


5-2011

# Machismo and the Glass Ceiling: A Comparative Cultural Study on the Role of Gender in the Presidential Elections of Hillary Clinton and Michelle Bachelet

Kayla Woodring  
*Utah State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/honors>

 Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), and the [Comparative Politics Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Woodring, Kayla, "Machismo and the Glass Ceiling: A Comparative Cultural Study on the Role of Gender in the Presidential Elections of Hillary Clinton and Michelle Bachelet" (2011). *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. Paper 91.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact [becky.thoms@usu.edu](mailto:becky.thoms@usu.edu).



**MACHISMO AND THE GLASS CEILING:  
A COMPARATIVE CULTURAL STUDY  
ON THE ROLE OF GENDER  
IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF  
HILLARY CLINTON AND MICHELLE BACHELET**

by

**Kayla Woodring**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree**

of

**DEPARTMENTAL HONORS**

in

**Political Science  
in the Department of Political Science**

**Approved:**

---

**Thesis Advisor**

Vincent James Strickler, PhD

---

**Departmental Honors Advisor**

Veronica Ward, PhD

---

**Thesis Committee Member**

William Furlong, PhD

---

**Director of Honors Program**

Christie Fox, PhD

**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Logan, UT**

**Spring 2011**

**Machismo and the Glass Ceiling:  
*A Comparative Cultural Study on the Role of Gender  
In the Presidential Campaigns of  
Hillary Clinton and Michelle Bachelet***

**Kayla Woodring  
Utah State University  
Senior Honors Thesis  
2011**

**Abstract:**

During her bid for president, Hillary Clinton was often questioned about allegations of sexism in media coverage surrounding her campaign. She once responded: "It's been deeply offensive to millions of women. I believe this campaign has been a groundbreaker in a lot of ways. But it certainly has been challenging given some of the attitudes in the press." Were media mentalities and reporting really as biased toward Clinton's gender as has been asserted? This study seeks to answer not only that question, but also to determine whether such bias is unique to a female presidential candidate in the United States. This is accomplished by studying and quantifying gender-specific labels applied to Clinton and former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet in major newspapers of their respective countries during their campaigns. Clinton has praised Bachelet for her response to sexism in politics. In 2008, she said, "Being a woman in politics can be tough business, and Bachelet made it look effortless." This study reveals that though bias existed in coverage of Bachelet's campaign, there was a greater amount of bias in Clinton's campaign. This was achieved by determining how often gender-based labels were applied to each of the women, how harsh they were in tone, and which country appeared to use sexist language at a greater rate.

## Table of Contents

Gender, Media and International Politics.....	1
The Study of Gender Bias in the Context of Media Coverage.....	4
Gender Bias in Presidential Campaigns.....	10
Why Clinton and Bachelet?.....	12
Predictions and Research Methods.....	15
Results.....	18
Figure 1- Tone Breakdown: Clinton.....	19
Figure 2- Breakdown of Bias Categories: Clinton.....	20
Figure 3- Tone Breakdown: Bachelet.....	22
Figure 4- Tone Occurrences by Candidate.....	23
Figure 5- Breakdown of Bias Categories: Bachelet.....	24
Figure 6- Occurrence of Bias Categories by Candidate.....	26
Figure 7- Tracking the Coverage: Number of Daily Articles per Candidate during the Final Month of the Campaign.....	27
Conclusions.....	27
Bibliography.....	31
Author's Biography .....	34

*One of the greatest lessons of her [Hillary Clinton's] campaign is the continued and accepted role of sexism in American life, particularly in the media... It isn't just Hillary Clinton who needs to learn a lesson from this primary season—it's all the people who cross the line, and all the women and men who let them get away with it" –Katie Couric, The CBS Evening News, 2008*

## **Gender, Media, and International Politics**

In recent decades, the study of gender portrayal in the media has become prominent and even expanded to include research on international candidates and politicians (Valenzuela and Correa 2007). This may be explained by the recent upswing in the number of women seeking office around the globe which has increased the relevance of academic studies on female candidates. In the past decade, women have been particularly engaged in races for chief executive, both in parliamentary and presidential systems. From Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner in Argentina, Portia Simpson-Miller of Jamaica, and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia to Tarja Halonen in Finland, and Michelle Bachelet of Chile, women are increasingly assuming the role of head of government (Thomas and Adams 2010). In the United States, Hillary Clinton came closer to the role of chief executive in 2008 than any other woman had before her.

There are different opinions on what might explain this. It may possibly be the consequence of political turnover as men are aging and leaving office, thus allowing increased opportunities for women to enter the political sphere through subsequent vacancies in political office (Milyo and Schosberg 2000). This theory may help explain the increase in the number of women seeking legislative office, but

not necessarily that of those seeking executive office. This is because in most countries, and more specifically, the two at the center of this study, presidential terms are short and subject to term limits. That would make such an explanation less likely as presidential turnover is frequent and consistent. Perhaps a better theory for the encouraging trend of women entering executive office is that heightened female equality, changing attitudes and adapting global institutions have made it easier for women to seek such office. This idea has been supported by academic studies, but the advancement of women professionally, politically and economically still has yet to lead to a more equitable presence in political office (Hernnson, Lay and Stokes 2003).

Though a growing number opportunities for women exist worldwide, press coverage of these women and their campaigns is widely criticized for not keeping pace with the changing attitudes toward female political participation, or at the very least for not addressing it in the same way as male participation.

Accusations come from the candidates themselves, as well as from political and media elites and academic researchers from disciplines like political science, communications and gender studies. Critics charge the media with claims of unfairness and allegations of placing women at a disadvantage when compared to their male counterparts. For example, during her campaign, Michelle Bachelet said in a 2004 interview on *Radio Cooperativa*, "When you are woman, they [the media] delve into private life, concentrate on the suit, the hairdo. I mean, issues that nobody evaluates in a man, and women politicians are asked things that, in reality, men are not."

Allegations of media bias exist for many female political campaigns around the globe, but they are particularly high among those who study Hillary Clinton's 2008 presidential campaign. In some cases, the charges go beyond mere sexism, and the media is actually blamed for the failure of her bid for president.

The media were overly critical of her, downplayed her victories, and ultimately cast her campaign as a failure, even though she came closer to the presidency than any other woman in history. – Nichola D. Gutlgold in *Almost Madam President*, 2009:81

Interestingly, certain advanced democracies still see low levels of female participation despite the fact that the structural barriers that would prevent women from holding office have been largely removed. In fact, such barriers have been removed long enough that at least some women should have had the opportunity to achieve educational and professional credentials similar to those of the men whom they challenge for office. This means that female candidates should be just as qualified for office as male candidates (Milyo and Schosberg 2000). This is true of both the United States and Chile, yet the percentage of women holding national offices in these countries has remained somewhere between 15 and 20 percent as of late, even though women are continuing to enjoy increased freedom and workforce participation. Some suggest their lack of significant presence is due to the incumbency advantage which leads to more men in office than women since women were less politically active until recent decades (Ulahner and Schlozman 1986 in Milyo and Schosberg 2000). But if this were the case, we should see numbers beginning to shift as male office-holders are retiring or dying.



The fact that the composition of women in political office is still balanced in favor of men suggests that perhaps something else is keeping women from a more equal proportion of representation in political office. Some wonder if it is because of media bias and the grueling obstacles women face in their campaigns that discourages women from entering political races (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991). If it doesn't discourage them from entering, it can at least be argued that it makes the campaign process a more negative experience for them.

“The word ‘campaign’ is a war term. So when you go into a campaign, you prepare to go to war. If you think this is an exercise in civic activity... then you are going to be surprised.”-- Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, 1985. Quoted in “Women Running as ‘Women’: Candidate Gender, Campaign Issues and Voter Targeting Strategy” Herrnson, et. al 2003. The Journal of Poltics Vol. 65, No. 1

This study will determine if bias in these two countries really is as bad as women candidates and media critics claim, thus shedding light on what may be the actual deterrent to female candidates.

