Gender, Political Leadership and Media Visibility: *Globe and Mail* Coverage of Conservative Party of Canada Leadership Contests

LINDA TRIMBLE¹ University of Alberta

Introduction

When women seek the leadership of competitive political parties, does their sex influence their news visibility throughout the campaign? Or is the amount and prominence of a leadership candidate's news coverage determined by their competitiveness and standing in the race? To date, studies examining the relationship between gender and the amount of news coverage a candidate receives have provided inconclusive results. While some studies indicate a gender gap in news visibility, others suggest women are not disadvantaged relative to men and indeed may attract more news attention because of their sex. If gender parity in the amount of coverage of similarly situated candidates can be established, then it is likely that factors other than the sex of the candidate are shaping the quantity and placement of news coverage.

This paper examines the relationship between the sex of the party leadership candidates and their visibility in news reports by performing a content analysis of *Globe and Mail* coverage of each of the three Conservative Party of Canada leadership races featuring "high quality"² female contenders: Flora MacDonald in 1976, Kim Campbell in 1993 and Belinda Stronach in 2004. While the three case studies are similar in three respects—political party, news source and the presence of a female candidate—they reflect important differences in the nature, competitiveness and importance of the leadership race, the political context for women and the success of the female candidate. Flora MacDonald was the first serious woman candidate to seek the leadership of the Conservative party at the national level and she went after the top job at a time when the

Linda Trimble, Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science, 10-19 HM Tory Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2H4, ltrimble@ualberta.ca

party was in opposition and female parliamentarians were in short supply. Few women were elected prior to 1970, and MacDonald was among the women who held a mere 3.4 per cent of the seats in the Commons in 1976. Eleven candidates sought the leadership of the party, and six contenders, including Flora MacDonald, were seen as capable of winning the race. MacDonald surprised observers with a poor showing-she was sixth out of 11 candidates on the first ballot and withdrew after the second-prompting the phenomenon of declared but undelivered support for leadership candidates to be labelled the "Flora Syndrome." The man who won the 1976 Progressive Conservative leadership on the fourth ballot, Joe Clark, went on to form a minority government in 1979; his brief tenure as prime minister was brought to an end by the defeat of the government on its first budget. The subsequent 1983 leadership contest was won by Brian Mulroney, who had been a candidate in 1976. Mulroney went on to secure two back-to-back majority governments, serving as prime minister from 1984 to 1993.

Meanwhile, women's electoral fortunes improved dramatically, and the 1988 election not only brought the Mulroney-led Progressive Conservatives a second majority government, it boosted the number of female members of Parliament to just over 13 per cent. It seemed possible for women to seek, and even win, the leadership of competitive political parties, provincially and federally; indeed, Kim Campbell pursued the leadership of the governing Progressive Conservative party at a time when nine other women were party leaders (Trimble and Arscott, 2003: 70). Despite the unpopularity of the Progressive Conservative party when Mulroney stepped down in 1993, the race to succeed him was competitive and hard-fought. In 1993, there were five candidates in the race to replace Brian Mulroney as prime minister, but only two of them stood a chance of victory. The two leading contenders, Kim Campbell and Jean Charest, served as ministers in the Mulroney government and were considered both youthful and experienced. Kim Campbell was clearly in the lead early in the campaign and was predicted to win handily on the first ballot. However, her closest competitor, Jean Charest, gained momentum throughout the campaign and mustered a strong enough showing to require a second ballot on the convention floor, though Campbell won as expected. Kim Campbell's victory made her the first woman both to head the party and to become prime minister of Canada, albeit not for long. Campbell's party was destined for electoral decimation well before she assumed the leadership and indeed was reduced to a mere two seats in the subsequent general election, held a few months after the leadership vote.

The party's struggle to rebuild was hampered by the 1987 creation of a new party on the right, the Reform (later renamed the Canadian Alliance) Party, which supplanted the Progressive Conservatives as the official opposition in 1997. In 2003, after 16 years of divided loyalties **Abstract.** When women seek the leadership of competitive political parties, does their sex influence their news visibility throughout the campaign? By conducting a content analysis of all *Globe and Mail* coverage of each of the three Conservative Party of Canada leadership races featuring competitive female contenders—Flora MacDonald in 1976, Kim Campbell in 1993 and Belinda Stronach in 2004—I measured the news visibility of each of the leadership candidate and news prominence, as the female contenders were, on the whole, more visible than similarly situated male candidates. However, as the analysis reveals, sex is not the only factor shaping news coverage. I argue that the news value of the party, the nature of the leadership competition, and gendered mediation of individual leadership candidates intersect to determine the amount and prominence of news coverage accorded male and female candidates for party leadership positions.

