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The Gendered Lens of News Coverage: A Media Analysis of the 2016 Election

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The Gendered Lens of News Coverage: A Media Analysis of the 2016 Election

THESIS

By

Elizabeth V. Gonzalez

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in Political Science, Philosophy, and Economics

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Does the media have a gendered lens when it covers women and men running for public office? As technology develops and the internet becomes more accessible to the public, this question becomes increasingly important. Answering whether or not news organizations have any bias when it comes to political candidates carries serious implications for how election outcomes should be evaluated and understood. The goal of this research is to shed new light on gender bias within the 2016 context by providing a comparative analysis of the coverage between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the 2016 election. This study analyzes articles published by the *New York Times* in the 100 day period leading up to the election. Each article is evaluated for the candidate of focus, the number of Trump mentions relative to Clinton mentions, and its correlation with polling results. The final results find that Trump had more articles published about him than Clinton did, and more name mentions relative to Clinton per article. However, increased Trump coverage did not correlate with increased performance in the polls, which highlights some of the limitations of media bias influencing outcomes. This finding in particular points to the need for further research in order to fully determine the effect that news coverage has when it comes to women versus men running for office in general and the 2016 presidential election in particular.

Keywords: Media bias, gender bias, news coverage, The *New York Times*, 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump.

The Gendered Lens of News Coverage: A Media Analysis of the 2016 Election

Introduction

Women have historically been underrepresented in elected office, and continue to be to this day. The first woman wasn't elected to Congress until 1917, and a woman would not be a presidential candidate until 2008.[1] Today, in 2021, women only hold 16% of governor seats, 26.5% of seats in Congress, and only 30.9% of seats in state legislatures. Though there is a significant amount of research dedicated to determining why exactly this is the case, there continues to be a number of questions surrounding the precise reason, or even combination of reasons, as to why. Regardless of the fact that progress has been made in different levels of public office, from state legislatures to Congress, there is one position that remains strikingly void of a woman: the United States presidency. Arguably the most powerful country in the entire world, the United States has never had a woman as president. Granted, women were not allowed to vote until 1920, and though the first woman to seek the presidency, Victoria Woodhull of the Equal Rights Party, ran in 1872, there was not a woman nominated as the candidate for a major party until 2016, with Hillary Rodham Clinton of the Democratic Party. The question of why once again arises. Are the political institutions inherently sexist in such a way that they have prevented a woman from being elected to this office, whether that is the political parties, the election process, or the government itself? Is society at fault, with its expectations, stereotypes, and biases? Is the issue with gender differences between men and women?

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[1] The first woman to run for presidential office actually did so in 1872 - well before women even had the right to vote. Her name was Victoria Woodhull and she ran on the ticket of the Equal Rights Party, as is later mentioned. Since then, 11 women have made it as candidates in the general election, though only as third party candidates. However, Hillary Clinton was the first to be on the ticket with a major party for all the states' primaries and caucuses in 2008.

This paper will seek to explore whether the media plays a role in shaping election outcomes at the presidential level in such a way that women are negatively impacted. To be clear, the results of this research will not be overtly generalizable, as the only candidate that we have available at this level of analysis is Hillary Clinton. Because of the limited nature of the data and this study, however, it will be difficult to determine whether or not the media reports on Clinton in a particular way because of the fact that she is a woman or because she is Hillary Clinton. Undoubtedly, the media reported on Clinton and Trump through drastically different lenses, but this is to be expected, at least to a certain extent. Trump and Clinton are different candidates, different people with different backgrounds from different parties. However, the key question that we will continue to return to is whether any of these differences in coverage stem specifically from a gender bias. The goal of this research is to shed new light on gender bias within the 2016 context by providing a comparative analysis of the coverage between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the 2016 election.

Such an investigation carries great significance, particularly in an age where increased emphasis is placed on the role that the media plays in elections. Similar research has been done at the congressional level, and though no direct media bias was found there, an analysis at the presidential level might yield different results (Hayes and Lawless 2015). This study takes a first step at determining whether or not there might be a media bias against female candidates running at the presidential level. This research is important for understanding election outcomes with the surrounding context of the media and its impact on the potential for women to run for president and serve in the Oval Office someday.

Background and Significance

As mentioned previously, the 2016 presidential election would be the first in America's history that a woman would be selected as the nominee for a major party. However, this was not Hillary Clinton's first run for the presidency, as she began this journey in the 2008 democratic primaries. Eventually losing the nomination to Barack Obama, despite being more qualified on paper (Mo 2015), she later became Secretary of State under the Obama administration before running again in 2016. In contrast, Donald Trump came from outside the world of politics, having made his name as a businessman and a reality TV star. Initially seen as a candidate with limited chances of succeeding in the primary, he went on to become the nominee for the Republican party. The 2016 election turned out to be a decidedly divisive one, with the results incredibly close. Though Donald Trump won the Electoral College 304 to 227, Clinton took the popular vote by almost 3 million, a point difference of about 2 percent, making 2016 the fifth time in history that the Electoral College and the popular vote yielded different results.[2]

What role, then, did the media play in these results? There has been some research into this question, though it is difficult to determine the precise extent to which the media had an influence. However, in comparison to previous elections, it has been noted that the 2016 presidential election was "overwhelmingly negative in tone and extremely light on policy" though this has been an increasing trend since the 1980s (Patterson 2016). One look through the headlines about each candidate further illustrates this point, with more articles focusing on scandals than focusing on policy issues. At the same time, it is also important to note that the amount of news media consumed by the public has been on a consistent downward trend, particularly print media.[3] That being said, with the rise of the internet, access to news is

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[2] The last times the Electoral College yielded different results from the popular vote include 1824, 1876, 1888, and 2000.

[3] The estimated circulation of U.S. daily newspapers has been decreasing at a consistent rate since the 1980s, going down by about 10% each of the past few years. However, digital news has been on a slight rise in recent years, though it is more difficult to gauge.

changing, and it will likely continue to do so as different means of accessing information arise, such as through social media. In short, there are a variety of factors that should be taken into account when considering what role the media played in the 2016 election.

When it comes to determining the differences in the way that the media covered Trump versus Clinton, the results carry significant implications. Though whatever comparative analysis that comes out of this report is not generalizable to female candidates in elections overall, it is still valuable to take note of any noticeable differences in the coverage of the two candidates in this election, particularly because of the emphasis on political advertising and campaign ads. This election is particularly notable due to Donald Trump's reliance on free media coverage in order to receive recognition and get his word out. Throughout his campaign, Trump expressed disdain for spending money on political ads, and Clinton frequently outspent him on advertisements. Though most political scientists believe that political advertisements have a negligible impact on election outcomes, Lynn Vavreck (2016) shows that in the 2016 election, spending on this type of campaigning was generally correlated with a small but meaningful effect on Clinton and Trump's performance in the polls. Coppock et al. (2020) also provide insight into this question of the impact of campaign ads with reference to the 2016 presidential election, overall finding "small average effects on candidate favorability and vote". However, they also acknowledge that "despite these small effects, campaign advertising may still play a large role in election outcomes," particularly in an election as close as 2016's. In addition, though media coverage and campaign ads can play similar roles and produce comparable outcomes, they are still different from one another. The fact that Clinton outspent Trump in paying for campaign ads and still lost is an indication of other involved factors, such as media

attention, exemplifying the importance and need for focusing on the amount of coverage each candidate receives.