## **The Study of Gender-Bias in the Context of Media Coverage**

*Widespread sexism in the media is one of the top problems facing women. A highly toxic media environment persists for women candidates, often negatively affecting their campaigns. The ever-changing media landscape creates an unmonitored echo chamber, often allowing damaging comments to exist without accountability. —*

“Name It. Change It.” Campaign, Women’s Media Center

Multiple research studies in recent decades have revealed that media bias against female candidates exists in text, commentary, and even quantity, as men tend to receive more media coverage than female candidates (Falk 2008; Kahn and

Goldenberg 1991). The revelation of such bias is important in order to address these barriers and to allow for women to have greater access to participation in the political sphere.

Certain forms of media bias, such as framing, can have dramatic impacts on the success of a candidate's bid for public office. Framing essentially determines what is emphasized in a particular news report (Druckman 2001). This often dictates whom and what the public view as relevant (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991). In this study, the framing addressed refers to mentions of a candidate's gender and/or associated gender roles in the coverage she received, which could potentially have affected her outcome in an election.

*"Gender is probably the most restricting force in American life, whether the question is who must be in the kitchen or who could be in the White House."*—Gloria Steinem, Writer and Activist, 2008

Agenda-setting is another important form of analysis in searching for bias in media coverage and can be applied in this analysis of gender bias. Robert Entman described the impact of agenda-setting well when he said, "The media do not control what people prefer; they influence public opinion by providing much of the information people think about and by shaping how they think about it. Americans exercise their idiosyncratic dispositions as they ponder the news, but the media's selection of data makes a significant contribution to the outcome of each person's thinking." (Entman, 1989: 347, 361)

An example of these types of bias is observed in the different types of questions asked of female candidates by members of the press. Such questions

range from inquiries about domestic duties and familial roles to questions about fashion and style (Falk 2008). These candidates are framed in terms of their gender and not their political credentials. For example, during the 1984 presidential campaign, Democratic Vice Presidential Candidate Geraldine Ferraro was asked questions like, “Can you bake a blueberry muffin?” and “Do you think the Soviets might in any way take advantage of you simply because you are a woman?” (Falk 2008:52) Focusing on gender-based questions like these becomes problematic because voters are not sufficiently exposed to a female candidate’s commentary on her leadership, experience, policies, and issue positions. Instead they are constantly directed to think of her exclusively in gendered terms. This could potentially put women at a disadvantage in elections. Here the agenda is set, and the agenda is her sex, not her politics.

“The press is an independent force whose dialogue ... produces the agenda of issues considered by political elites and voters” – Shaw and McCombs in *The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press* 1977:151

Gendered media coverage is not simply limited to questioning of these candidates; it can be reasonably argued that it is present in commentary, and even standard reporting. For example, a 2009 article from *The Economist* said of Michelle Bachelet, “Chileans have come to see her as empathetic, as a mother figure who is protecting them.”

That reference to Bachelet is by no means a unique episode. Studies of media reports on female candidates in the 1980s and 1990s were found more likely to contain content related to personality characteristics than issue (Kahn 1998). For

example, in 1998, the Chicago Tribune published an article about former Illinois Senator Carol Moseley Braun's bid for reelection that read:

“Though she boasts that her legislative record is one of the best in the Senate, it is not her votes that make many of her supporters go weak in the knees. It is her personality, featuring a signature smile that she switches on like a light switch, leaving her admirers aglow.” – Quoted by Dianne Bystrom in “Advertising, Websites and Media Coverage” in *Gender and Elections*, 2006

In this particular case, the coverage may not exactly be negative, but it leads voters to think of her personality traits before her policy accomplishments.

Furthermore, it reflects a larger trend of focusing on a female candidate's personal characteristics rather than her record or body of work, something that could potentially be harmful in a competitive race.

When the press focuses on personal characteristics and sensational topics, it robs voters of substantive material that should be part of their decision making process... Women candidates have historically been victimized by coverage that minimizes the political and emphasizes the personal. – Nichola Gutgold in *Almost Madam President*, 2009:78

In addition to the previously mentioned forms of bias, women are also exposed to a significant amount of criticism centered on their physical appearance. During the 2008 McCain-Palin campaign for the White House, multiple stories on Sarah Palin's couture wardrobe were published. It's unlikely that a male candidate would be subject to similar scrutiny. Another example is observed in a 2000 article on Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. It read that she had “whittled her figure down to a fighting size 8” by “touching little more than a lettuce leaf at fundraisers.” (Quoted in Bystrom 2006: 173) Michelle Bachelet, who, in Chile, is often referred to as “La Gorda (the fat woman) and Gordi (chunk),” was

ridiculed for her figure and sarcastically dubbed the “Baywatch Babe” in an article that ran photos of her in a swimsuit at the beach. The pictures were posted in multiple publications and prompted crude caricatures. Such coverage is not only harmful to those campaigning for office, but also can discourage other women from entering the political arena, thus shrinking the pool of potential female candidates in the future. These unfair analyses can act as a deterrent if not adequately acknowledged and stopped (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991).

In concentrating campaign coverage on gender roles, the media also create expectations for gender roles to be repeated in female politicians, and therefore their subsequent campaigns, leading to a continuous cycle of gendered coverage (Reeves 2009). Additionally, this creates a standard for women which men are not held to. By covering the emotions and familial relationships of a female candidate, voters may come to expect that she meet certain qualifications they would not expect of men. Furthermore, certain gendered issues may come to dominate a female politician’s campaign. Such issues are typically associated with women and include policies such as child care and education, but not other typically “masculine” issues such as war and economics (Herrnson, Lay and Stokes 2003).

Perhaps one of the most interesting consequences of gendered coverage is that, depending on what the most important issues are in a given election cycle, this type of bias can actually end up hurting *male* candidates. If issues surrounding human services are salient in an election, women could potentially receive more positive coverage at a higher quantity, at least for this issue or policy in question (Herrnson, Lay and Stokes 2003). Unfortunately, issues related to human services

are rarely the most important issues, unless entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare are included within that realm. If, as some research has suggested, women are in fact benefitting from this type of coverage, it should not be counted as a victory because it still reflects a gender bias within the press that is affecting elections. Just because the harms are being absorbed by male candidates in this case, does not make gendered coverage acceptable.

Beyond simply placing women at disadvantage related to image and expectations, media bias toward female candidates can depict female ambition as atypical, novel, and unnatural (Falk 2008 and Heldman, et. al 2005). The U.S. has had 44 male presidents, and, though a well-developed democracy, it has yet to elect a female president. This alone makes female candidacy seem odd; there is no need for the media to reinforce the conception that female candidacy is abnormal (Lawrence and Rose 2010). In her study of eight U.S. female presidential campaigns, Erika Falk found that every campaign she studied was covered as a first, and sometimes even incorrectly. Though many of the early female presidential candidates in this country were not viable candidates, all were described in terms of being “firsts” by the media, though obviously only one of them was (Falk 2008).

The use of gendered terms by the media, such as “woman senator”, “female governor”, “the female members of the House,” compounds this sense of oddity when used in instances that would not be used for males. For example, it would be strange to hear a reporter say, “the male senator from Pennsylvania offered his opinion.” Yet it is commonplace to describe female politicians in this way (Falk 2008).

Ultimately, all of these expectations require a unique balancing act that leaves women straddling arguably impossible expectations.

A woman candidate must be... assertive rather than aggressive, attractive without being a sexpot, self-confident but not domineering. She must neither be too pushy, nor show reticence. The human qualities of compassion and sympathy must not resemble emotionality. Because society tends to label active women as pushy, aggressive, domineering or masculine, voters may be more ready to see negative traits in a woman candidate than they will be in a man candidate. They may perceive determined women as shrill, strident or emotional. A woman is easily discounted by being labeled "just one of those women's libbers."