Résumé. Lorsque les femmes se présentent à la chefferie d'un parti politique important, leur sexe a-t-il une influence, durant la campagne, sur la place qu'on leur accorde dans l'actualité ? J'ai mesuré la présence dans l'actualité des meneurs des trois courses à la chefferie du Parti conservateur du Canada où une femme était candidate – Flora MacDonald en 1976, Kim Campbell en 1993 et Belinda Stronach en 2004 – à partir d'une analyse du contenu de toute la couverture du *Globe and Mail* pour chacune des campagnes. Les résultats permettent d'établir un lien entre le sexe des candidats et leur présence dans l'actualité, les candidates étant, dans l'ensemble, plus visibles que les candidats dont la situation était par ailleurs comparable. Cependant, l'analyse démontre également que le sexe n'est pas le seul facteur déterminant de la couverture médiatique. Je soutiens que l'importance du parti même dans l'actualité, le style propre à la campagne, ainsi que la représentation genrée de chaque candidat par les médias se recoupent pour déterminer la fréquence et la visibilité de la couverture accordée aux candidats et candidates à la direction d'un parti politique.

and votes, the feuding partisan groups merged to form the Conservative Party of Canada.³ The newly formed party adopted a direct election method of leadership selection, which allows each party member a vote, to replace the traditional delegate/convention selection method used in 1976 and 1993.

The Conservative Party of Canada's first leadership contest, in 2004, took place in a context of stalled hopes for gender parity in electoral representation as women's share of the seats—21 per cent—in the House of Commons had not budged since 1997. Moreover, the halcyon days of women's party leadership were over, as by 2004 only three women led provincial parties and none led competitive national parties. The 2004 leadership race featured three candidates vying for party members' support in a direct ballot selection process. At stake for the leader of this newly reunited Conservative Party was a solid chance of challenging the governing Liberals, but while several names were touted as possible candidates, only three people stayed in the race: Canadian Alliance leader Stephen Harper, Tony Clement, a former Progressive Conservative cabinet minister in Ontario, and Belinda Stronach, a business-woman and political unknown with powerful supporters. Surveys of party members confirmed positions were clear from the outset, with Harper

in the lead, Stronach in second position and Clement a distant third. Despite her political inexperience, Stronach ran a strong second place campaign for the leadership, though she lost to Stephen Harper on the first ballot.

As this brief overview shows, examining the 1976, 1993 and 2004 Conservative leadership races offers a rare opportunity to compare media coverage of male and female candidates for a powerful political leadership position in the context of three different competitive scenarios, including one in which a woman emerged victorious. For each leadership contest, coverage of male and female candidates was compared on the basis of several measures of visibility and framing, including the amount and prominence of the coverage of each of the candidates over the course of the race, and the ways in which each of the candidates was portrayed, or framed, within the context of the race. The findings indicate a relationship between the sex of the leadership candidate and news prominence, one that boosts the visibility of competitive female contenders beyond their standing in the race. However, the findings make it clear that sex is not the only factor shaping news coverage. The news value of the party, the nature of the leadership competition and gendered mediation of individual leadership candidates intersect to determine the amount and type of news coverage accorded male and female candidates for party leadership positions.

Women Politicians and Media Visibility

The news media are the lens through which citizens see politics in action. The press provide "the *real* public space in which politics occurs and through which citizens comprehend the political process" (Ross, 2000: 1). Moreover, political leadership is a "historically constituted and gendered performance" (Clare, 2002), and it remains, in Canada as elsewhere, largely a male preserve. Masculine values and themes are evident in the campaign rhetoric devised by parties and leadership candidates (Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, 1996). These themes are, not surprisingly, often reproduced by the press. Several studies have found that female political aspirants receive less attention in the form of news stories, commentary and cartoons than do their male counterparts (Carroll and Schreiber, 1997; Gilmartin, 2001; Heldman, Carroll and Olson, 2005; Kahn, 1992, 1994, 1996; Kahn and Goldenberg, 1991; Norris, 1997b; Sampert and Trimble, 2003; Scharrer, 2002). Yet other research shows women may receive more coverage because of their sex. Bystrom, Robertson and Banwart's analysis of newspaper coverage of the primary races of 20 female and 41 male US Senate and gubernatorial candidates in the 2000 American election discovered that more newspaper articles about the primaries focused predominantly on female candidates than on male candidates (2001). Bystrom et al. (2004) extended their study to analyze all senatorial and gubernatorial contests between male and female candidates held in 1998, 2000 and 2002, observing relative gender parity in coverage overall (2004). Moreover, Norris' study of women world leaders revealed only modest differences in the amount of coverage granted male and female government leaders immediately after their victory or appointment, suggesting the quantity of coverage is related to women's place in the race—perceived ability to win—and proximity to power—status of the post (1997b).

