 2019). Rakin was elected to Congress before women had the right to vote nationwide. The 19th amendment, which gave women the right to vote, was not ratified until 1920. Since the 19th amendment, the American political system has seen a very slow progression of women entering and participating in politics.

It was not until the 84th Congress (1955-1957) that the United States began to see an increase in female representation, with one female representative sworn into the Senate and 16 female representatives into the House. The next big surge of female candidates was in the 103rd Congress (1993-1995), which was coined “The Year of Women.” In this year, seven female representatives were sworn into the Senate and 47 into the House. Most recently in the 2018 midterm election, 25 females were elected into the Senate and 102 into the House of Representatives, proving to be a historic election for women (Center for American Women and Politics, 2009).

The total number of women in the United States Congress only makes up 23.6% of the total number of members of Congress (Center for American Women and Politics, 2019). This fact alone showcases the underrepresentation of females in elected office. Additionally, women make up more than half of the population in the United States, showing again how under-represented females are in comparison to their male counterparts. While the influx of females into the 116th Congress is an historic point in history for female representation in American politics, it does not mean the American political system has a newfound equality or diversity of representation. There are still deeply rooted biases in the American people that limit the growth of diversity in American representation.

Gender stereotypes have varied across different moments in history, but continue to guide the norms deemed appropriate for males and females. The slow progression of women being elected into political roles is evidence of a deep-rooted cause systematically limiting females. One would suggest that gender specific roles, traits, and images assigned to males and females are a few of those deeply rooted causes. There is a foundation of the American system that is rooted in limiting individuals based on their gender. The question now is what aspect of the American culture is perpetuating this foundation. This study suggests that news media outlets are the foundation perpetuating the gender stereotypes. To understand the role that cable news outlets may play in the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, this study uses a content analysis to understand the biases and frames that cable news outlets use when covering candidates. This research focuses on the amount of coverage candidates receive and the trait, issue, and viability coverage received in association to a candidate to determine the role cable news outlets play.

Literature Review

Gender specific roles, traits, and images deemed appropriate for each gender have had limiting effects on the role females have been able to play in American politics (Sanghvi & Hodges, 2015). Due to historically accepted gender-specific attributes, the different roles men and women play in society have become normalized. When females enter new arenas such as politics, there is a sense of anxiety created due to the restructuring of preconceived gender roles. When females enter politics, this not only redefines the role they play in society, but also drives new conversation around topics not normally associated with the established political discourse, such as women's reproductive rights, a women's relationship to war, and the debate about women balancing career and family (Ritchie, 2012). Ritchie continues to suggest that because women are creating a space for themselves in the political system, there is unease and uncertainty around this new political arena that was once dominated by masculine values.

Meeks (2013) found evidence to suggest that journalistic and political values have aligned with traditionally masculine values. He suggested that masculine behavior, characteristics, and professional experiences are highly valued and considered the norm, which in turn, creates a normalization of males in the political arena because their masculine traits and presence are the most ideal fit for politics.

According to Sapiro (1993), gender is an uncontrollable factor that has limited females to specific roles within society. Sapiro continued to suggest that because females have historically been limited from entering politics, there is now an assumption that females are underqualified because of their gender. Due to a set of preferred roles, traits, and images, females have had limited access to politics, which created a political atmosphere that has become masculinized (Meeks, 2013). The preference for masculine traits within politics has become the battle that

females have had and will continue to fight against so that at some point gender is not a qualification for a seat at the table (Huddy & Terkildsen, 2019; Humprecht & Esser, 2017).

Dolan and Sanbonmatsu (2009) looked to understand whether the public felt that the American political system needed more representation of women. The study found that the public expresses a preference for higher levels of women's representation, but overall, the public is comfortable with a male majority in government. The authors suggested that this may explain why women are underrepresented in government. They concluded with the idea that gender stereotypes provide a basis for beliefs of what male and females can do, which creates doubts about the competency and suitability of women in politics. They continued to suggest that these doubts provide implications about the public's view of the extent to which women should hold public office.

Quantity of Coverage

Quantity of coverage is crucial because a lack of available information to voters results in a disadvantage to the candidate because voters have been found to vote less for a candidate they do not recognize (Khan, 1994; Khan & Goldenberg, 1991). A study conducted by Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) showed that male candidates consistently receive more coverage than their female counterparts. In this study, an average of 12.9 paragraphs were published about male candidates each day, while only 10.5 paragraphs were devoted to female candidates each day.

A content analysis of newspapers conducted by Kahn (1994) found that there was a difference in the amount of coverage that male and female candidates received specifically in races for the U.S. Senate. Comparatively, 95 paragraphs each week were published for male Senate candidates, while fewer than 79 paragraphs were published for female Senate candidates. For gubernatorial races, it was found that women did not consistently receive less coverage, with

133 paragraphs per week being published for both male and female candidates. Kahn (1994) suggested that the lack of available information presented by the media might result in a disadvantage for female candidates. The type of office was a significant piece of information that Kahn showcased the idea that the quantity of coverage may depend on the office and the significance of that office.

Smith (1997) found that while there were some differences in gender-based patterns of coverage by the media, these findings are not as glaring as earlier studies reported. In a content analysis of newspaper coverage collected during the 1994 election, women received less coverage in open races in the U.S. Senate, and more coverage in gubernatorial races. This study looked at incumbency as a factor in quantity of coverage, citing Kahn (1992), who suggested incumbency is an advantage for both competitiveness and coverage during a campaign. However, Smith did not find that the incumbency was a factor that helped or hurt female candidates.

To explain why women received less coverage in open races, Smith suggested that the pseudo-incumbency effect might play a role. The pseudo-incumbency effect is the idea that because male candidates are more likely to have held elected office and are more likely to have had previous political experience, it may translate into more attention from the press (Carroll, 1986; Smith, 1997). Additionally, Smith suggested that the novelty effect provided an explanation for why women received more coverage in gubernatorial contests. In this study, all the gubernatorial candidates were trying to become the first female candidate to be elected as governor in their state, thus giving them the novelty factor that news media outlets thought was newsworthy enough to discuss. While this study did show a less glaring difference in the amount of coverage, Smith suggested that male dominance in politics is still prevalent and the increase in

coverage can be explained by the pseudo-incumbency factor and novelty factor present in these elections.

Jalalzai (2006) conducted research mirroring Kahn (1994) on media coverage for senatorial and gubernatorial candidates. This study was a content analysis of newspaper coverage of candidates running between 1992 and 2000. While this study mirrors the general research design of Kahn's 1994 study, Jalalzai added additional variables intended to lead to a better understanding of female versus male coverage in the media. In terms of quantity of coverage, this study found that women running for senatorial or gubernatorial office did not receive less media attention than males did. From the data found in this study, Jalalzai concluded that based on different factors, females were neither receiving less nor more coverage, which leads to the idea that amount of coverage was not based solely on gender.

In a content analysis of local television news in 172 U.S. House candidates, Lavery (2013) found that female candidates received the same amount of coverage as male candidates. This study was designed to model that of Kahn and Goldenberg's analysis of the media's reporting on Senate races in the 1980s. Lavery concluded that at the candidate level, no gender differences in coverage were significant; males and females received similar amounts of total coverage.