Compiling a comparative analysis that observes and discusses the way that the media represented and discussed Hillary Clinton in comparison to Donald Trump provides a more complete understanding of the different factors that contributed to Clinton's overall loss as well as the outcomes of the 2016 election more generally. Media continues to become more widespread and accessible, and its effects on elections cannot be dismissed. Though fully understanding whether or not news organizations cover women and men running for office through a gendered lens is not conclusive in this study, we are nonetheless provided with a more complete picture. Further realizing whether or not any bias is due to differences in gender rather than the differences in candidates will require further research and comparisons with other studies that discuss gender bias in the media.

Literature Review

This research is influenced by and further builds on two distinct veins of research: studies that are trying to answer whether or not the electoral arena that female candidates run in is biased, as well as why that might be, and studies that are exploring media bias specifically, particularly at the presidential level in reference to Hillary Clinton. Each of these strains of research has helped shape and inform the approach taken in this study and the hope is to contribute to both, by not only providing insight into media bias in general, but also into gender bias that may exist for women running for office in particular.

The majority of this study was informed and inspired by a recent article written by Hayes and Lawless's (2015), which falls into both categories mentioned above. The authors analyze the media coverage of women versus men, running at the congressional level. They focus on local

news outlets, and overall find that candidate sex does have an effect on media coverage of or voter attitudes toward men and women running for office in their districts. Once compared side by side, the women and men running against each other receive similar coverage. However, this research was only done at the district level, and it was explicitly noted by the authors that results might very well differ if a similar study was done at the presidential level. This refers to both the coverage and candidates, as only local news outlets were used instead of national news organizations covering the district elections. Hayes and Lawless (2015) have therefore provided the foundation for this research, which shall attempt to contribute to their discussion of gendered media bias by doing just that: replicating a similar study at both the presidential and national level.

Teele et al. (2018) also provide relevant insights, particularly in their exploration of the forms of bias that have the potential to hinder the election of women to office. Here, the focus is not specifically on the media, but rather on the existence of outright discrimination, double standards, or double binds. Though no evidence is found for outright discrimination or double standards, there is support for a double bind in which the expectations for men and women burden women moreso than they do men, particularly in reference to child rearing. Though it might be the case that men and women do not face outright discrimination or double standards, the fact that candidates are viewed more favorably when they have children works as a double bind for women. Therefore, in order to experience the same favorable outlook that a man with children would, women have more obstacles to overcome. The importance of these results for the current research is found mostly with the question of outright discrimination when it comes to media coverage. The results of this paper will contribute to our understanding of whether there is in fact a gendered difference when it comes to the way the news covers women and men. Though

Teele et al. acknowledge previous support for the idea that women receive less attention from the media than men, these results have the potential to demonstrate how this might also be true at the presidential level.

When it comes to media bias specifically, this research is functioning under the key assumption that the media has some level of influence on election outcomes. This premise coincides with that of Bode et al.'s (2020), where the direct impact of the media is studied. They find that news organizations, as well as social media, play an increasingly significant role in elections, and from this note "that accounting for both the nature of media content and the nature of media effects is central to understanding presidential election campaigns." As noted above, the state of the media is quickly changing and developing, and understanding the role it plays is becoming increasingly important with every election. The research that will be done in this project hopes to build on this idea and contribute to this understanding.

Media coverage in the 2016 presidential election has been evaluated in other contexts as well, such as by Bhatia et al. (2018). They use news articles to determine the media representations of the two candidates in the election as well as the words and traits associated with each of them. They find trait associations with morality to be dependent on the political bias of the news organization, as well as differences in associations for warmth of the candidates. In addition to further noting the importance of the media in elections through the mention of "Existing evidence [that] strongly suggest that news media play an important role shaping people's voting attitudes", this study also conducts a comparative analysis of the news, with a slightly different goal in mind. Such an analysis is particularly relevant for the present study, which will only be looking at a single news organization, one that tends to have a left leaning political bias. The results therefore have to be evaluated with this context in mind. Further, these

surrounding factors emphasize the importance of the data selection process for studies involving media analysis, especially when it comes to the type of news, as well as the organizations from which the news comes.

Both in terms of studying biases in the electoral arena generally, as well as media bias specifically, past research has established a foundation upon which the analysis of this current paper will hope to build upon and contribute to, particularly with respect to comparing the media coverage of Clinton and Trump, as well as understanding what role the media plays in elections.

Expectations

Though a number of factors could contribute to the results of this study, the focus here will be primarily on the direct findings, rather than the potential explanations for such findings. Three key hypotheses will be examined in the analyses below. Again, there is potential that the findings of this research are correlated with a number of potential causes that are outside the scope of this study, and thoroughly understanding what causes theses outcomes will require further research not covered in this paper.[4] Deciding what outcomes to focus on was a process of considering both the importance of certain comparisons as well as how straightforward and objective the findings could be.

The first hypothesis addresses which candidate will have more overall articles that are determined to be about each of them respectively. The expectation is that Trump will have more articles than Clinton, both in total and on average per day. When candidates spend millions of dollars on campaign ads, the possibility that the media might give more attention to one candidate than another has significant implications for how that might affect the election results.

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[4] Though the overall goal is to determine whether or not the media has a gender bias in its coverage of elections and the effect that this has on election results, it is acknowledged that finding the answer to this inquiry requires the consideration of several factors, such as who the candidates are, what news organizations are covering them, the time in the election cycle, and more. Because this study focuses on one specific election and the coverage from only a single news organization, understanding what shaped the findings in this study will require further research past the scope of this study.

Therefore, determining which of the two candidates did in fact receive more attention than the media is relevant to understanding the actual outcome of the election. This hypothesis will set the foundation for the rest of the study to be built upon.

H1: Donald Trump will have more articles written about him than Clinton will over the entire 100 day period as well as on average each day.

The second hypothesis is that Trump will have more name mentions relative to Clinton per article. An extension of Hypothesis 1, this hypothesis will allow us to understand not only how many more articles were about one candidate than the other, but also how much each of those articles focused on one candidate compared to the other. Each article will be assigned a "Trump Advantage", which will be how many times Trump's name was mentioned in the article relative to Clinton's. This factor is also important particularly because a number of articles focused on both candidates. However it is necessary to understand whether or not these articles are giving more attention to one candidate over the other when their purpose is to cover both. Such results might indicate some level of bias when it comes to the two candidates.

H2: Trump will be mentioned more often within articles relative to Clinton.

Finally, in considering whether or not the articles have any correlation with the projected vote share, it is expected that the greater the Trump advantage, the greater the projected vote share for Trump will be. This test will take a step in determining whether candidate coverage is correlated with how well they do in the polls. Though media coverage still has potential relevance even if it has no effect on the way voters view the candidates, the point of this inquiry is to establish the relevance of the media to the perspective of the public and determine any existing correlations.

H3: The greater the Trump advantage, the greater his projected vote share will be.