--Suzanne Carrol in *Women as Candidates in American Politics*, 1985: 94

There are, however, critics who assert that the intense media scrutiny these women face makes for higher quality candidates and can actually help women in the long run.

## **Gender Bias in Presidential Campaigns**

The study of bias in female presidential campaigns is particularly relevant since presidential candidates are unique in their reliance on the media due to their distance from voters. Their constituencies are much larger than those of congressional and gubernatorial candidates and they must utilize the media to communicate their goals and platforms to voters (Falk 2008).

For presidential candidacies, the press serves as the great mentioner, without whose attention no candidate can be seen as viable. The power of mentioning, or not, has implications beyond individual candidates. What the press assumes, and the way it frames coverage of presidential elections and candidacies, has consequences for what readers think about, and to a lesser extent, how they think about it. – Georgia Deurst- Lahti in *Gender and Elections*, 2006

Research also indicates that a voter's perception of a candidate's character may have more influence on his or her decision to vote for that candidate than any other factor ( Keeter 1987), or that it at least plays a significant role in his or her decision making (Iyengar and Simon 1993, 2000). For this reason, it is important that female presidential candidates receive fair and unbiased coverage.

Furthermore, bias can lead to stereotyping and questions about the effectiveness of women in political positions. Research indicates that stereotypically female traits (such as being emotional) are not associated with leadership. Additionally, it has been suggested that people are more likely to remember stereotypical information about a person than information that challenges stereotypes (Falk 2008). By presenting stereotypical information of female candidates, the media reinforces what voters may be wary of. A 2000 poll by Roper-Starch Worldwide revealed that voters were indeed suspicious of female candidates. Results showed that one-third of respondents agreed that women have certain characteristics that make them less qualified to be president and that just over half of the respondents felt that a man would be better at leading during a crisis and/or making difficult decisions (Deloitte and Touche 2000:2 in Bystrom, et. al 2004). Stereotypical gender assumptions such as these can be particularly dangerous for those campaigning for the presidency, since it has historically been perceived as a masculine office (Lawrence and Rose 2010). For this reason, it is important that members of the media do not focus on gendered information and stereotypes.



## Why Clinton and Bachelet?

There are various reasons that I chose to focus this study on Hillary Clinton and Michelle Bachelet. Essentially, I wanted to do a comparative study on the amount of bias in the news coverage of different countries. Since I lived in Chile for a short time, am fluent enough in Spanish to read Chilean news articles, and found that the campaigns of Clinton and Bachelet possess certain similar characteristics, their campaigns seemed like a good choice for this study.

Both Clinton and Bachelet were labeled as the first female candidates in their nations to actually come close capturing the presidency (in Bachelet's case, she did capture the presidency). Regina Lawrence and Melody Rose, authors of *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, called Clinton the "first truly viable female candidate" (Lawrence and Rose 2010). Perhaps this is because both women held formal offices that were nationally visible prior to campaigning for president: Clinton as a Senator and First Lady and Bachelet as Minister for both the Chilean Ministries of Health and National Defense, respectively.

Bachelet and Clinton also make good comparison because both ran for chief executive in countries with presidential election systems. A large portion of the female executives that have emerged throughout the world in recent years have been seeking office in parliamentary systems, and some argue that it is easier for a woman to ascend to the position of prime minister than to president (Thomas and Adams 2010). I worried that it might have been more difficult to create an accurate comparison of a campaign for prime minister with that of a campaign for president than it would be to compare two campaigns in a presidential system.

In both Chile and the United States, women continue to be underrepresented in government positions, though it is not for a lack of institutions that would permit their participation. This made for another interesting similarity that suggested barriers were more cultural. This could possibly be attributed to media attitudes about female politicians, or the resulting deterrents that discourage women in these nations for running for office. As previously stated, media framing can have a significant impact on the way that people view and select the candidates for whom they will vote.

Furthermore, the time period I selected made for similar campaign situations. I coded the last month prior to the Chilean run-off election in which Bachelet was pitted against Sebastian Pinera. This meant she was at a point in the campaign process where she was only campaigning for the presidency against just one man. This allowed for the Chilean press to be in a similar position for coverage as that of the American press was with Hillary Clinton and opponent Barack Obama in the last months of the 2008 Democratic Primary. In both situations this pitted a lone female against a single popular male candidate, both of whom had similar levels of support among voters.

Another similarity between these two women is that both are considered to be somewhat controversial in their respective countries. I felt this was important in order to adequately and fairly compare the bias against these women since a controversial public figure will likely be subject to more intense media scrutiny than a non-controversial public figure.

Both women have been accused of harboring masculine leadership qualities and not conforming to the stereotypical gender mold due to their ambition, placement in powerful political offices and vocal advocacy of female advancement. Both women are highly educated, Clinton in law and Bachelet in medicine, and both are frank about their commitment to using their education to better the status of women worldwide. Additionally, each of these women has been the subject of criticism regarding social issues in her personal life. Clinton is often scrutinized for her decision to remain married to former President Bill Clinton despite his repeated infidelities. Bachelet is criticized for divorcing her husband in a conservative Catholic country where divorce was not even legalized until 2004. Furthermore, Bachelet is openly agnostic in a highly religious nation.

The study of Michelle Bachelet is also relevant because it is a study of media portayals of gender in an emerging Western democracy and will give insight as to whether gender bias is an isolated American phenomenon or generally more widespread.

Additionally, both women have been the subjects of previous academic studies on the presence of gender bias as compared to male candidates running for the same office. I wanted to see how they fared when compared to one another, thus determining which country printed more bias in their news stories, and perhaps which of the two women had the greater media obstacle to overcome.

An example of one study on Bachelet by researchers Valenzuela and Correa, involved coding hundreds of stories from multiple major newspapers in Chile. They found statistically significant results indicating that Bachelet's gender and familial

roles were brought up in new stories more than they were for her male counterparts. The study also found that Bachelet was more likely to receive negative coverage about her competency, and had nearly twice as many negative mentions of her competency as positive ones. The study did find, however, that she was more likely to be presented as the likely winner (Valenzuela and Correa 2009).

## **Predictions and Research Methods**

Given the large amount of literature available that referenced bias toward female candidates and politicians in the United States, I predicted that Hillary Clinton would be subject to more biased coverage than Michelle Bachelet would. Also, of the few contemporary studies that I could find on gender in Chilean elections, and more specifically on Bachelet, there didn't appear to be as concrete a pattern of bias, most specifically in the types of bias that were occurring.

As stated previously, this study is a search for bias in press coverage of these two female presidential candidates. One challenge of this study was determining what precisely would qualify as "bias" is as its definition varies depending on circumstance.

"Bias" is a difficult term to use precisely, because it can describe the *amount* of coverage a candidate or issue receives, the *content and tone* of that coverage, or the presumed *motives* driving that content. – Lawrence and Rose 2010: 150

In order to better clarify what constituted bias in this study, I have broken down the criteria used to search for it. This research involved reading and coding stories that covered the candidates' campaigns for president in a major newspaper in each of the candidate's countries. For Clinton, this meant the widely-read daily

newspaper *New York Times*. For Bachelet, the data was coded from the most popular daily newspaper in Chile, *El Mercurio*. The reviewed and coded newspaper content included all news stories, feature stories, interviews, editorials by newspaper staff and opinion columns for a given time frame. These articles were accessed through the *LexisNexis* database and the online archives of *El Mercurio*.

When I searched for articles that contained a reference to Michelle Bachelet or Hillary Clinton, about 800 total articles were returned. I then read those and determined whether or not they were actual reporting or commentary on the candidate by the author. If the only mention of the candidate came in a quote that was not from the author of the article and/or the mention had little to do with the subject of the story, I did not include it in my data. An example was a story about a bus crash in Chile that was carrying some passengers on their way to a rally for Michelle Bachelet. The story had little to do with Bachelet or her campaign, so I did not code the article. I also did not include letters to the editor or guest editorials and opinion pieces. Of the approximately 800 articles, I determined that 322 met the criteria for coding. Of the 322, 140 were articles about Hillary Clinton and 182 were articles about Michelle Bachelet.