Bode and Henning's (2012) content analysis of major newspapers, cable news, and blogs provided insight into the media's coverage in terms of quantity of coverage of a major Vice-Presidential race between the female candidate Sarah Palin and the male candidate Joe Biden. In terms of the amount of coverage, they found that Palin received more media coverage in every medium compared to Biden: blogs 14.2 to 3.2 stories per day, newspapers 15 to 8.2 stories per day, and television 8.8 to 4.6 stories per day. To explore the novelty factor in the difference in

coverage, the researchers compared the Palin/Biden race to the 1984 Ferraro/Bush Vice Presidential race. Ferraro outpaced Bush by 33%, which is not as drastic as the 2008 Vice Presidential race, but indicates the role that gender played in creating a novelty for which news media outlets increased the coverage of female candidates.

The research suggests that female candidates have progressively seen an increase in the amount of coverage on a variety of different levels of cadency. While findings show that female candidates are receiving more quantity of coverage, these findings do not imply that the quantity of coverage has increased because news outlets see female candidates as equal to their male counterparts, but suggest that different factors such as the novelty affect and pseudo-incumbency are driving forces behind the increase in coverage. It is important to note that while an increase in coverage provides female candidates with more name recognition, it is important to understand in what ways females are being covered.

Viability

Khan and Goldenberg (1991) said that horserace coverage includes “any discussion of a candidates’ chances of winning, including comparisons of the two candidates’ organizations, discussion of poll results, and discussion of the candidates’ performance in campaign debates” (p. 188) or “any mention of who has the stronger campaign organization” (Khan, 1994, p. 161). If there is a focus on horserace coverage by news media outlets, there are implications that suggest it may position a candidate as less viable to voters (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). If a candidate is seen as less viable in the eyes of constituents, there are grounds to assume that a voter may be less likely to vote for a candidate.

Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) examined horserace coverage in the U.S. Senate races during 1984 and 1986 elections. The researchers found that horserace coverage was more

prevalent for female candidates; an average of 27% of articles written about female candidates discussed some form of horserace coverage, while only 21% of articles written about males talked about horserace coverage. In terms of viability, the content was rated on a scale from 1 to 4, with “1 indicating sure loser, 2 somewhat competitive, 3 indicating competitive, and 4 indicating likely winner” (p. 188). They found that the press was more negative in its viability assessments of female candidates. The results found that male candidates were labeled competitive (3.1), while female candidates were labeled as somewhat less competitive (2.5). If the direction of negative viability coverage is directed to female candidates, as these findings suggested, it can be implied that female candidates are at a greater risk to be considered less viable.

Kahn’s (1994) study replicated that of Kahn and Goldenberg’s 1991 study and the results were consistent with Kahn and Goldenberg’s content analysis. However, Kahn also looked at gubernatorial races, and found that the print media did not differentiate between male and female candidates when discussing horserace issues, with 15% of all articles regardless of sex focusing on horserace coverage. As seen in previous research, when type of office is considered, there are different results found, thus implying that the type of office can play a significant role in the type of coverage the female and male candidates receive.

Smith’s (1997) content analysis, closely mirrored that of Kahn’s (1994) study, but added gender parity in terms of coverage domination as a factor. Coverage domination was defined as one candidate receiving a minimum of one column more coverage than his or her opponent did. On days when female candidates were dominating coverage, more attention was given to horserace coverage, with 36 column inches of coverage focusing on horserace coverage. On days when males dominated the news coverage, males received on average of 30 column inches

devoted to horserace aspects of the campaign. These findings suggest that when female candidates dominated the news cycle, more time was taken to discuss horserace aspect of the races. This can imply that when male candidates dominated the news cycle, more time was devoted to different aspects of the campaign, like issue coverage that may lead voters to a better understanding of male candidates rather than a focus on horserace aspects of the race.

Bystorm, Roberston, and Banwart (2001) studied the newspaper coverage of 20 female and 41 male primary races during the 2000 election for U.S. Senate and gubernatorial elections. In terms of quality and dominant focus, this study found there were more articles focused on females than males; out of 707 articles, 42.4 % were female-focused and only 16.7% were male-focused. This study also investigated the differences in the favorable, unfavorable, and viability coverage of candidates. The study found that both females and males received more neutral coverage than positive or negative coverage. Of the 683 articles, females were mentioned positively in 14.1%, negatively in 18.4%, and neutrally in 67.2% of the articles, while the male candidates in 529 articles were mentioned positively in 6.4%, negatively in 23.6%, and neutrally in 69.9% of the articles. When viability was discussed in female-focused articles, the findings showed that 31.7% of these articles discussed female viability, while 31.1% of male-focused articles discussed male viability. In the 2000 primary races for U.S. Senate, female candidates received more newspaper coverage, but the quality of coverage was directed more to a woman's role as a mother or her marital status. This research indicated that gender bias in news media outlets was prevalent in the quality of coverage, but in terms of quantity of coverage, males and females were treated more equally.

Jalalzai (2006) found that female candidates did not receive less coverage than male candidates, but suggested that the substance of coverage was lacking. These findings suggested

that the substance of information being discussed in relation to female candidates was not on the same level as male coverage. In terms of viability, Jalalzai (2006) found that between 1992 and 2000, women senatorial candidates received higher viability ratings than men, but men were rated as more viable than women when running as an incumbent. When looking at viability for candidates running for governor, men received higher viability ratings than women, except when they were running as challengers. Men were receiving more positive viability coverage in races where they were already known, the incumbency races, and in races where quality of coverage was vital because of the open aspect of the race. In the aspects of these races, it was vital for the female candidate to receive positive viability coverage, but it was found that males were given the upper hand.

Bode and Hennings's (2012) content analysis compared the media's coverage of the 2008 election that involved Sarah Palin and Joe Biden. This study looked at the references made to electability, also referred to as "experience" or "viability." In a random selection of texts from all media, the researchers found that Biden was never negatively discussed in terms of experience, while Palin was regularly discussed in terms of lack of experience. This study also compared candidate specific coverage versus combined coverage of the two candidates. It was found that when articles mentioned both candidates, it was more likely to include discussions of electability, implying that when the candidates were being discussed together, it was almost necessary to discuss the likely electability between the different gendered candidates. This study was relevant because it exemplified how a female candidate was more regularly talked about in regard to lack of experience and when discussed in relation to her male counterpart, electability was more often brought into the conversation.

In regard to viability, there were a few different factors that were taken into consideration in the different content analyses to understand viability. In summary, viability is the aspects of coverage that imply the ability of a candidate to succeed in a race. For example, horserace coverage was a major aspect of viability coverage seen in these studies to measure the overall ability of a candidate to succeed in a race. It can be understood that viability coverage equals the overall ability of a candidate to succeed, and depending on the portrayal of different aspects of this type of coverage, for example, talk of poll results, debate performance, and overall likelihood of winning, a candidate can be portrayed as less viable.

Issue Coverage and Trait Ownership

The gender stereotypes and gender schemes that are a part of individuals' cognitive processes have created the conceptualization of gendered political issues. A political issue in its basic form is something that affects individuals in some way; it is neither male nor female. However, gender stereotypes and schemas play a significant role in how we interpret the world; political issues are another aspect that individuals have gendered. Not only have political issues become gender-specific, but they have come to limit females and males to specific areas of preferred expertise. This section looks to understand the role the news media outlets played in limiting specific issues to candidates based on their gender.