If these hypotheses appear simplistic, it is because they are only a step in advancing the understanding of gender differences in elections. Here I am not examining the causal relationships between what produces the differences in media coverage between women and men, specifically Clinton and Trump, but providing a new window into the dynamics of media coverage within the context of the 2016 election, an election that many view as among the most consequential in the modern era. Though this study is attempting to shed light on potential gender bias that the media might have, it is fully acknowledged that such claims cannot be justifiably made from a single case between two candidates and through one news organization. Regardless, this research will provide important insights to the continuing study of gender bias in the media and politics by answering whether or not there is in fact a difference in the way Clinton and Trump were covered by news organizations. This research and the specific questions introduced by the hypotheses will help us understand not only whether there is a disparity in the coverage of Clinton and Trump, but also what form that difference takes. Answering these questions provides the foundation for future research and queries, as once it is established that a difference exists, further research can inquire into the question of why there was a dissimilarity in the way Clinton and Trump were reported on.

Research Design and Methods

Building off of the ideas discussed above, the following will outline the approach that was taken in producing a comparative analysis of the media coverage of Clinton and Trump in the 2016 election. This approach is also designed so that similar research can be replicated in the future with different election years, different candidates and different levels of office.

Selection

The majority of this research is going to revolve around the actual content that is produced by the media. Knowing this, it is necessary to define what the process for selection is for this project, in reference to the news organizations that are focused on, the time periods that articles come from, and the articles that are included.

News Organization

There are a few factors to take into account when it comes to selecting the news organization that will supply the articles for this research. First, if one is building on the expectation that the media has a gender bias that is reflected in their reporting, it is also expected that this has some effect on the public, in one way or another. For this reason, it would make sense to focus on the news organizations with the highest level of viewership and reach. Further, it is important to note the political bias of a news organization, as this can potentially have an effect on the results (Bhatia et al., 2018). Finally, keeping in mind whether the news organization is one that falls into the category of new media versus traditional media will also be insightful, particularly when considering that new media has been found to have more sexist coverage than traditional media (Han and Heldman, 2017).

The news organization of focus for this research will be the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* is an organization that is consistently rated as center to left leaning, and one that has an online population of 53,966, making it the newspaper with the second highest level of digital traffic.[5] Further, it is considered a traditional news outlet, rather than a digital native one, despite having had an increased online presence over the past few decades. Researchers commonly use the *New York Times* as the focus of analysis, and this project adopts a similar empirical approach.

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[5] The news organization with the most digital traffic is Yahoo-ABC news, though they do not have an accessible archive, a factor that was required in order to be used for this research.

Ideally, there would be multiple news organizations included in such a study, but for the sake of this research only the *New York Times* will be used to collect articles.

Time Periods/Articles

The time period these articles are selected from span the 100 days before the election. In the case of the 2016 election, which took place on November 8th, the article selection begins on August 1st. This particular span of time was chosen in order to focus on the time leading directly up to the election but at a point in which both candidates had been officially nominated by their respective parties following the Democratic and Republican conventions.[6] In the 100 days leading up to the 2016 election, the *New York Time*s published a total of 15,565 articles. This sample is limited to those articles that directly center Clinton or Trump, or both, in any context. Those that focus on the election itself or on other governmental matters are not included. However, it is necessary to further define what is meant by a centering of either Clinton or Trump as well as to specify the process that was used in attaining articles from the *New York Times*, which is outlined below.

Initial Selection

Using the *New York Times* Archive, it is possible to set specific dates and use search terms in order to generate the desired content. This section outlines the process used to achieve a sample that fit the relevant criteria to this study. Using the "Date Range" option, the start and end dates were set as "August 1st, 2016 - November 8th, 2016". This brought the available articles to the previously mentioned 15,565. The term 'election' was entered into the search bar in order to

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[6] Hillary Clinton was deemed the presumptive nominee on June 6th, 2016, and was announced as the official nominee for the Democratic party on July 26th, during the Democratic National Convention, which took place from July 25th-July 28th. Donald Trump, on the other hand, was deemed the presumptive nominee on May 4th, 2016, and was officially announced as the nominee for the Republican party on July 19th, 2016, during the Republican National Convention, which took place from July 18th-July 21st.

filter out publications that would not be of interest.[7] The number of articles that mentioned the

term election during the set time period was 3,420. The term election was selected due to its

neutrality in reference to either of the candidates. The *New York Times* archive also has an option

where one could select publication type; here, only 'Articles' were selected. This precluded

videos, interactive slideshows, graphics, and audios, bringing the total number of articles to

3,078[8].

Further Selection

Despite the above selection process substantially providing a more workable sample of

articles, this still left a significant number of articles that were not relevant to the present

research. In order to further ensure that the only articles included in the final sample were those

that centered either Clinton or Trump, the following process was used with each article in order

to determine if it were to be included in the final sample or not: If the topic of the article is

Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump, it is included (The Life of Hillary Clinton, What Makes

Donald Trump Tick, etc). If the topic of the article is Clinton's or Trump's action or can be

framed as a noun that is a possessive of Clinton's or Trump's, it is included (Hillary Speaks,

Trump Sues, Hillary's Emails, Trump's Tapes, etc). If the topic of the article can be framed as a

person that is a possessive of Clinton's or Trump's, it is included only if Clinton or Trump are

mentioned more times than the other individual (Clinton's Aide, Trump's Wife). Supporters or

voters are not included if they are the topic of the article. If the topic of the article is a different

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[7] The term 'election' was selected due to its neutrality as well as scope. Using this term rather than a different term, such as 'president', or the candidate names, resulted in the largest starting sample size. When the term "election" was used, there were relevant articles that came up that did not come up using other search terms. One could say that the net was cast wide to begin, in order to make certain no articles of interest would be missed.

[8] Because this study focuses so much on word usage and word count, including any other type of publication would not contribute to the overall purpose of the research. However, it should be noted that replicating similar research with these other types of media could produce interesting results and contribute to our overall understanding of the role news organizations play in elections.

person in juxtaposition with Clinton or Trump or their possessives, it is included only if Clinton or Trump are mentioned more times than the other individual (Obama and Clinton Campaign in CA, Pence Comments on Trump's Tapes). Additional articles that did not fit the above criteria were included if the topic focused on a presidential event in reference to either of the two candidates (Debates, Campaigns, Election).[9]

Analysis

Once the full sample of articles was selected, each article was analyzed on the dimensions outlined below. These include the number of times each candidate is mentioned in an article, the candidate of focus in an article, and the candidate mentions relative to the other candidate. From here, the total number of articles about each of Clinton and Trump is determined. Further, if any unexpected details do not fit into the scope of these predetermined factors, they will also be noted and included in the final results.

Candidate of Focus

For each article, it will be noted who the candidate of focus is, either Clinton or Trump. This will be done by noting the number of times the candidates' names are mentioned in each article. Specifically, the article is deemed to be focused on the candidate that is mentioned more frequently in the article. However, it is of course likely that certain articles will mention both candidates in a similar capacity, and there is a separate category for such articles. For an article to be about both candidates, the mention rate of their names has to fall between 40-60%. If the name mentions fall outside of this rate, then the candidate who is mentioned more is the focus. It

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[9] The following is an accessible link that displays the selection process in a list format. During the research, the list of questions was asked of each of the articles one by one. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VdpWQ1BAmCQARZw2vjQ5ZDRIrxjAbdHJAlvMRKzoMgM/edit?usp=sharing

should also be noted that for this category that includes both candidates, the rest of the data will still be collected in the same way.