The coding time period for Michelle Bachelet was for the one month prior to January 15, 2006, the date she won the general Chilean election in a run-off race against Sebastian Pinera. In the case of Hillary Clinton, the coding time frame was for the one month prior to the date she withdrew from the race for the Democratic nomination, June 7, 2008.

Coding involved searching articles for mentions of gender-specific labels, references to gender roles, personal characteristics, and/or portrayals of female candidate novelty. Words with a gender-based connotation, such as “witch” for example, were simply coded as a “gender label” and marked in the data set with a “GL.” References to familial roles or family circumstances, such as “wife of the former president”, “two-time divorcee”, “absent mother”, etc., were coded as “role references,” marked in the data set with the letter “R”. Articles were also coded for descriptions of personal characteristics, both physical and emotional. These could include words and phrases like “weepy”, “shrill”, “looked more feminine than usual in her lavender pant-suit”, “heartless”, etc. These labels were recorded in the data set with the letter “C”. Whenever a mention of the candidates’ prior experiences was attached to a gender qualifier, this was coded as a gender-marker, reflected with a “GM”. Examples would be, “woman senator,” or “female defense minister.”

Articles were also coded for their tone. Articles with a negative tone were given a 3, articles with a neutral tone were given a 2, and articles with a positive tone were given a 1. Tone was determined by an obvious attempt by the reporter to include their own approval or disapproval of the candidate and/or her actions. If the author simply stated that someone else had expressed approval or disapproval of the candidate, the article was coded as neutral. Articles with a distinct positive or negative tone were rare; the majority of the articles for both women were neutral.

The statistical analysis performed included difference of means tests for each of the different gender bias marker categories and also for the average tone of each candidate. The tests were performed at the 95 percent confidence level. The

purpose of these tests was to determine whether or not one of the women was subject to more bias at a statistically significant rate.

## **The Results**

Of the 140 articles I coded for Hillary Clinton, 30 contained one or more of the bias markers I outlined in my coding scheme. Finding articles with either distinctly positive or negative tones proved to be much more difficult. Of the 140 Clinton articles, just five had a distinctly positive tone and 17 had an obvious negative tone. The numbers show that negative coverage was more likely to occur. The average tone for Hillary Clinton was 2.085. Clearly, the average was close to neutral but still with a slightly negative lean, even with the inclusion of the positively toned articles which help draw the mean right.

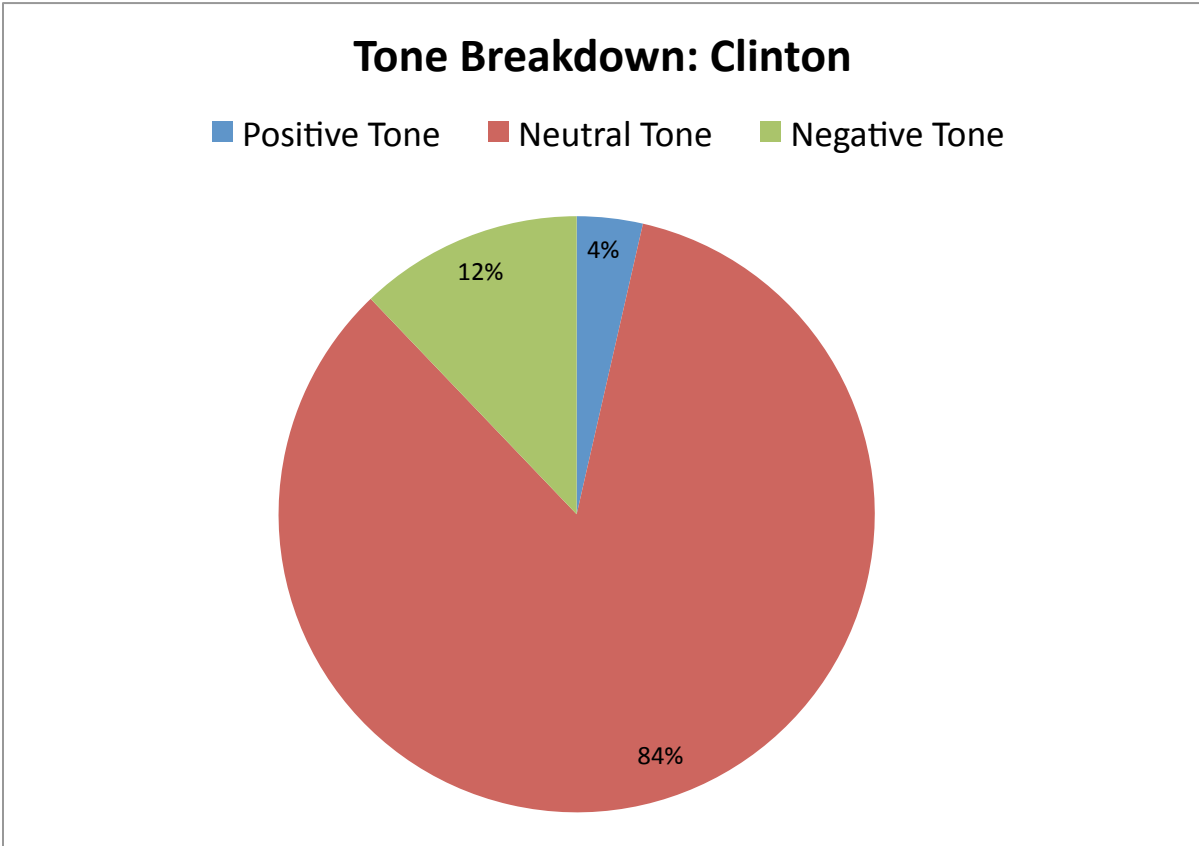


Figure 1- Depicts the use of each tone as a percentage of the dataset for Hillary Clinton

The coding for Clinton revealed 38 separate bias markers in the 30 articles in which they were found. The most common bias marker I found for Hillary Clinton was for character which occurred 20 times. The second most common was the role reference which I found 10 times, followed by the gender marker and gender label codes at six and two occurrences, respectively.