The information that news media outlets cover is becoming vital to the overall understanding of policy stances for a candidate. If it was found that there was a lack of issue coverage or coverage was based on gender, researchers suggested that voters would find it difficult to evaluate candidates in terms of policy. In a content analysis conducted by Kahn and Goldenberg (1991), they found that in terms of issue coverage, more than 3.5 paragraphs were published about male candidates' issue stances each day, while less than 3.0 issue paragraphs

were published each day for female candidates, implying that male candidates are receiving slighting more issue coverage compared to female candidates.

In terms of stereotypical issue coverage, Kahn and Goldenberg divided male and female issues based on past research, categorizing male issues as foreign policy, defense, economics, and agriculture, and female issues as minority rights, environment, abortion, school prayer, drugs, and discussion of social programs. The researchers found that female issues were discussed on a more frequent basis for female candidates (40%) compared to male candidates (30%). However, issues identified as male were talked about more often than female issues, but this study suggests that the presence of females in the race encouraged more discussion of female issues than had it been male versus male.

In Kahn's (1994) research, in both senatorial and gubernatorial races, women received less issue coverage than their male counterparts did. Kahn provided a few explanations as to why this may have been the case. First, there may have been an understanding among journalists that females were less capable of dealing with major issues, so females' views on issues were less newsworthy. Second, due to limited space allotted for discussion of issues, journalists may prefer to emphasize other aspects of campaign news when discussing female candidates. Lastly, issue coverage may be less extensive due to the idea that women may spend less time in their campaigns talking about issues. In terms of specific issue coverage for male and female candidates, it was found that female issues were mentioned 40% of the time for female candidates, but less than one-third of the time for male candidates. Overall, it was found that female issues (32%) received less issue attention when compared to the coverage of male issues (68%).

In terms of trait coverage, Kahn used the following variables: Male traits included independent, objective, strong leader, insensitive, aggressive, ambitious, and tough, while female traits included passive, sensitive, gentle, weak leader, and compassionate. Kahn found that in the U.S. Senate election trait coverage was sparse for both male and female coverage; fewer than 15% mentioned personality traits for candidates. For gubernatorial races, females received more personality trait coverage (21%), while males received only 15%. However, in terms of substance of trait coverage, it was found that in senatorial coverage, male traits were discussed more in male coverage. Kahn suggested that this may have been due to reporters considering male traits as a more relevant factor to discuss in terms of qualifications for office.

Bystrom, Roberston, and Banwart (2001) found that there were slight differences in the issues discussed in newspaper articles. They found that the top issue mentioned in both male- and female-focused articles was taxes, which was identified in 22% of the 118 male-focused articles and 20% of the 300 female-focused articles. Other issues identified in similar percentages in male- and female-focused coverage were the economy (11% male, 13% female), budget deficit (5.1% male, 4.3 % female), and immigration (4.2% male, 4.7% female). Issues identified more with female candidates, but not at a significant percentage, included women's issues (15.7% female, 10.2% male), social security (7.3% female, 3.4% male), environment (5% female, 1.7% male), drugs (3.7% female, 2.5% male), defense (3.3% female, 2.5% male) and welfare (3% female, 1.7% male). While there was not a drastic difference in the issues covered for male and female candidates, this research did contribute to the school of thought that acknowledges the presence of male- and female-specific issues.

Jalalzai's (2008) study focused on issue-related coverage that candidates received during election news coverage. Issues coded as female included childcare, unemployment, welfare,

poverty, health care, education, women's and minority rights, gun control, drug abuse, and the environment. Issues coded as male included foreign policy and other international issues, defense, economic, finance, agriculture, and crime. This study found that in senatorial races, female candidates were associated more with "female issues" as was the case with males and "male issues." This study found that in gubernatorial and senatorial races in the 1990s, candidates were not associated with issues connected to their genders.

A content analysis performed by Major and Coleman (2008) of newspaper articles and editorials was used to determine if the media had changed in their coverage of women and minority individuals in campaign news coverage. This study found that there was some reduction in the use of stereotypes in the media's coverage, but the media had continued to use stereotypical coverage. The feminine issues included issues such as healthcare and education, while masculine issues included crime and economics. They found a significant difference of mentions about a female candidate's ability to handle "feminine issues" and a male candidate's ability to handle "masculine issues."

Bode and Hennings's (2012) research compared coverage between Joe Biden and Sarah Palin. It was found that in terms of issue coverage, Palin was more often associated with "feminine" topics in every medium, while Biden was strongly connected to coverage in foreign policy in newspapers and blogs, and the economy in television. Biden-focused television and blog coverage was associated with language linked to taxes and the economy more than Palin-focused coverage. Social issues were 23-48% more likely to feature in Palin-focused coverage. These findings suggested that "gender stereotypes regarding male candidates were strongly at work in the coverage of the 2008 vice presidential candidates" (p. 241). However, there were a few instances of coverage that did not fit within gender issued framework. For example, it was

expected that healthcare and education would be closely linked to Palin-focused coverage because those topics are considered more “feminine.” However, it was found that while Palin’s newspaper coverage was more closely linked to education, Biden’s television and blog coverage was more closely linked to health care and education.

Meeks (2013) suggested that gender constructs are generated areas of emphasis that are deemed masculine and feminine and that certain groups were seen as “owning” certain issues. Meeks analyzed news coverage of eight mixed-gender elections between 1999 and 2008. This study looked to understand the presence of gendered issue and trait coverage and if there was a difference found with either a female or male journalist. Feminine issues were coded with any discussion of education, healthcare, reproductive rights, or women’s issues (e.g., equal rights, equal pay, or entitlements during maternity leave). Masculine issues for this study included military, defense or war, crime, foreign affairs, or economy. Feminine traits for this study included compassion, emotionality, honesty, congeniality, or altruism, and masculine traits included leadership, rationality, aggressiveness, decisiveness, or independence. The research found that female and male journalists did not show a difference in their emphasis of masculine content coverage. For example, “both feminine issues and traits, female journalist focused more on feminine coverage than male journalist when reporting on mixed-gender Senate campaigns” (p. 65). Bringing the gender of the journalist into the coding for this content analysis adds to the research by acknowledging that female and male journalists are different, and this may contribute to a difference in their coverage of candidates. There are a variety of different factors that may contribute to the overall coverage of candidates.

In terms of issue coverage, female candidates were discussed more regularly regarding identified female issues and the same for male candidates and male issues. However, when the

type of race was brought into the later research, there was a less direct correlation of females being talked about regarding gender-specific issues, but overall male issues were being talked about more regularly. The research suggests that male issues were leading the conversation overall, but there are a few outside factors that may contribute to these findings. For instance, the overall political atmosphere of the time in which the sample was drawn can lead to certain topics being discussed more often. It is important to understand the issues being discussed regarding female and male candidates as significant political issues gain traction within the public and the political environment in general. Additionally, it is important to understand the time spent on issue coverage regarding candidates and whether one gender is being discussed in regard to issues more than the other.

Regarding trait coverage, it is important to understand the implications that trait coverage has on how a voter views a particular candidate. If in society, we associate female candidates with the weaker traits, then by default if a female candidate is described in such a way, it will be more likely voters consider her the weaker candidate. As the cultural identity of females continues to shift, it is important to understand whether female candidates continue to be identified with female-specific traits.