Trump Advantage

Once the number of times each candidate's name is mentioned in each of the articles is collected, this information is used to calculate a variable that is referred to as the 'Trump Advantage'. The Trump Advantage is calculated as the number of times Trump's name is mentioned divided by the total number of both Clinton and Trump mentions. The result is a decimal between 0-1.00. A higher Trump Advantage indicates that the article was more heavily centered on Donald Trump, a lower Trump Advantage indicates that the article was more heavily centered on Hillary Clinton.

$$Trump\ Advantage = \frac{Trump\ Mentions}{Trump\ Mentions + Clinton\ Mentions}$$

The Trump advantage is also the key variable used to find any correlation between the results of this study and polling results. Once the Trump advantage is calculated per day, it is compared to the average projected vote share for Trump from Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, key swing states in the 2016 election.

Unexpected Details

It is important to acknowledge the possibility that there could be findings in this research that are not captured by the outline noted above. In order to account for this, any unexpected details that are found through the course of the study will be taken into account and presented separately from the rest of the analysis. This would include sharp differences in the adjectives used to describe candidates, an unexpected quotation or story, or anything else of the sort.

Results/Analysis

Certain results of this study were as expected, but others were more surprising. Over the hundred day period, 879 articles were included, or an average of roughly 9 articles per day. The number of articles ranged from 1 article for a day, occurring on August 7th, to 30 articles in a day, occurring on September 27th. The shortest article was 177 words while the longest was 6282 words.[10]

The data provided support for the first hypothesis, which is that Trump would receive more coverage than Clinton. There are 540 Trump articles during this period, compared to 201 Clinton articles (there were 138 articles that were determined to be about both candidates). The following graphs show the distribution of articles over the 100 day period in four parts so that each day can be viewed in isolation and it can be easily determined which candidate received more coverage on a particular day.[11]

In fact, when looking at the graphs one can easily differentiate which days Trump had more articles than Clinton, which days Clinton had more, and which days the two had the same amount. There were 3 days that Clinton and Trump were covered the same amount, and 13 days Clinton was not covered at all. There were not any days that Trump received 0 coverage. Most of the data shows Trump receiving more coverage than Clinton, and there are only a small handful of days that Clinton received more coverage than Trump, a total of only 9 out of the 100 days.

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[10] Interestingly enough, both the shortest (177 words) and longest (6282 words) articles were deemed to be Trump focused articles, with a Trump Advantage of 1.00 and 0.90 respectively. The names of the articles were "Donald Trump's Atlantic City" and "How Donald Trump Set Off a Civil War Within the Right-Wing Media."

[11] The articles are displayed in four graphs both for better visibility and because the articles were collected in four parts, with the 100 days divided into 25 day periods. This allowed for easier maneuvering of the data, as each article was downloaded one by one into an excel sheet. Further, displaying the data on less graphs does not allow for each day to be viewed on its own. In this layout, it can easily be determined on which days Trump had more coverage than Clinton and vice versa.

Though a few of these days occurred during the month of August, the majority of them took place in the last 10 days of the election.

Interestingly, upon going back to the sample of articles in order to more closely examine the days Clinton had more coverage, it was found that out of the 9 days that there were more Clinton focused articles, 5 of the days were due to significant coverage of Clinton's email controversy.[12] The other 4 days did not have any particularly distinct reasons for their increased coverage, though 1 of the days did have mentions of Clinton's health in multiple articles.

Figure 1.1

Articles Per Day (Part 1)

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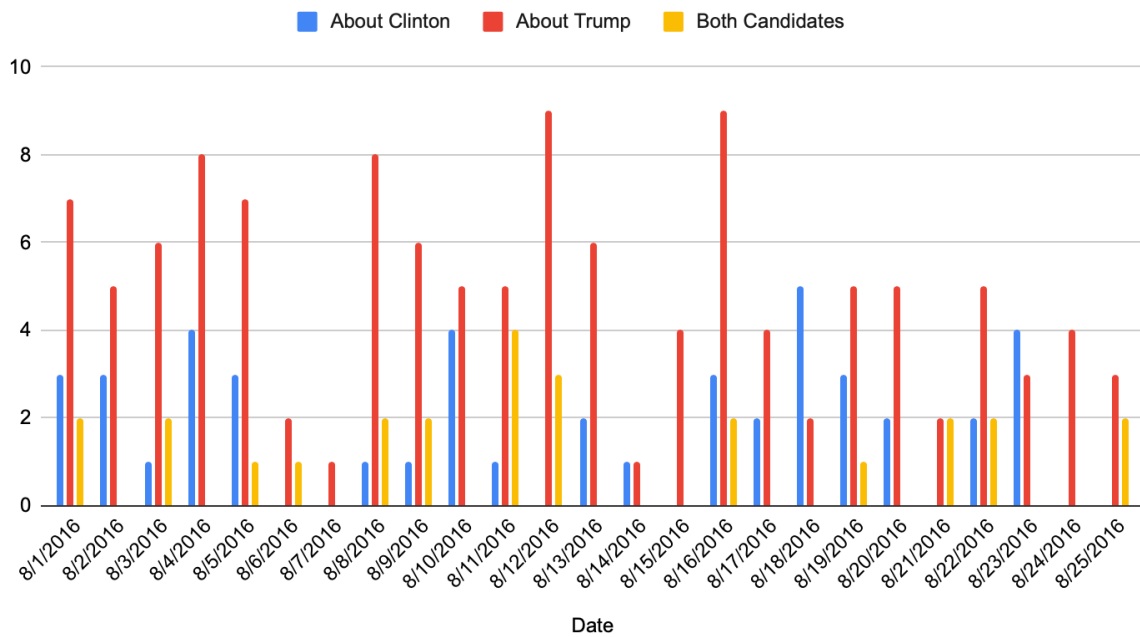
[12] Clinton's email controversy refers to her usage of a private email server rather than an official secured State Department email while she was Secretary of State. In this controversy, Clinton drew criticism because her private email was found to contain emails with classified information, which it is argued should have been kept on a secured server.
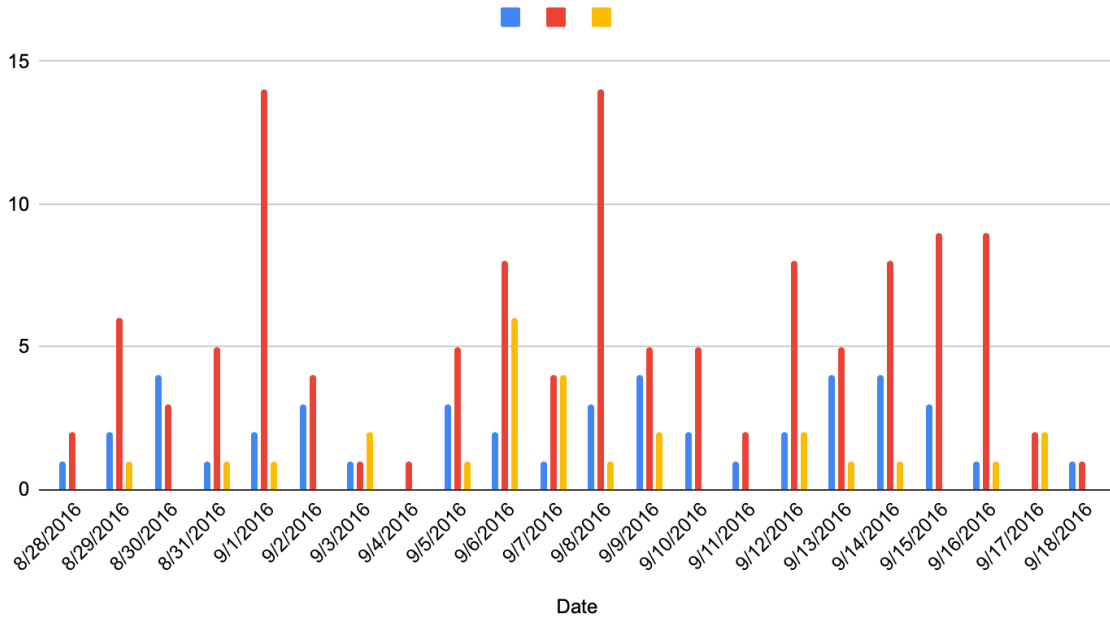
Figure 1.2