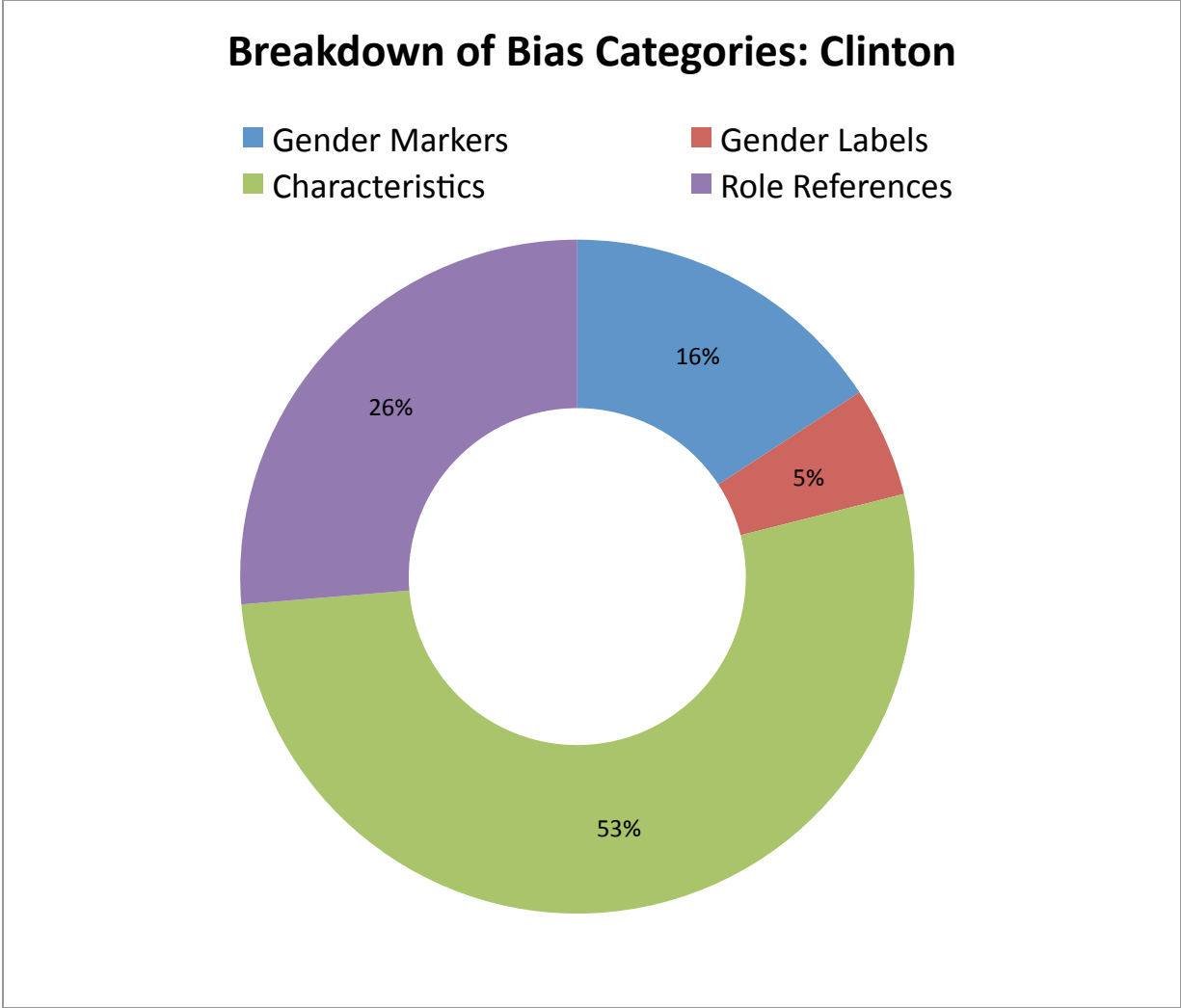


Figure 2- Depicts the use of each bias category as a percentage of the total number of articles which contained bias in the dataset for Hillary Clinton

Most surprisingly, one of Clinton’s harshest critics, in multiple articles, was, in fact, a woman. *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, at times celebrated and at times bemoaned by the women of the feminist movement, wrote columns that frequently attacked or negatively referenced Clinton’s gender. In one particularly sexist instance Dowd said of Clinton, “She has been too unseemly in her desire to be on the scene if he [Barack Obama] trips, or gets hit with a devastating story. She may

want to take a cue from the Miss America contest: make a graceful, magnanimous exit and wait in the wings... That's where the runners-up can be found, prettily lurking, in case it turns out the girl with the crown has some naked pictures in her past.”

Of the 182 articles that I coded for Michelle Bachelet, just 11 contained one or more of the bias markers, about 1/3 of the number Clinton received. Articles with obvious tone were even more rare in the stories about Bachelet than they were in the stories about Clinton. Only 12 articles with a distinct tone were found in the data set of 182, nine of which were negative and three of which were positive. The average tone of the articles for Michelle Bachelet was 2.03, almost neutral, but again, like Clinton, with a slight negative lean. Bachelet's average tone is certainly closer to neutral than Clinton's average tone was.

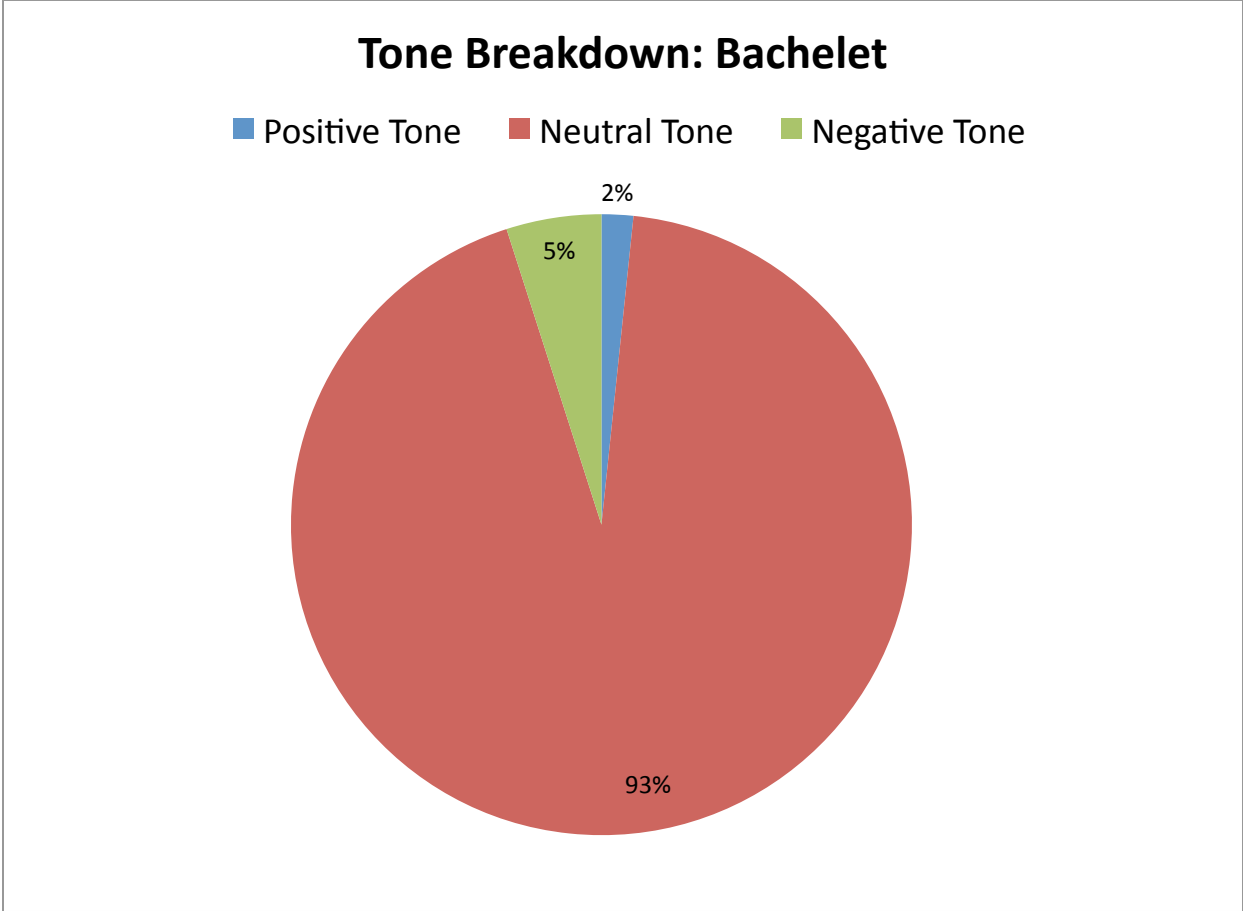


Figure 3- Depicts the use of each tone as a percentage of the dataset for Michelle Bachelet