Gender Stereotyping

According to Hamilton and Sherman (1994), “stereotypes are shared beliefs about the attributes and behaviors of individuals based on their membership in groups defined by a singular characteristic such as race, gender or age” (p. 3). Stereotypes provide individuals with a base knowledge set about a group, which allows for quick inferences to be made about said group (Aalberg & Jensenn, 2007). The shortcuts described by Aalberg and Jensenn (2007) are automatic and in most cases unavoidable in everyday life.

Gender stereotypes focus on the specific traits, roles, and images that are most commonly associated with females and males. Individuals attribute certain characteristics to women and men that create gender-specific constructs into which women and men are supposed to fit (Bigler & Liben, 2017). Gender stereotypes, the accepted characteristics of what it is to be female and male, bind groups of individuals to specific roles within society. If a woman or man tries to relinquish and separate him or herself from the gender stereotypes, he or she is cast aside as different.

Stereotypically feminine traits include compassion, emotionality, honesty, altruism, and congeniality. Stereotypically masculine traits include strength, decisiveness, independence, aggressiveness, and confidence (Banwart & Mckinney, 2005; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Meeks, 2013). The stereotypical roles assigned to women are the roles of the mother, the caregiver, and the spouse, while the male is viewed as the protector, the provider, and the breadwinner (Bauer, 2013; Major & Coleman, 2008).

Stereotypes are problematic because they dictate the roles that males and females are expected to fulfill (Meeks, 2012). The roles that society has assigned as appropriate for males and females have shaped the preferred communication styles of male and female candidates, as well as the roles, traits, and images that are emphasized about either male or female candidates in the mass media (Huddy & Terkildsen, 2005; Trent, Friedenberg, & Denton, 2011). The media's presentation of female and male candidates combined with preconceived expectations of how males and females are supposed to act creates a limited space for female candidates to succeed within the political atmosphere (Bauer, 2013).

Gender Schemas

While gender stereotypes are the generalized attributes of each gender, gender schemas are the unconscious cognitive structures individuals create for each gender. Markus, Crane, Bernstein, and Siladi (1982) said that while gender stereotypes are the social beliefs about a gender, gender schemas are the individual's understanding of gender identity. Hitchon and Chang (1995) define a gender schema as a network of cognitive associations that guide the individual in processing of category-related information. Fiske and Tylor (1991) suggested that schemas allow us to organize information and facilitate the processing of information. Schemas are created in response to personal experiences, media exposures, and real-world occurrences (Hitchon & Chang, 1995 & 1997). Valian (1998) suggested that gender schemas are the hypotheses individuals create about the behavior, traits, and preferences of men and women.

According to Harp, Loke, and Bachmann (2010), "gender schema theory points to cognitive structures that are historical, contextual, and persuasive and illustrate the significance of gender stereotypes" (p. 293). Bem's (1981, 1983, 1993) gender schema theory emphasizes the role that gender plays in the processing of information and the guiding of behavior. Gender schema theory explains how individuals' exposure to cultural definitions of maleness and femaleness create cognitive structures for individuals to make quick inferences about the world around them (Bem, 1981, 1983, 1993; Harp et al., 2010).

Schemas provide a means for individuals to organize and code information into categories that create expectations about how the world works, thus leading individuals to make inferences about the ways in which individuals are supposed to act (Hitchon & Chang, 1995). Therefore, we can accept that individuals through their experience with the world have created specific gender schemas that influence their thoughts and actions in terms of preconceived

notions of how males and females are supposed to act and behave. Bem (1981), who introduced the concept of a gender schema, wrote:

The distinction between male and female serves as a basic organizing principle for every human culture. Although societies differ in the specific tasks, they assign to the two sexes, all societies allocate adult roles on the basis of sex and anticipate this allocation in the socialization of their children. (p. 354)

This process of socialization of specific attributes deemed appropriate for males and females guides the perception of the world and the “two sexes become sex typed, in their own eyes, not only different in degree but different in kind” (Bem, 1981, p. 355).

Framing Theory

Framing theory provides a framework through which problems can be defined and identified, leading to the evaluation and causality of the problem, allowing ultimately for understanding and treatment of the problem (Entman, 1993). Framing theory and research is focused on the main goal of describing the power that communication has (Brummette & Fussell Sisco, 2017). According to Hallahan (1999), “[f]raming is conceptually connected to the underlying psychological processes that people use to examine information to make judgments and draw inferences about the world around them” (p. 206). The framing process Entman (1993) suggests “[i]s to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52).

Frames allow specific information to become salient to individuals; they can make a piece of information “more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993,

p. 53). Frames play an important part in news reporting because they allow the news media to create significance about a topic (Entman, 1991; Gitlin, 1980). However, gender-related frames may have negative consequences for women because the specific frames laid out by the media lead individuals to understand the role women play in society as less than that of a man's, particularly in terms of politics (Braden, 1996; Heldman, Carroll, & Olson, 2005).

To understand framing is to understand how social actors act and interact “to yield organized ways of understanding the world” (Reese, Gandy, & Grant, 2001). Price and Tewksbury (1997) suggested that framing is the media's presentation of a thought that becomes salient to the audience that results in their activation and use in evaluations of the world around them. Pan and Kosicki (2001) stated that “framing effects results from schema activation or modification and can be found in how information is processed and made sense of, how people talk about an issue, and how they form political evaluations” (p. 39). The goal of framing is to attract more supporters, to mobilize action, and to expand the realm of influence, and to achieve this goal, the mass media is strategic in constructing the information released to the public (Pan & Kosicki, 2001; Snow & Benford, 1998, 1992; Zald, 1996).

Media Bias

Today, individuals do not experience politics directly, but are able to form impressions and evaluations of the candidates through different forms of media (Dalton, Beck, & Huckfeldt, 1998). Dalton et al. (1998) established that individuals can form impressions and evaluations of candidates through different intermediaries, and the most commonly used is mass media, specifically television and the press. Understanding and acknowledging the role that the media plays in the political atmosphere is prevalent in understanding the persistence of gender stereotypes (Harp et al., 2010). Ritchie (2012) suggested that popular opinion is significantly

impacted by the gendered implications of political candidates by the media. Media bias includes the framing of stories strategically to attract and influence viewers specifically in terms of the view the public has of male or female candidates (Lavery, 2013; Snow & Benford, 1988, 1992). Media bias includes but is not limited to the amount of coverage female and male candidates receive, the type of language associated with male and female candidates, the way male and female candidates are presented in the media, and the issues covered in relation to male and female candidates (Jalalzi, 2006; Kahn, 1994; Lavery, 2013).

Bartels (1993) suggested that the media have a large effect on those individuals who have less knowledge of a candidate because he or she is “new.” He continued with the idea that media exposure to new candidates is more consequential because prior opinions of those candidates are weak, thus leading to the media exposure of a candidate to have a greater impact on opinion. The information that the media focus on has an important role for providing cues about the candidates to the voters (Dalton et al., 1998). With the understanding of the facts related to women’s slow progression into American politics, it is important to understand the role that media bias has on those women who are creating a new space for women in American politics.

Relevance of Cable News

Television has played a pivotal role for political coverage in the United States. There has been a transition from individuals using newspapers as their main source of news coverage to using television and specifically cable news. In a 2016 study conducted by Pew Research Center, it was found that only two in 10 U.S. adults get their news coverage from newspapers. There is a notable difference in the age group of individuals still using newspapers as a source of news. Only 5% of 18-20 year-olds get their news from print newspapers, while 48% of Americans 65

and older continue to use print newspapers as a source of news (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, & Shearer, 2016).