Articles Per Day (Part 2)

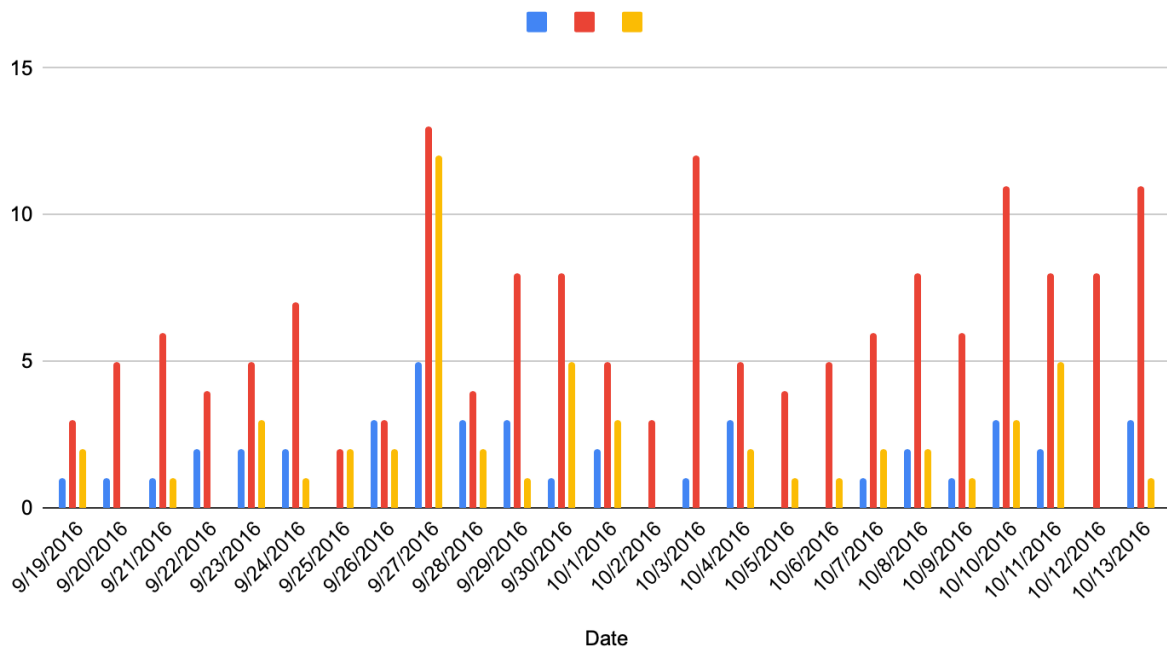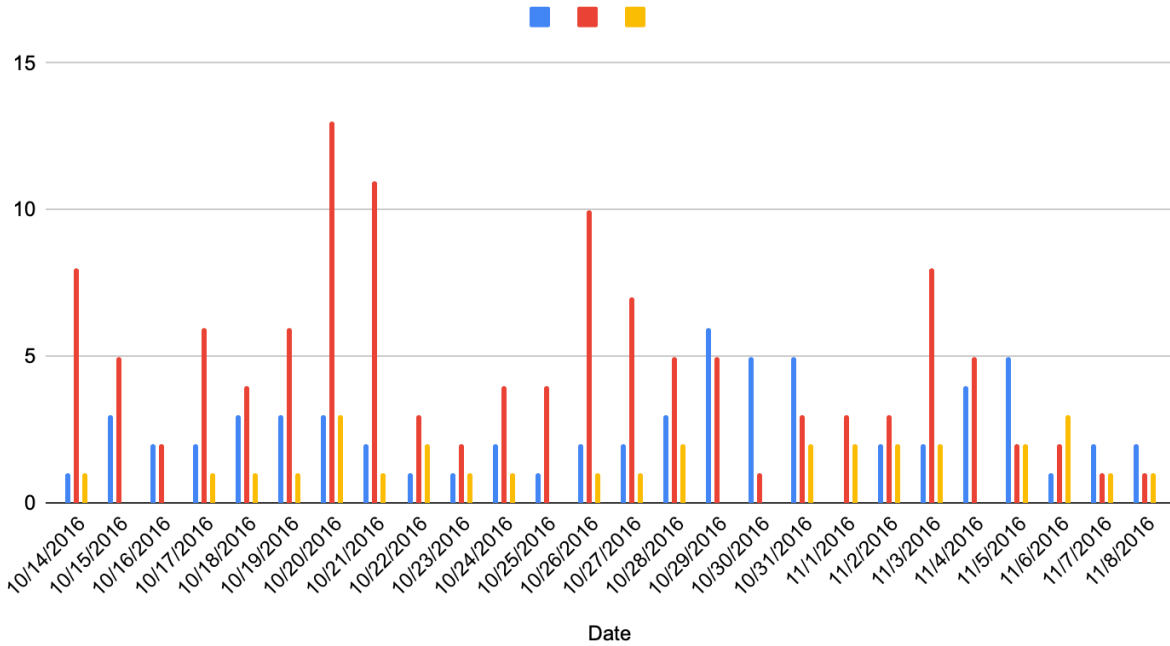Figure 1.3

Articles Per Day (Part 3)

Figure 1.4

Articles Per Day (Part 4)

Data also provide support for the second hypothesis, which was that Trump would be mentioned more times relative to Clinton. The average Trump advantage (name mentions relative to Clinton per article) was 0.64 over all 879 articles. The standard deviation for the Trump advantage over all the articles is 0.31, which is a fairly large range. However, when the articles are analyzed on a day by day basis instead of individually, the Trump advantage increases to 0.73, with the standard deviation becoming 0.19. The following graph displays the distribution of the Trump advantage variable. Visually, the difference becomes clear. There are almost 200 articles in which Clinton was barely mentioned in comparison to Trump, whereas there were 60 that only mentioned Clinton and didn't mention Trump, as indicated by the cluster of graphs at the Trump advantages of 0.00 versus 1.00. The rest of the distribution also trends towards a Trump advantage.