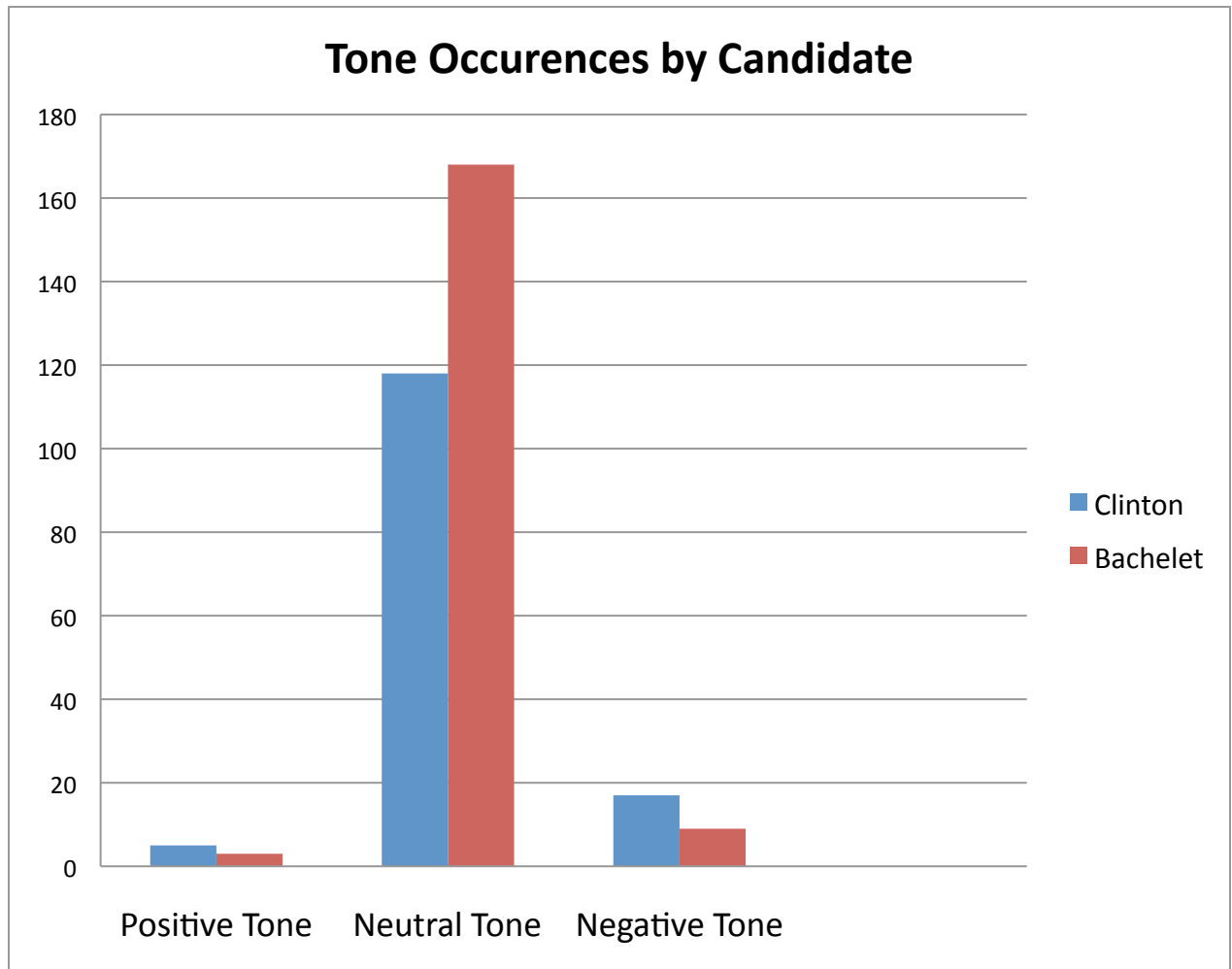


Figure 4- Compares the number of articles of each tone by candidate

In the coding for Bachelet, bias markers occurred 16 times and were much more similar in the rates at which they occurred than they were for Hillary Clinton. Role references and character labels were also the most common codes for Bachelet, though they occurred at an even number at five times each. The coding also revealed four instances of gender markers and two of gender labels.

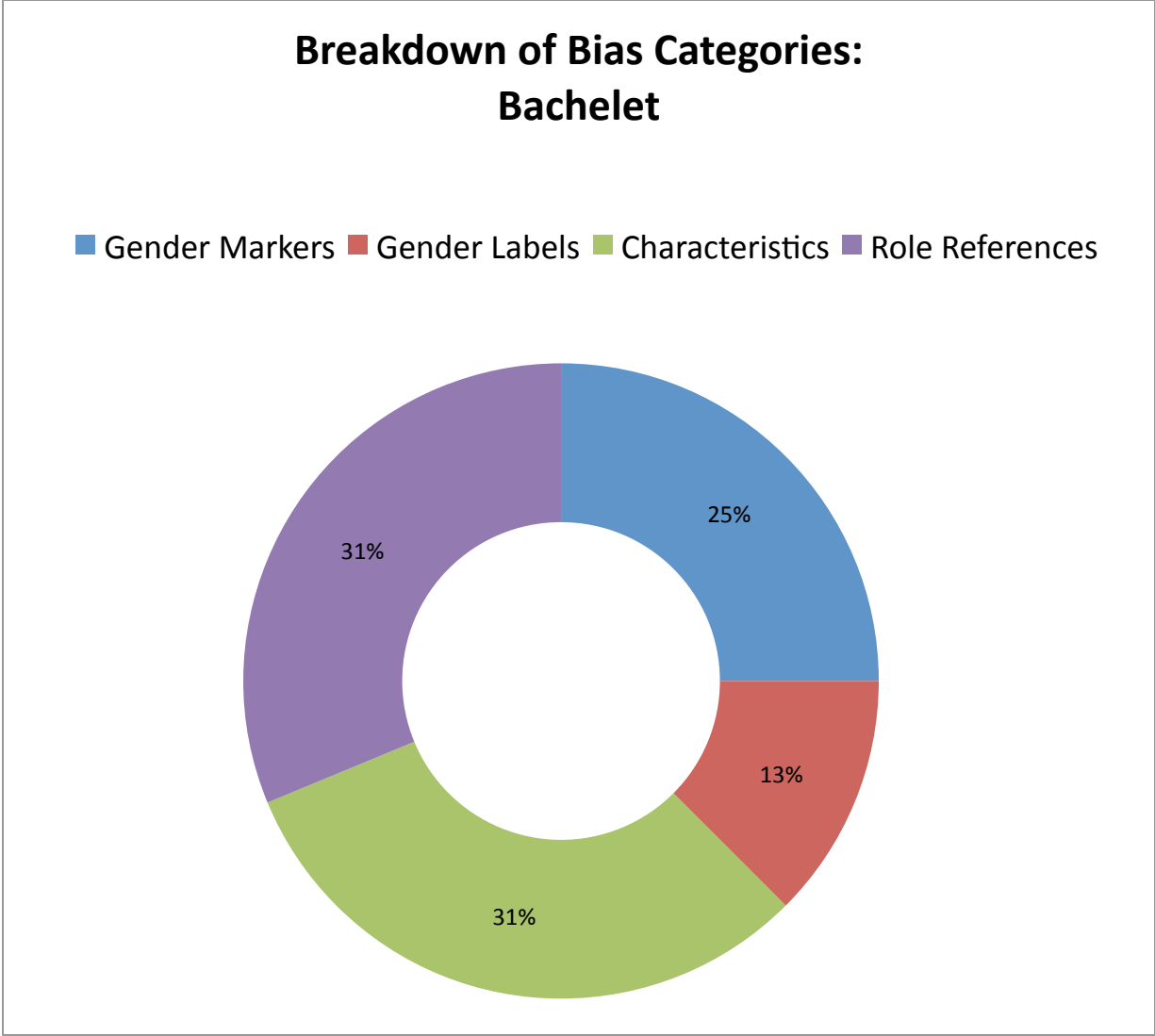


Figure 5- Depicts the use of each bias category as a percentage of the total number of articles which contained bias in the dataset for Michelle Bachelet

As previously stated, the results for each of the bias markers for each candidate were scrutinized with a difference of means test at the 95 percent confidence level.

At the .05 level, there was a statistically significant difference in the frequency of the role reference which indicated that Clinton was subject to more bias with regard to gender roles by the *New York Times* than Michelle Bachelet was by *El Mercurio*.

Under the same test at the .05 level, there was a statistically significant difference in the frequency of the character reference, again indicating that the New York Times was more likely to be biased against the gender of Hillary Clinton than El Mercurio was likely to be in its coverage of Bachelet.