The shift from newspapers to televisions as the preferred source of news began in the early 1960s and continues to evolve to this day (Griffin, 2017). The drop-in consumption of traditional news media began when revenues from advertisements and classified sections were not being utilized anymore because individuals began using the internet as their source for advertising (Griffin, 2017). The newspaper industry will continue to experience a decline because internet and television news is able to reach a wide range of individuals in minimal amount of time and with less cost involved (Ahrens, 2016).

In 2016, a study was conducted by Pew Research Center showing that 57% of U.S. adults get their news from TV-based sources. Through the findings of this study, it can be suggested that Americans no longer prefer to experience politics through newspapers; they prefer television as their source of news. This shift from newspapers to television news creates an opportunity to expand the research on gender stereotypes in news media outlets, specifically in cable news outlets.

Following the news remains an important part of many Americans' day-to-day lives, according to Mitchell et al. (2016). They also suggested that seven in 10 U.S. adults follow national or local news somewhat or very closely, and 46% of U.S. adults prefer to watch news rather read or listen to it. According to a Pew Research study conducted by Amy Mitchell, 46% of Americans get their news from local television, 31% from cable news, and 30% get their news from networks. The researchers continued by claiming that those individuals who watch television news are behaviorally loyal to the source of news they watch and those individuals who are very loyal followers are more likely to think the media organizations do a good job of

informing people and trust the information being presented. This research continued with identifying those individuals who are very loyal news consumers as preferring television news to other news sources like websites, apps, radio, print newspapers, or social media.

The research suggests that television is the preferred news source for very loyal individuals of news who believe that national news or cable news is trustworthy and does a good job of informing the public of news. These individuals are taking what the news media present at a very high level of trust and acceptance of information. This study will look to understand what information is being presented to those individuals of high loyalty and trust.

While television and particularly cable news has found a place in many Americans' day-to-day lives, these cable news platforms are fighting for viewership on a daily basis. According to Steinberg and Littleton (2017), audience ratings fuel advertising rates and affiliate fees, which leads the "Big Three" cable news networks Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC fighting to keep their viewers, but also vying for new viewers. The authors continued by stating that Fox News is the most watched news channel, being at the top for more than 15 years and having more than twice the affiliate fees compared to CNN and triple that of MSNBC.

The trend in revenue growth for the three main cable news networks correlates to the increased viewership in cable news channels in 2015 (Mitchell & Holcomb, 2017). According to the Pew Research Center's analysis of Nielsen Media Research data, a combined average viewership saw an increase in the prime-time slot for the three major news channels by 8% to 3.1 million in 2015. This research suggests that more viewers turned to cable news in 2015 than in 2014, which has not been seen in several years and yields to the expectation that there will be a continued revenue growth and increased viewership of cable news networks.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Quantity

Smith (1997) suggested that the novelty effect plays a large role in the transition from women receiving less coverage to more coverage as women enter politics. Women received more coverage because politics is a male-dominated sphere and women entering this sphere is new and unheard of. The 2018 midterm election saw more women than ever before run and win congressional elections. Due to the insurgence of female candidates in the 2018 midterm election, the researcher made the below hypothesis about the quantity of coverage that female candidates will receive.

H1: Female candidates will receive more coverage than male candidates.

Viability

The media frames female candidates as less viable through their focus of horserace coverage, coverage about candidate strategy, campaign organizations, poll results, performance in debates, overall likelihood of winning, fund-raising, and political advertisement claims (Kahn, 1994; Lavery, 2013). Viability coverage plays a pivotal role in the ways in which voters interpret how a race will end up, thus becoming more salient with voters. This has historically put female candidates at a disadvantage. That is why it is important to understand the role cable news outlets play in the viability coverage of candidates.

H2: Women will receive more coverage related to their viability.

RQ1: Which cable news shows provide the most viability coverage of female candidates?

Trait Coverage

It is important to understand how female and male candidates are being covered in terms of trait association because if the media perpetuate stereotypical trait affiliation, it may lead

voters to believe a female is less qualified for the office because of the masculinization of politics. For this study, the specific traits that will be looked at for males will include independent, objective, strong, leader, insensitive, aggressive, ambitious, tough, rational, and decisive, and female traits will include passive, sensitive, gentle, weak leader, compassionate, emotion, congeniality, and altruism (Kahn, 1994; Meeks, 2013).

H3: Women will receive more coverage in relation to stereotypically feminine traits.

RQ2: Which cable news shows use more stereotypical trait association for males and females?

Issue Coverage

Coverage of issues is imperative for a successful campaign because it will allow voters to understand where a candidate falls on certain policy issues. If women or men are being covered on specific issues based on their gender, it will leave voters with a less than full scope of where each candidate falls on issues that may be important to them. For this study, the issues that were categorized as male included foreign policy, defense, economics, and agriculture. Issues identified as female issues included minority rights, environment, abortion, school prayers, drugs, social programs, health care, poverty, welfare, unemployment, childcare, and gun control (Jalalzai, 2008; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Lavery, 2013).

RQ3: What issues are being covered the most for male and female candidates?

RQ4: Do cable news shows differ in the number of segments dedicated to issue coverage for male and female candidates?

Methods

This study was a content analysis of transcripts from major cable news outlets. The transcripts were taken from the top two rated cable news shows from FOX News, CNN, and MSNBC. The researchers used NexusUni, a research database, to pull the transcripts. NexusUni allowed the researchers to search and collect the transcripts from a specific set of search terms for the shows listed above. There were two coders for this content analysis and a code book was created with specific variables and definitions for the coders to use.

The top two segments were determined by a November 2018 poll from TV Newster's top viewed cable TV news shows. The two most viewed shows from FOX News included the Hannity Show and Tucker Carlson Tonight. During the timeframe of this study, The Sean Hannity Show aired at 9 p.m. on Monday through Thursday. Tucker Carlson Tonight show aired at 8 p.m. on Monday through Thursday. The two most viewed shows from CNN included Cuomo Prime Time and Anderson Cooper 360. During the timeframe of this study, Anderson Cooper 360 aired weekdays at 8 p.m. and Cuomo Prime Time aired at 9 p.m. from Monday through Thursday. From MSNBC, the two most viewed shows included The Rachel Maddow Show and The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell. During the timeframe of this study, The Rachel Maddow Show aired at 9 p.m. from Monday through Friday and The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell aired at 10 p.m. from Monday through Friday.

After the researchers identified the top-rated shows from the respective cable news outlets, the researchers used the identified shows to collect the sample set. As mentioned, the transcripts from each show were collected by using the research database, NexusUni. Within this research database the researchers used the advanced search option to input specific search terms, a specific time period, and a publication name to draw a sample set.

Prior to the start of the official coding and to ensure a high rate of intercoder reliability, the coders reviewed and discussed in depth the language and definitions of each variable. To ensure high standards of intercoder reliability, the coders ran a pretest on a sample set of segments. The pretest was used by each coder as an opportunity to examine the variable set and ensure the definitions were reliable for an accurate coding process. During the pretest phase, the coders created guidelines to ensure accuracy. In addition to the codebook, a few guidelines were created, including checking if a person mentioned was in fact running in the 2018 midterm election and to only code a candidate if he or she was directly discussed in reference to the 2018 midterm election. Once the pretest was complete and the coders were able to code at a reliable level, the next step was to collect segments that would be used for the data set. The search criteria for those segments is described to follow.