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Figure 2

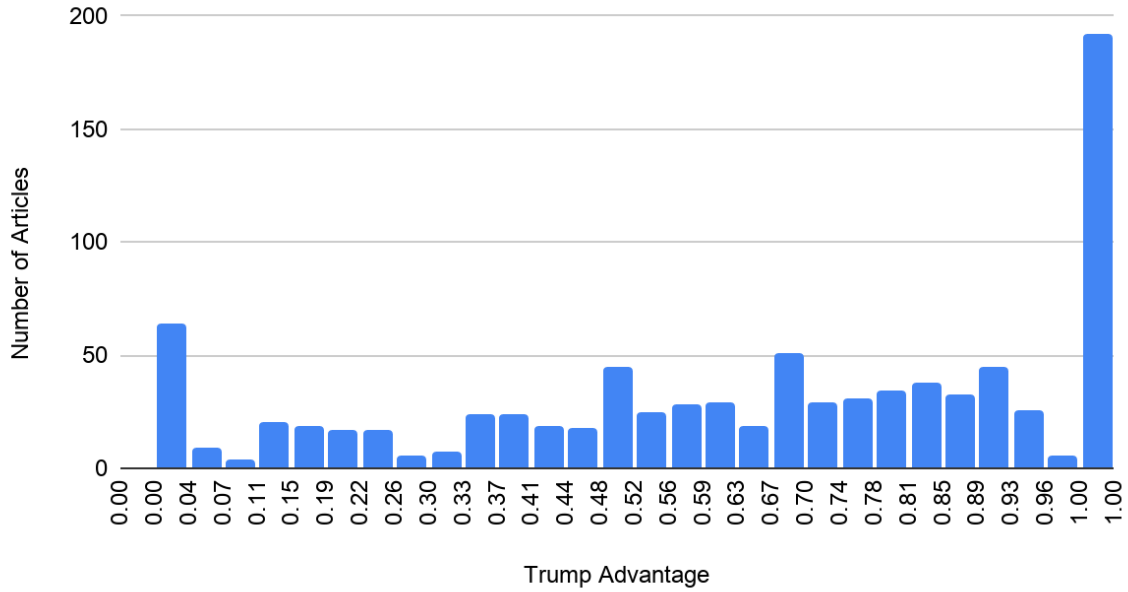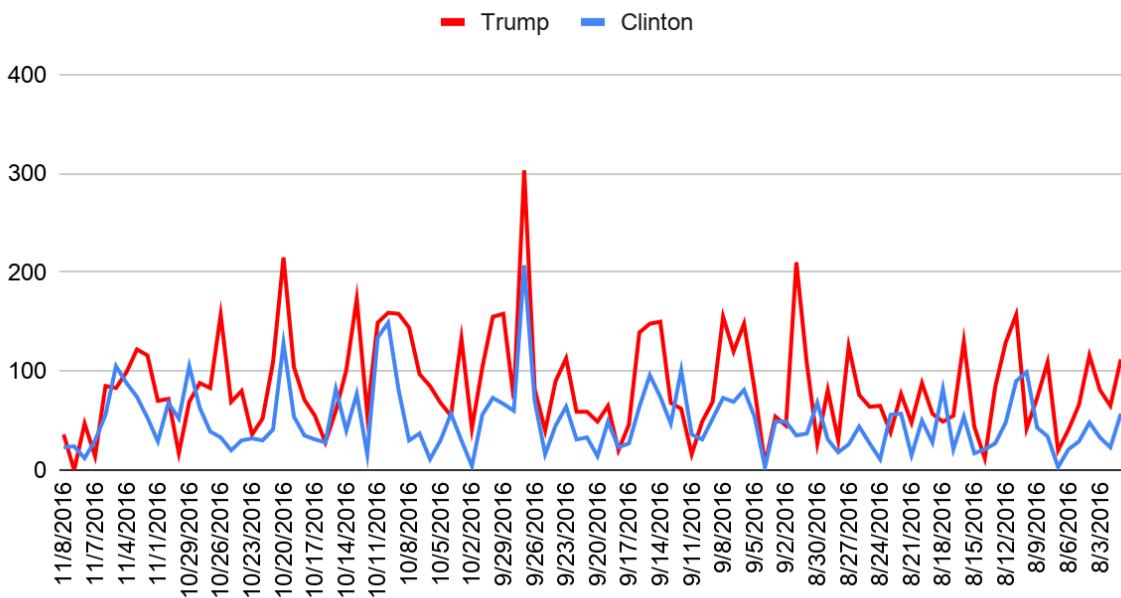## Histogram of Trump Advantage

Figure 3

Name Mentions Over time

In contrast to the first two hypotheses, the test for Hypothesis 3 did not return the expected results. In order to determine if the articles had any impact on the actual voters, polling results for the 100 days were taken from Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania as according to FiveThirtyEight 2016 election forecast.[13] The average projected vote share, determined by a voter's likelihood to vote for a candidate, was calculated for each day. The average projected vote share ranged from 39.6% to 45.1%. From there, the average Trump Advantage per day was tested against the projected vote share. Though a statistical significance of $p=0.0459$ was found, the Trump advantage to projected vote share was actually found to be negatively correlated at -0.20, which is also displayed in the graph below. This means that the more that Trump was written about, the worse that he performed in the polls, which is the opposite of what was expected.

Figure 4

Trump Advantage vs Projected Vote Shares
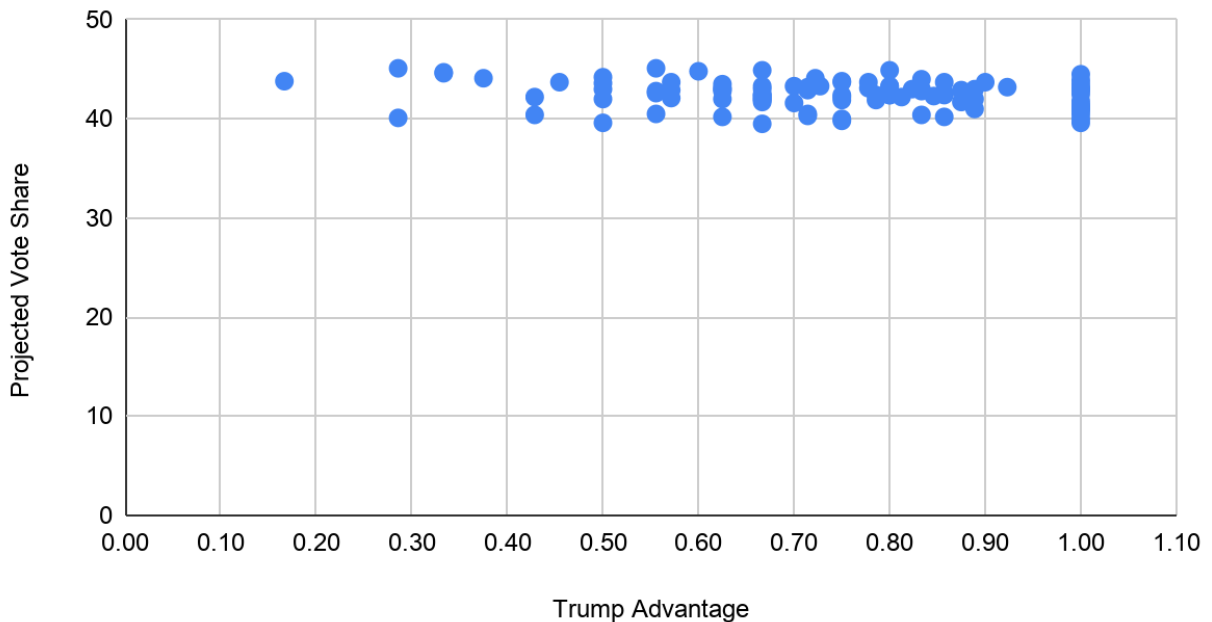
[13] These states were chosen due to the fact that they were labelled as swing states for the 2016 election.