The test was again run at the .05 level for gender label frequency with similar results indicating that Clinton was more likely to be a victim of biased coverage. The .05 level difference of means test was then applied to the gender marker and again revealed a statistically significant difference in the frequency of bias by the *New York Times*.

The difference of means test was then used to compare the tone used in the articles and revealed, at the .05 level, a statistically significant difference in the frequency of both distinctly positive and distinctly negative tones for articles covering Hillary Clinton.

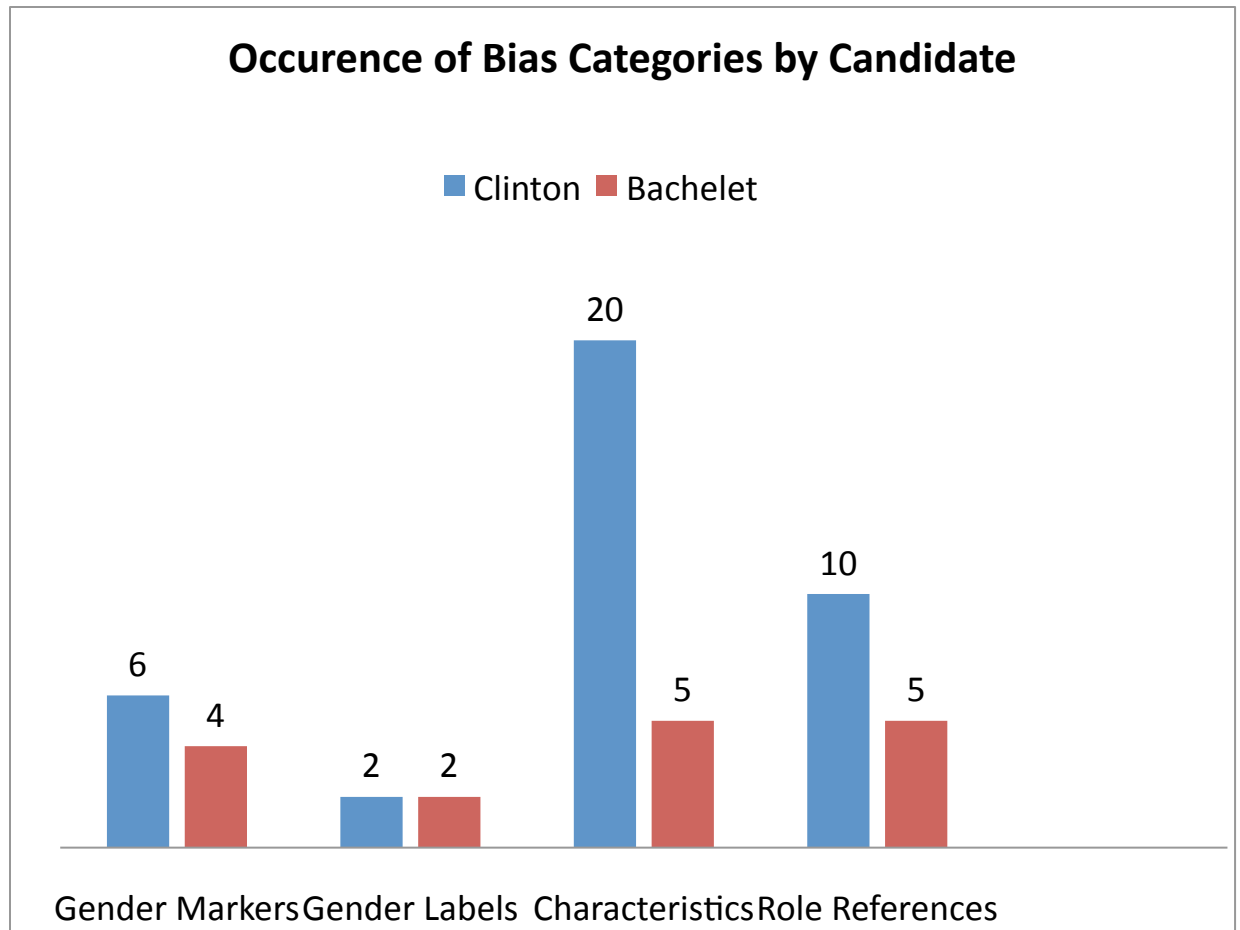


Figure 6- A comparison of the occurrence of each type of bias category by candidate

I also found a difference in the way the candidates were covered in terms of the quantity of articles that were published about them each day. As you might expect, Bachelet’s coverage tended to generally increase throughout the month and peak in the days, just before the election. The coverage of Clinton however, stayed a range closer to constant with occasional spikes. Perhaps this is due to the nature of primary elections in the United States in which primaries held at different points throughout the month may have temporarily increased coverage. In any case, the difference is interesting.

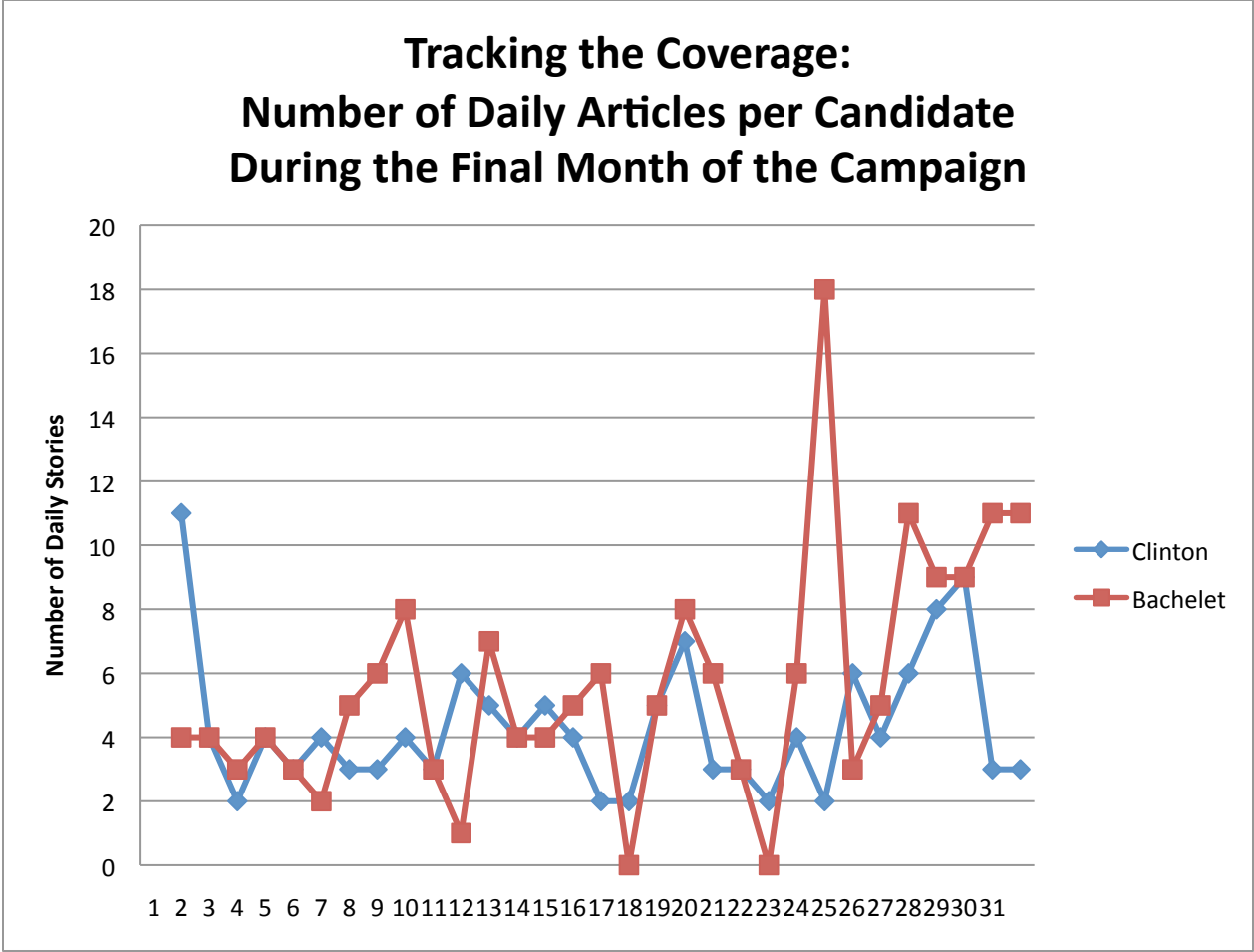


Figure 7- Depicts the fluctuation in the number of daily articles focused on each candidate during final month of the campaign. Day 31 represents the day of the election in Bachelet’s case and withdrawal from the race in Hillary Clinton’s case.