The pre-sample phase determined that “2018 and midterm and election” encompassed the appropriate combination of key words to provide an accurate data set. In addition to using the specific set of search terms, the researchers put the name of the show in the publication section of the advanced search. The time period from which the segments were pulled included the dates starting with September 3, 2018 and ending by November 13, 2018. This time period was identified as the appropriate amount of time because it encapsulated both an appropriate period before and after the election took place.

In constructing the codebook for this study, found in Appendix A, there were multiple variables that were set to understand the role the top-rated news show from FOX News, CNN, and MSNBC played in the election coverage of female candidates. First it was identified what show the transcript was associated with, then the coder would proceed to read the transcript and code if a candidate was mentioned, the gender of the candidate, and if the candidate was running

in a house or senate election. Once the candidate was identified, the coders looked for any reference to issue, trait, or viability coverage. The variables used regarding issue, trait, and viability coverage were a compilation of past variables used in previous research. If there was the mention of a candidate and no direct mention of the candidate regarding an issue, trait, or viability variable, it was left blank to signify no additional variables were identified, but the name of the candidate was used for quantity of coverage purposes.

A total of 20 segments for each show were coded for this content analysis. To identify which segments would be used, the researchers used a random number generator. To ensure intercoder reliability, 20% of the 20 segments were coded by both coders. The researchers used a collaborative spreadsheet program called AirTable (<https://airtable.com/>) to store the data that they collected. Once all the coding was finished, all the data was downloaded into Microsoft Excel 2016 and SPSS Statistics 25. Through this program, the coders were able to analyze the data that was collected.

Results

In terms of intercoder reliability for the articles that were coded within the 20% guidelines, the researcher used percent agreement for the intercoder reliability test. It was found that the two coders agreed 89% of the time on which issues were associated with a candidate and 80% of the time on candidate traits associated with a candidate. For the viability factor, the coders agreed 72% of the time.

Hypothesis 1 stated that female candidates will receive more coverage than male candidates. The results of the content analysis indicated that male candidates were mentioned 214 times and female candidates were mentioned 142 times. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported, as male candidates were actually mentioned significantly more often than female candidates ($\chi^2(1) = 14.12, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that women will receive more coverage related to their viability. The results of the content analysis showed that male candidates were discussed in terms of viability more than female candidates. There were 129 mentions of male candidates discussed in terms of viability, which was 60% of the total mentions of male candidates, while there were 79 mentions of female candidates in terms of viability, which was 56% of the total mentions of female candidates. This difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = .59, p = .44$).

Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that women will receive more coverage in relation to stereotypically feminine traits. Female candidates were associated with stereotypically masculine traits 19 times and stereotypically feminine traits 8 times. Additionally, male candidates were associated with masculine traits 11 times and feminine traits 8 times, so in general, stereotypically male traits were more common for both genders. It also should be noted that the

overall number of trait mentions was very low. Therefore, the results of the content analysis show that this hypothesis was not supported.

Research question 1 asked which cable news shows provide the most viability coverage of female candidates. The data from the content analysis showed that Anderson Cooper had 80% of mentions of female candidates (12 out of 15) focusing on viability, followed by Sean Hannity (57%), Rachel Maddow (56%), Lawrence O'Donnell (50%), Tucker Carlson (47%), and Chris Cuomo (33%). Although interesting, this difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(5) = 6.32$, $p = .28$), possibly because of the small number of viability mentions overall.

Research question 2 asked which cable news shows use more stereotypical trait associations for male and females. The data from the content analysis found that all the shows associated female candidates with masculine traits more than feminine except Lawrence O'Donnell. The O'Donnell show had two mentions of masculine traits and two mentions of feminine traits. It was found that Anderson Cooper's show did not associate female candidates with specific traits. In all the shows it was found that male candidates received a mixed amount of masculine and feminine trait associations.

Research question 3 asked what issues were covered the most for male and female candidates. The results of the content analysis found that for male candidates, healthcare was mentioned 12 times, economics 10 times, and minority rights eight times. Female candidates were mentioned regarding health care 13 times and minority rights five times.

Research question 4 asked whether cable news shows differ in the number of segments dedicated to issue coverage for male and female candidates. It was found that The Sean Hannity Show had 18 issue mentions for male candidates and nine for female candidates. The Rachel Maddow Show had 10 mentions for male candidates and four mentions for female candidates.

Chris Cuomo had four mentions of issue coverage for male candidates and nine mentions for female candidates. The other three shows had limited numbers of issue mentions, with Tucker Carlson having two for male candidates and three for female candidates, Lawrence O'Donnell having three for male candidates and two for female candidates, and Anderson Cooper having one for male candidates and three for female candidates.

Discussion

This content analysis looked to investigate whether cable news outlets portrayed candidates in a different light based on the gender of the respective candidate. To understand the type of coverage that candidates received, the researcher used specific variables to analyze transcripts from top-rated cable news shows. This section will discuss the results from the data set and provide a summary of the implications and suggestions for future research.

In terms of quantity of coverage, past researchers found a progressive trend of women receiving more coverage overall. It had been suggested that different factors including the novelty effect and pseudo-incumbency were contributing to the changes being seen in overall quantity of coverage. Based on trends seen in past research, this study hypothesized that female candidates would receive more coverage in cable news outlets compared to males. However, the hypothesis was not supported. There are a few implications that can be drawn from this finding.

Cable news outlets thrive on their ability to create and report on newsworthy components of what is happening at a specific time. In this study, it was found that in total, male candidates were only mentioned 214 times and female candidates 142 times, for a total of 356 overall mentions. It can be suggested that based on the total number of mentions for all candidates across all 120 segments, these cable news outlets did not view the 2018 midterm candidates as newsworthy compared to other events happening during the news cycle. From the overall lack of mentions for both female and male candidates, it can be argued that cable news outlets in general were not focused on specific races and were not focused on the gender of a candidate. The researcher found that the discussion was focused on other aspects of the political atmosphere at the time that included, but were not limited to, the Kavanaugh hearings and the Mueller report investigations. This was an observation that was found during the data collection. The researcher

noticed trends in stories being mentioned. Through observations made and the data found, it can be implied that during this time cable news outlets in general were less focused on candidate coverage.

As the results show, in terms of quantity of coverage, male candidates were talked about more often than female candidates. This can be understood through a newsworthy centered focus of cable news outlets. There were very few newsworthy races that involved female candidates, with a few exceptions that involved a Senate race in Arizona between two female candidates. Outside of the Arizona Senate race, most of the tight races or noteworthy races involved male candidates. In general, most discussion of elections involved general talk based on partisan viewpoints or the implications of a particular outcome of the election. It should also be noted that the overall discussion of House elections was very limited and House elections is where the most female candidates were running. A general conclusion that can be drawn from the findings in terms of quantity of coverage is that overall, cable news outlets were not focused on candidates in the 2018 midterm election. The lack of overall candidate coverage has major implications on the ability for voters watching cable news outlets to understand and draw inferences about the wider political atmosphere in the United States. While House elections by the nature of the race are focused on local support and media coverage, it is still important for the wider public to be able to draw references and implications of the wider political environment.