Discussion

Reiterating the point that the context of this does not claim to make generalizable conclusions about the results, there are nonetheless a few insights that we can glean. This section will discuss the context of this election further, as well as other factors that could have contributed to the results.

In understanding the results from Hypothesis 1, that Trump had more articles written about him than Clinton, Donald Trump was undoubtedly the more unpredictable candidate, with countless scandals, questionable statements, and dubious positions. Perhaps, then, with the interest of news organizations attaining greater readership, the difference in coverage is due in part to the fact that Trump simply made for more interesting articles. The shock factor of covering whatever new outlandish proclamation he had made makes for an enticing read. However, does this account for the entire difference in coverage that Clinton received versus Trump?

Not only did Trump have more articles written about him, but the articles were written *more* about him, as predicted by hypothesis 2. Even articles that were headlined in such a way to imply that they were covering Clinton still had significant mentions of Trump, begging the question of why it was so difficult to discuss Clinton without having to reference her opponent. Certainly, Trump was often written about in a negative way, though this was not always the case. Part of the reason that this research did not delve into the question of tone was due to the difficulty of determining whether articles were discussing Trump in a positive or negative manner.

In reference to the results from Hypothesis 3, we're left with additional questions. One factor that is important to consider in understanding these results is that articles were only pulled

from the *New York Times*, a consistently center to left leaning and traditional news organization. As a left leaning establishment, one can assume that the Democratic candidate would be more favorably reported on than the Republican candidate, providing a potential explanation for why the increased Trump coverage correlated with a decrease in his performance in the polls. Further, as was previously noted, traditional news organizations tend to have less sexist content and coverage than digital age news networks, which is important to keep in mind when evaluating the results.

However, this study still only has data from one news organization. In order to fully understand any bias that the media might carry and how that affects election results, it would be necessary to include more news companies with different political leanings and that were founded in different time periods.

An In Depth Analysis of Articles of Interest

The findings differ from the Hayes and Lawless (2015) article, which found no difference in the amount of coverage for female and male candidates. In other words, when the coverage that women and men received as candidates was compared, they had similar amounts of articles published on them, and the articles were of similar length, which contrasts with the findings of this current research. However, Hayes and Lawless did not delve into the actual content of the articles, and they mentioned that there might in fact be a gender bias when it comes to this factor. Up until this point, this research project has also not delved into the question of content.

When going through the selection process in order to determine the sample of articles, there were a few interesting instances that are worth paying further attention to for several reasons. Throughout the 100 day period, there were occasionally a set of articles published that discussed the candidates in similar contexts, making them ideal articles to do a deeper analysis

due to certain variables that could be held constant in each of the comparisons. In both instances that will be examined in this section, the authors are the same, and the topic of the articles are the same, providing the unique opportunity to directly compare the way Clinton and Trump are discussed with regards to word count, Trump advantage, and content[14]. Further, this section will also include a discussion of the prominent controversies that plagued both Clinton's and Trump's campaigns and the way they were covered.

Warnings of Danger

The first set of articles that will be discussed are written by Ross Douthat and include "The Dangers of Hillary Clinton" and "The Dangers of Donald Trump". Both are opinion pieces, and the Clinton article was published on October 22, 2016, while the Trump article was published a week later, on October 29th, 2016. One could consider these differences miniscule and within expectations. However, there are more noticeable differences when it comes to name mentions and trump advantage. For the Clinton article, her name was mentioned only 6 times, while Trump's was mentioned 5 times in the same article, bringing the Trump advantage to 0.45, which would actually have put it in the "both candidates" category, rather than the Clinton focused category. In comparison, the Trump article mentioned Trump's name 12 times, and only mentioned Clinton's name 5 times. This resulted in a Trump advantage of 0.71, making it a Trump focused article. This distinction is significant, for it indicates that even in an article that was implied to be focused on Clinton, Trump was mentioned in such a large capacity that it no longer met the standards of being Clinton focused. On the other hand, Clinton did not receive the same amount of attention in the Trump article. The difference in coverage is clear, and is

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[14] The majority of this research has been evaluated on its averages, whether it be the average name mentions, the average number of articles, or the average word count. Though this has provided a good overview, it does not take into account several variables such as who is writing the articles, what the articles are being written about, when they are being written (particularly in relation to scandals), and more. The goal here is to evaluate four articles more closely in order to provide deeper insight into the results.

particularly striking because it occurred in articles written by the same author. There is an implication that Clinton's coverage is constantly tainted with mentions of Trump, though Trump's coverage is focused on him.

There are also interesting differences in the content of the articles. When it comes to "The Dangers of Hillary Clinton", Douthat doesn't seem to be focusing quite on Clinton herself. The article begins with a disclaimer that Trump has dangers of his own, but that "passing on the plane-crash candidate doesn't mean ignoring the dangers of his rival," in reference to Clinton. He goes on to discuss how Clinton is a candidate that will simply go along with the rest of her party, emphasizing "how few examples there are of her ever breaking with the elite consensus on matters of statecraft". These dangers, Douthat notes, are those that "we live with [...] in our politics already" and that ultimately "gave rise to Trumpism in the first place". Douthat ends the article with a return to the idea that Clinton would still be a more stable option than Trump, noting that "she is unlikely to do anything that the cosmopolitan capitals of Europe or America would consider obviously radical or dangerous or dumb" and paying her a compliment, saying that she is "tempermentally pragmatic, [and] self-consiously hard headed".

In "The Dangers of Trump", Douthat's tone shifts. No longer is he raising a concern, now he is sounding an alarm. He begins by noting that Trump is in fact the worse candidate, and that the article will "outline why the risks of Trump are so distinctive as to throw the perils of a Clinton presidency into relative eclipse". Douthat discusses "three baseline dangers for a Trump administration, three perils that we would very likely face", beginning with what he calls "sustained market jitters" that would lead to "an economic slump". This, he claims, would be due to Trump's lack of predictability. The second danger would be that of "major civil unrest". According to Douthat "Trump's election would be a gift to bad cops and riot-ready radicals in

equal measure" due to the inflammatory culture he evokes with his speech and policies[15]. The third and final danger Douthat discussed was that of "a rapid escalation of risk in every geopolitical theory" due to Trump's position of being seemingly "poised, very dangerously, between overreaction and his least-favorite position - looking weak."