### Conclusions

There is confirming evidence that a higher rate of occurrence for bias can be found in coverage of Hillary Clinton than can be found for Michelle Bachelet. My predictions were thus consistent with the results I found.

Still, however, many of Clinton’s critics discredit the idea that her failure to capture the presidency had anything to do with sexism (Lawrence and Rose 2010).



Whether or not her defeat was due to sexism or her own failings as a candidate, the fact remains that she was subject to sexist media coverage, and that should be reason enough to pause and consider the impact that this type of coverage has not only on the female candidates of today, but the potential candidates of tomorrow as well.

Perhaps some will argue that Clinton was already a politically controversial figure and this is what shaped the attitude of columnists and reporters toward her, rather than simply her gender. This is indeed a possibility as many people are unable to separate Hillary Clinton from the messy affairs and political successes and failures of her husband, former President Bill Clinton. This could explain why she was often the victim of sexist coverage, but does not entirely explain why she was subject to more gender bias than Michelle Bachelet who was a controversial figure in her own right, as previously explained in this study.

Bachelet, a divorcee, self-proclaimed agnostic, socialist and champion of women's issues had her own uphill battles to fight in a conservative, predominantly Catholic country where divorce is frowned upon and was only officially legalized in 2004. Even more, abortion in Chile is still illegal without exception and reproductive laws in the country are often labeled as some of the strictest in the world.

It seems puzzling that Bachelet overcame such barriers and ascended to the presidency in her country, while Hillary Clinton was unable to obtain her office in the United States, a religiously heterogeneous country with much more relaxed social policies. Surely, some of the difference can be attributed to different electoral

systems and political cultures, but there is enough similarity between the two women for this discrepancy to be deemed somewhat odd and confusing.

One possible explanation for the increased bias Clinton was exposed to could be the difference in the journalistic approaches of the two newspapers studied. *El Mercurio* tended to be much more vigilant in attributing statements about candidates in the articles, making it easier to distinguish what was reporter opinion and what was the opinion of the reporter's source. Also, opinion columns were more frequent in the *New York Times* and this was where the bulk of the bias against Clinton appeared.

Furthermore, there seemed to be a general trend in which writers for the *New York Times* were much more comfortable using gendered language. In fact, it seemed this writers were more likely to use less than neutral language in general.

Whatever the reasoning behind the greater amount of gender bias in the U.S. newspaper than the Chilean newspaper, the most important information that should be taken from this study is the fact that gender bias occurred more often for Hillary Clinton. Perhaps this is why Bachelet succeeded in her quest for office and why Clinton did not. In any case, gender bias can pose a significant deterrent and barrier to female candidates in the United States and more steps should be taken to address this.

The study of gender bias in media continues to be relevant. Though steps are being taken to end gender bias, it continues to occur as evidenced by this study. Worldwide, more and more women are running for political office. This makes the study of gender bias coverage highly relevant. If women are to ever achieve a more

equitable proportion of the political representation around the globe, they must have fair access to that office both culturally and institutionally. Hopefully in revealing gender bias by the media, it can one day be eliminated.

## Bibliography

1. Carroll, Susan and Fox, Richard. *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
2. Carroll, Susan. *Women as Candidates in American Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
3. Childs, Sarah and Krook, Mona Lena. *Women, Gender and Politics: A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
4. Druckman, James N. "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence." *Political Behavior* 23 (2001): 225-256.
5. Entman, Robert. "How the Media Affect What People Think: An Information Processing Approach." *The Journal of Politic* 51 (1989): 347-370.
6. Falk, Erika. *Women for President: Media Bias in Eight Campaigns*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008.
7. Gutgold, Nichola. *Almost Madam President: Why Hillary Clinton "Won" in 2008*. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009.
8. Heldman, Caroline, Carroll, Susan and Olson, Stephanie. "She Brought Only a Skirt: Print Media Coverage of Elizabeth Dole's Bid for the Republican Presidential Nomination." *Political Communication* 22 (2005): 315-335.
9. Herrnson, Paul S., Lay J. Celester and Stokes, Atiya Kai. "Women Running 'as Women': Candidate Gender, Campaign Issues and Voter-Targeting Strategies." *The Journal of Politics* 65 (2003): 244-255.

10. Iyengar, Shanto and Simon, Adam. "News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion: A Study of Agenda- Setting, Priming and Framing." *Communication Research* 20 (1993): 365-383.
11. Iyengar, Shanto and Simon, Adam. "New Perspectives and Evidence on Political Communication and Campaign Effects." *Annual Review of Psychology* 51 (2000): 149-169.
12. Kahn, Kim Fridkin and Goldenberg, Edie N. "Women Candidates in the News: An Examination of Gender Differences in U.S. Senate Campaign Coverage." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 55 (1991): 180-199.
13. Kahn, Kim Fridkin and Goldenberg, Edie N. "The Media: Obstacle or Ally of Feminists." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 515 (1991): 104-113.
14. Kahn, Kim Fridkin. "Does Being Male Help? An Investigation of the Effects of Candidate Gender and Campaign Coverage on Evaluations of U.S. Senate Candidates." *The Journal of Politics* 38 (1994): 497-517.
15. Keeter, Scott. "The Illusion of Intimacy Television and the Role of Candidate Personal Qualities in Voter Choice." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51 (1987): 344-358.
16. Lawrence, Regina and Rose, Melody. *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House: Gender Politics and the Media on the Campaign Trail*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2010.
17. Milyo, Jeffery and Schosberg, Samantha. "Gender Bias and Selection Bias in U.S. House Elections." *Public Choice* 105 (2000): 41-59.

18. Reeves, Katherine Shaunesi. "Media Gender Bias in the 1984 and 2008 Vice Presidential Elections." 2009. Undergraduate Honors Theses.  
<http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/honors/32>
19. Shaw, Donald Lewis and McCombs, Maxwell. "The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda Setting Function of the Press." St. Paul: West Publication, Co. 1977.
20. Stroud, N.J., & Kenski, K. "From Agenda Setting to Refusal Setting: Survey Nonresponse as a Function of Media Coverage Across the 2004 Election Cycle." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71 (2007): 539-559.
21. Thomas, Gwynn and Adams, Melinda. "Breaking the Final Glass Ceiling: The Influence of Gender in the Elections of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Michelle Bachelet." *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy* 31 (2010): 105-131.
22. Valenzuela, Sebastian and Correa, Teresa. "Press Coverage and Public Opinion On Women Candidates : The Case of Chile's Michelle Bachelet." *International Communication Gazette* 71 (2009): 181-202.

Kayla May Woodring was born in Ogden, Utah. She graduated from Weber High School in May 2007 and began studying political science and journalism at Utah State University the following fall. At USU, she was a research fellow, teaching assistant and supplemental instructor. She was selected as a Harry. S Truman Scholarship Finalist in 2010 and also nominated for a Rhodes Scholarship the same year. She graduated with a bachelor of arts in 2011. She plans to work and travel for a year or two before pursuing a law degree. She will then focus on a career in international law.