The 2018 election saw more female candidates elected into office than ever before, but many of these wins happened at a very local level, and from what the researchers gathered, local elections were not discussed on a national level. When gender was brought into the discussion, the primary focus was usually surrounding the diversity of the 2018 midterm candidates and how more female candidates than ever before were running for election. There was very little gender-

specific coverage that focused on the political issues or traits generally thought of being associated with a gender. For example, Lawrence O'Donnell on September 7, 2018, said,

And, you know, (Obama) talked a lot about the candidates out there, up and down the ticket. Not just Senate, not just House but all the way up and down the ticket. They're more diverse. We've got a ton of women running, just dynamic interesting candidates. And I think what he was talking about is how important it is to run for something, to run on something and how important it is for those folks to get out and vote for those candidates.

Another example came from Chris Cuomo on November 7, 2018:

So, last night, brava to the women. I don't care what your partisan stripe is, what your tribe, your team, or whatever you're calling it, it doesn't matter. Women were on the ballot and they won the night. Women voted in ways we haven't seen.

This topic was historical: The fact that more women than ever before were running was a newsworthy topic that the news outlets capitalized on for a broader reporting purpose rather than to report on specific candidates. In conclusion, while female candidates were mentioned less, the data overall suggests that gender did not play a significant role in the amount of coverage a candidate received; rather, the type of office was more prevalent in determining the amount of coverage a candidate received.

In terms of viability, mentions included horserace coverage, candidate strategy, campaign organization, poll results, debate performance, overall likelihood of winning, fund-raising, or political advertising. The results showed that male candidates received more viability coverage, but this finding was not statistically significant. Viability coverage was determined to play a significant role in the coverage of candidates because the overall nature of this type of coverage

provides predictions and implications to a candidate's ability to be successful in a race.

Depending on the type of viability coverage a candidate receives, a candidate can be framed in a particular light to the viewers. It was found that cable news outlets provided more viability coverage for male candidates. The researcher suggests that based on the findings, cable news outlets were focused on what type of coverage would get them the most newsworthy components. Based on the findings, the researcher suggests that cable news outlets were not focused on the gender of a candidate in determining the viability coverage, but rather on the races that would provide them newsworthy aspects to report on, and as mentioned previously, those were the highly competitive Senate races.

In terms of issue-focused coverage, the data shows that cable news outlets focused on very specific topics of discussion, presumably ones that at the time were of high importance to most viewers rather than candidate-focused issue coverage. The results of the content analysis found that health care and minority rights were frequently mentioned regardless of the gender of the candidate. These findings suggest that cable news outlets did not mention a topic because of the gender of a candidate, but because that topic was considered newsworthy.

During the midterm elections, health care was the number one issue that voters were concerned about according to a 2018 poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation. That can explain why the cable news outlets focused on a health care more frequently. Additionally, during the timeframe that the segments were pulled from, a caravan of migrant families was coming to the United States. This story received a lot of coverage on the shows and press in general. This was a newsworthy story that captured the attention of the United States. This may provide insight as to why minority rights were mentioned frequently in relation to both male and female candidates.

The results suggest that candidates' issues were talked about infrequently overall. The implications that can be drawn from the data is that cable news outlets focused less on issue coverage associated with candidates in the 2018 midterm election and more on implications of the outcome in general from the results of the 2018 midterm election. Issue coverage for cable news outlets was more in line with newsworthy reporting that focused on hot topic issues at the time, when issue coverage was present. It can be implied that for cable news outlets, gender was not the driving force behind the issues covered regarding a candidate, but whether an issue was relevant at the time.

To represent how little issue coverage was present, it was found that a total of three shows contained all the issue coverage found (Sean Hannity, Rachel Maddow, and Chris Cuomo). Issues were mentioned more often about male candidates, but due to the very low number count, this is not a significant finding. The researcher found that the most significant data that was collected was the overall lack of issue coverage within major cable news outlets.

The lack of issue coverage provides wider implications of the overall trend that cable news outlets show when framing the broader American political system. By way of this lack of issue coverage, voters are becoming more reluctant to understand a candidate for the issues he or she stands for, but rather voting along party lines or by name recognition. The ways in which mass media outlets cover elections provide the framework through which constituents are shifting to alignment with party affiliation rather than understanding the policy stances of a particular candidate.

Regarding trait coverage, the results found that male traits were used more often for both genders. It can be implied that cable news outlets did not focus on stereotypical gendered traits for candidates. It should be noted that the shows chosen for this study tend to be very partisan,

and the researchers suggest that candidates were talked about more along the lines of their party rather than their gender. For instance, Republican women might have been associated more with issues or traits traditionally associated with men, while Democratic men might have been associated with traits and issues traditionally associated with women. To understand this at a deeper level, the researchers decided to run an analysis comparing party identification and trait coverage.

It should be noted that party identification was not part of the original codebook, but to add to the findings, the researchers added party identification as a variable in their post data analysis. In the post analyses, the researchers wanted to better understand the relationship between party identification and issue/trait coverage. The researchers predicted that Republicans would be associated with more masculine-related issues and that Democratic candidates would be more closely associated with feminine issues. It was found that the researcher's assumption about Republican candidates was not supported, but the assumption about Democratic candidates was. Republicans were most often associated with health care (13 mentions) with none of the other issues being connected with Republican candidates more than four times. The issues most associated with Democrats were health care (11 mentions), economics (10 mentions), and minority rights (9 mentions).

In terms of trait coverage, the researchers found that Republican candidates were more often associated with masculine traits. Republican candidates were mentioned regarding masculine traits 12 times compared to just three associations with feminine traits. However, Democratic candidates were as likely to be associated with either type of trait: 13 times for both feminine and masculine associations. The researchers thought it was important to mention these

findings to suggest that future research regarding cable news outlets should focus on the partisan lean of the cable news show versus the coverage of the candidates based on party identification.

In this content analysis, the researchers sought to understand the role that the media played in the persistence of gender stereotypes by way of quantity, issue, trait, and viability coverage of candidates. Based on past research, conclusions were drawn to predict how cable news outlets would select aspects of candidates based on their gender and make them more salient through their coverage. However, it can be implied from the findings of this content analysis that gender was not the leading factor in the type of coverage a candidate received. The researchers suggest that future research focus on the partisan lean of each cable news outlet in determining the type of coverage candidates receive.

The objective of this research analysis was to understand the role that gender stereotypes and gender schemas played in cable news outlets' framing of candidates. While the results of this content analysis did not provide major implications regarding the presence of gender as a factor in the framing of candidates, it can be implied that there were other framing objectives at play during this election news cycle. While the role of gender did not provide the framework through which cable news outlets represented candidates, there should be an understanding that gender in some way is still finding a presence in American politics. While the researcher has drawn conclusions from the findings of this study, it should be noted that a wider analysis of cable news outlets and the framework through which they represent candidates is needed.

Cable news outlets, in this ever-changing fast paced world, are looking to stay relevant regarding workflows, money streams, and viewership. It is important to understand what is driving their coverage of elections overall, how they provide implications to the culture shift of

the American political system, and how they drive the understanding of American politics through oversimplified, party-lined coverage of candidates and elections.