An Overview

The next set of articles for closer analysis include "Hillary Clinton's Moments and Missteps: A Look Back" and "Donald Trump's Moments and Missteps: A Look Back", both written by Liam Stack and published on November 4th, 2016. For Clinton's article, the word count is 1179, while for Trump's article it is 1762, a fairly substantial difference. The difference in name mentions is not quite as striking in this set of articles, though it still favors Trump. Clinton had 22 name mentions in her article, with Trump being mentioned 7 times, making for a Trump advantage of 0.24. On the other hand, Trump was mentioned 29 times in his article, with Clinton being mentioned 7 times, making for a Trump advantage of 0.81. Clinton's article has 11 sections covering different notable instances in her campaign, while Trump's has 13 sections.

The contents of the articles are in line with the expectations for such a summary of each of the candidates' campaigns. Interestingly, out of the different sections summarizing Clinton's campaign, only one seems to come close to touching on policy. This section is titled "A Frank Exchange on Black Lives Matters" and describes a discussion Clinton had with an activist regarding her support for criminal justice policies during her husband's time in office. The rest of

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[15] It is particularly interesting to read this article outlining the future dangers of a Donald Trump presidency with the context of having lived through four years of him in office, as well as his re-election campaign in 2020. Though the different dangers that Douthart warned of had differing levels of being realized, the one that struck me most was that of "major civil unrest". The summer of 2020 was a historical period of protests against racial injustices, beginning with the murder of George Floyd by Derek Chauvin, but not ending there. Further, January 6th, 2021, the day that right-wing radicals stormed the United States capitol in an attempt to overturn the 2020 election results, marked another event that would go down in history. The point here is that Trump did indeed seem to deliver a gift to "bad cops and riot-ready radicals".

the sections mostly highlight different missteps, as indicated by the title, including mentions of her email scandal, her reference to Trump supporters as "deplorables", and a literal misstep from when she stumbled as a consequence of her pneumonia.

In contrast, Trump's article had four sections that discussed policy related topics, two in reference to restrictions on Muslims, one on NATO, and finally one on the Second Amendment. The rest of the sections discuss a mix of events that occurred throughout the campaign, though none quite take on the tone of discussing Trump's actions as a mistake or misstep other than a discussion of the Trump tape in which he makes "lewd boasts on sexual assault". This topic actually had two sections devoted to it, which reflects its prominence as an issue throughout the campaign.

Compared to the previous set of articles, on the warnings of danger, there is a not as significant of a Trump advantage in Clinton's article. However, the fact that Trump's article touches on policy in a greater capacity than does Clinton's still points to an interesting distinction in the way the two candidates are being discussed, particularly when paired with the fact that Trump's article was nearly 50% longer than Clinton's. Though a conclusive answer for why this is the case is not determinable from the present data, it still leads to some key questions. Why is Trump discussed in reference to policy more so than Clinton? Does this occur due to the context of the election itself? Did Trump simply have more interesting references to policy during his campaign, or was it because Trump was taken more seriously as a candidate?

Scandals Upon Scandals

Though there are not a set of articles that discuss Clinton's and Trump's controversies in a similarly parallel capacity to the sets of articles above, it is still worth mentioning and exploring the difference in coverage between two key scandals that occurred in the 2016

presidential election. For Clinton, the prominent controversy was the issue revolving around her emails. When Clinton was Secretary of State under the Obama administration, she reportedly used her private email server in order to exchange messages containing classified information, rather than using the official, secured State department email accounts. This controversy has been widely recorded as having received the most media coverage in comparison to any other single topic in the 2016 presidential election. In comparison, Trump's largest scandal was the release of the Hollywood Access tape which showed him making vulgar and demeaning comments about women, in particular the infamous line of "I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. ... Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything."

The sample of articles was examined in order to determine the number of articles published on both topics. Key search terms and buzzwords were used to find the articles, and the disparity in the final count is striking. Out of the 879 articles, 28 were written on Clinton's email controversy. In comparison, only 11 were written about Trump's tapes. For the Clinton articles, the average Trump advantage was 0.18, and for the Trump articles the average was 0.77. Certainly, one must acknowledge that Trump had a variation of scandals that received less coverage, such as those revolving around his taxes, his sexual assault allegations, and other such controversies. Regardless, for his main scandal, deemed as the "October surprise", to be covered significantly less than Clinton's main controversy is striking, particularly when he has received more coverage in every regard throughout the entirety of this study. In combination with the rest of the results, we are presented with more than a difference in coverage between the candidates. This implies the existence of some sort of bias in the way Clinton and Trump have been covered. Further understanding the existence of a gendered bias requires more research and examples.

Nonetheless, the implications of this deeper analysis with the candidates' controversies are clear, and should be acknowledged when considering the overall results of this study.

Implications/Further Research

Continuing to keep in mind that this study isn't one that can necessarily be generalized to further contexts, there are still significant insights we can glean. The results have not dismissed the idea that the media plays a part in contributing to why women are underrepresented in political office, particularly at the national level. Further research with more news organizations beyond the *New York Times* would be necessary for more conclusive findings. Though it was not found that Trump was given an advantage with the media coverage he received when compared to the polling data, Trump became president whereas Clinton did not. Understanding the process that led to this outcome will require further research. This study adds to the literature that discusses media bias and provides additional motivation for future research. In 2020, another woman ran for office at the presidential level, though this time as Vice President. Kamala Harris, a woman of color, was the vice presidential nominee for the Democratic party and went on to win alongside Joseph Biden as the president. Doing a similar study comparing Harris and the Republican vice presidential candidate could provide new insights into the gendered lens of the media. In addition, the study can be replicated with male candidates from other election years as well in order to allow for further comparisons.

In addition to having implications for the literature and the gender and politics field, this study also has implications for the way that news media is interpreted. A difference in coverage was indeed found, though there are still questions regarding whether or not this is due to an inherent bias. With future research, if such a bias is then found, then it has the potential for a re-evaluation of the way news is written, or at the very least the way that news is consumed by

the public. There were undoubtedly going to be differences in the way that the media covered these two candidates specifically because they are different people from different backgrounds and different parties. Even though the results of this study cannot necessarily point to a definitive answer of media bias, hopefully they contribute to the general pressure on news organizations to be aware of any implicit bias they have in their reporting and what they choose to report on. The media plays a huge role in today's society, and is particularly crucial in a democracy when it comes to the decimation of information. Just as it is important for several other areas of society to be aware of biases, it is necessary that there is awareness revolving around potential biases here.

Conclusion

     This study did not determine whether or not the media has a gender bias when it comes to candidates at the presidential level, but the implications that came with the results are nonetheless significant. Taking the time and effort to create a comparative analysis between the ways that the media represented and discussed Hillary Clinton, the first woman to ever be selected as a presidential candidate for a major party, as well as have actually won the popular vote, with Donald Trump, her opponent, has allowed for greater insight into the 2016 presidential election, and has also provided insight into the media's approach to the candidates. In order to further understand whether or not any potential bias is due to the differences in gender versus the differences in candidates is not something that has been conclusive here, and further comparisons with other studies on gender bias in the media, as well as continued research as the future brings more female candidates at the presidential level will continue to be necessary.

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