Limitations

It is important to understand the limitations of this study when implications are being made and generalizations are being asserted. As mentioned in the methods section, this sample was taken from a very specific timeframe. For future research, the researcher suggests widening the period of time to get a larger sample size to ensure that the sample is considered representative of a larger set of transcripts. Additionally, only the top three rated cable news outlets were used in this sample set. For future research, the research suggests adding additional cable news outlets to get a wider scope so that implications can be made more broadly about cable news outlets. Another limitation of this study was the lack of coding positive or negative variables with regard to viability coverage. This variable should be used in future research to more accurately understand the implications of the viability coverage in cable news outlets. Lastly, the research suggests allowing for more context clues and overall awareness of the political environment to be used to drive the variables, specifically in regard to gender issues. It will be important to have a more specific set of variables that is relevant to the political environment of the time.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand the role cable news outlets played in representing and framing female candidates during the 2018 midterm election news cycle. Past research found a gradual increase in the quantity of coverage females received, in addition to female candidates receiving more viability coverage and coverage related to gender specific issues and were more commonly associated with feminine traits. The hypotheses were constructed based on prior research and all three were not supported. Cable news outlets were a different data set compared to past research that proved to showcase difference aspects of reporting styles, leading to a very different outcome compared to past research. The research questions provided insight into the overall trends that cable news outlets use in the framing of election news through the amount of viability coverage they used versus issues coverage. It can be implied that in general, cable news outlets did not report based on a candidate's gender, but more on the overall newsworthiness of a candidate or issue.

It was important to research the role gender plays in cable news outlets because these news outlets play a pivotal role in influencing constituents. Cable news outlets are widely viewed and can play a part in shaping the views of constituents based on the coverage they provide. It should be highlighted that cable news outlets from Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC are very partisan in their coverage, suggesting that partisan ties may have played a more pivotal role in the overall bias and framing of candidates in the respective cable news shows. It is important to continue to understand how the media is covering candidates, whether it be gender-specific or party-specific attributes. The media will continue to play a role in how voters understand politics and more specifically understand the candidates running to represent them. A light needs to be shown on the specific biases and frames of media outlets that shape voters' views of politics so

that participants of democracy are not controlled by the media's portrayal of candidates, but can come to their own conclusions.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Codebook

A) News media outlet

- 1) Fox News: Hannity
- 2) Tucker Carlson
- 3) CNN: Cuomo Prime Time
- 4) Anderson Cooper 360
- 5) MSNBC: Rachel Maddow Show
- 6) Last Word with L. O'Donnell

B) Name of candidate discussed:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6) Other

C) Gender of candidate discussed

- 1) Male
- 2) Female
- 3) Other

D) Gender Issue Coverage:

Code according to whether one or more of the issues listed below is mentioned about a candidate. A code for present (1) or absent (0) was assigned for each female or male candidate, and these items were combined for an aggregated variable ranging for 0 to 8.

DF1: Education (1, present, 0, absent)

- *Example: The segment focuses on state educational policy at the elementary, high school, or collegiate level. The segment mentions a candidate's position on free education, taxes for education, charter schools.*

DF2: Healthcare (1, present, 0, absent)

- *Example: The segment mentions the free health care, insurance, the cost of medication, the Affordable Care Act*

DF3: Family Life (1, present, 0, absent)

- *Example: The segment mentions maternity leave, parental leave, child care, marriage, or single parent*

DF4: Social Welfare (1, present, 0, absent)

- *Example: The segment mentions food stamps, poverty, housing assistance, PELL Grants, housing assistance, job training programs or Social Security*
- DF5: Minority rights (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Examples: Gay marriage, LGTBQ+, affirmative action, voter registration, voters rights, or illegal immigration*
- DF6: Environment (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment mentions of climate change, global warming, solar energy, raising sea levels*
- DF7: Abortion Rights (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment mentions abortion, family planning, pro-choice, or pro-life*
- DF8: Child Care (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment mentions of family, working mothers/fathers*
- DF9: Unemployment (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment mentions unemployment rates*
- DF10: Drug Abuse (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on drug addition, drug overdose, national drug epidemic*
- DM1: Business (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on financial regulation, shareholders, big corporations,*
- DM2: Economics (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on taxes, budget*
- DM3: Crime (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on raising crime, police enforcement, shootings, fun law*
- DM4: International Affairs/Foreign policy (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on diplomatic affairs, international trade agreements, international taxes*
- DM5: Defense (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on military budget, military forces, war, Afghanistan, Iraq, war of terror*
- DM6: Agriculture (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on farmers, crops*
- DGN1: Finance reform (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on tax reform*
- DGN2: Transportation (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on transportation infrastructure, roads, or trains*
- DGN4: Religion (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Example: The segment focuses on religious freedom, religious rights, separation of church and state*

E) Gender traits:

For both traits variables, for each of the respective traits a code of present (1) or absent (0) was assigned for each female or male candidate, and these items were combined for an aggregated variable ranging from 0 to 10

- EF1: Compassionate (1, present, 0, absent)

- *Defined: Any mention of compassion, sympathy show by the candidate, any concerns the candidate might have for the less fortunate*
- EF2: Emotional (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of the candidate personal emotion – crying, being to angry, being scared, being sad, being happy*
- EF3: Honest (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of the candidate being truthful, free of deceit, or their sincerity*
- EF4: Altruism (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of the candidate's selfless concern for the well-being of others, selflessness, self-sacrifice, unselfish*
- EF5: Congeniality (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of the candidate being pleasant or friendly, agreeable, amiable, cordiale, gentle, sociable, warm, pleasant*
- EM1: Strength (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of the candidate being emotionally or physically strong, having power, being tough, being firm*
- EM2: Decisiveness (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of the candidate being quick to make decisions, conclusive, being able to decide, strong-willed, resolute, determined*
- EM2: Independent (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of the candidate being free from control, not depending on anyone, individualist, freethinker, self-sufficient, self-standing, cable of doing something by themselves*
- EM3: Aggressive (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of a candidate being quick to attacking something or someone, forceful, competitive, vigorous, dynamic, bold, hostile,*
- EM4: Confident (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Any mention of a candidate showing confidence, being self-assured, sure of oneself*

F) Viability

- F1: Horserace coverage (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Was the segment primarily concerned with which candidate is ahead or behind in the race?*
- F2: Candidate strategy (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Does the segment focus on the tactics of candidate, party, or interest group, and talk more about the “game” or “style” of politics and elections than substance or issues?*
- F3: Campaign organization (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Does the segment focus on the political party or political affiliation of the candidate?*
- F4: Poll results (1, present, 0, absent)
 - *Defined: Is the story about a poll? Does the segment describe or by assumptions about a candidates place in a particular poll?*
- F5: Debate performance (1, present, 0, absent)

- *Defined: Does the story focus on the results of a debate the candidate may have performed in? Does the segment describe a debate performance? Does the segment suggest that how good or bad a candidate did in a debate?*
- F6: Overall likelihood of winning (1, present, 0, absent)
- *Defined: Is there any coverage focusing on if a candidate will win? Does the segment make any suggestions to how a particular race will end up?*
- F7: Fund-raising (1, present, 0, absent)
- *Defined: Is the segment about fund-raising? Does the segment talk about funds available to a particular candidate?*
- F8: Political Advertising (1, present, 0, absent)
- *Defined: Does the story analyze a candidate or interest group ad for the claims it makes or its use of imagery? Does the segment make comments on a political advertisement?*