Comparisons of male and female competitors for powerful leadership positions would provide useful data; however, there is little research on gender differences in press coverage of men and women seeking leadership of competitive political parties. Studies of newspaper coverage of Elizabeth's Dole's six-month campaign for the Republican party's presidential bid in 1999 offer inconclusive findings, largely because different measures of visibility were employed. Aday and Devitt analyzed all news stories printed in five newspapers over the last three months of Dole's campaign, counting whether or not each of the candidates was named in each paragraph in the news story (2001). By calculating the number of mentions as a percentage of the total paragraphs for all news stories in the sample, they determined that Elizabeth Dole was mentioned more often in news stories than any of the male contenders except the frontrunner, George W. Bush, in the three months before she dropped out of the campaign (Aday and Devitt, 2001: 57, 60). However, Heldman, Carroll and Olson (2005) and Bystrom (cited in Bystrom, Robertson and Banwart, 2001) found that Dole was less visible than she ought to have been based on her second-place standing. Heldman and others measured news visibility in several ways; in addition to counting how many stories mentioned each of the six candidates, they determined the proportion of each story devoted to the various candidates and looked for mentions of the candidates in headlines and front-page stories (2005: 320-21). Overall, these authors found that Dole received significantly less attention than either George W. Bush or John McCain even though polls showed that Dole, not McCain, was running second to Bush during this time period. Still, given that Dole did not stay in the race to the finish, there is no conclusive evidence that women who are serious candidates for party leadership positions receive proportionally less, and less prominent, coverage than comparable male candidates.

Gendered news framing can help explain why women may receive more or less media attention than their male counterparts. Framing analysis is the study of interpretive structures that give meaning and order to the news (Norris, 1997a: 2). It is widely acknowledged that news

media frame political life, especially elections, as games, by focusing on leaders or front-runners, campaign strategies, polling data, and explanations for wins and losses (Cappella and Jamieson, 1997: 37-57; Courtney, 1995: 93-95; Patterson, 1994: 53-93; Trimble and Sampert, 2004: 53). Male and female candidates alike will fall on the margins or even outside the game frame when they are not among the leaders of parties or the front-runners in leadership contests. However, even competitive women who display one or more of the features of high-quality candidates may be, by virtue of their sex, regarded as lacking the qualifications necessary to win political leadership positions and elections (Gilmartin, 2001; Ross, 1995; Sampert and Trimble, 2003; Scharrer, 2002). For instance, newspaper coverage of Elizabeth Dole's bid for the leadership of the Republican party accorded less attention to her issue positions and more to her personal traits than did coverage of her male opponents (Aday and Devitt, 2001; Anderson, 2002). Political cartoons sexualized and domesticated Dole and suggested she lacked substance on the issues of the day (Gilmartin, 2001). Similarly Kahn (1994, 1996) and Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) found women candidates for Senate and governor attracted less issue-related coverage than did men.

On the other hand, the news value of unusualness can enhance the visibility of female candidates because of their gender-based difference from their male competitors. Hegemonic masculinity in political life ensures that gender is interesting in and of itself, and news coverage of female politicians typically makes explicit reference to their sex (Heldman, Carroll and Olson, 2005: 8; Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross, 1996: 109). The news media often situate female politicians as women first, politicians second, by highlighting their marital status, sexuality, appearance and domestic roles (Bystrom, Robertson and Banwart, 2001; Carroll and Schreiber, 1997; Devitt, 1999; Heldman, Carroll and Olson, 2005; Jenkins, 1996, 1999; McGregor, 1996; Robinson and Saint-Jean, 1991, 1996; Ross, 1995; Van Acker, 1999). When women are in the picture because they are women, their gender difference can become central to the story. The novelty of being the first woman to contest a traditionally masculine role can propel her onto the front pages of newspapers (Norris, 1997b: 161). For instance, the women who were newly elected to the US Congress in 1992, the so-called "year of the woman," received more mentions by name in major newspapers than did newly elected men (Carroll and Schreiber, 1997: 135). Women leaders of Canadian national parties who engaged in confrontational behaviour during televised party leaders' debates attracted more coverage than equally combative male politicians because of the newsworthiness of their unexpectedly aggressive behaviour (Everitt and Gidengil, 2003; Gidengil and Everitt, 2000).

Hypotheses

The literature on gender and news visibility suggests both gender-specific and gender-neutral hypotheses. The gender-neutral hypothesis assumes that sex is not a determinant of the amount and intensity of news coverage for leadership candidates. Given the dominance of game framing in media coverage of electoral politics, winnability should be an important factor shaping news visibility of leadership candidates. According to Trimble and Sampert game framing "shapes the selection and content of news stories, focusing on the horse-race elements of the campaign" and reflecting a preoccupation with winners and losers, conflict, strategy and personalities (2004: 53). A gender-neutral hypothesis based on the dominance of the game frame posits that visbility will be largely determined by standing in the race, measured by placement of candidates on the first ballot. It is not always possible to determine candidate standings during the course of the leadership contest, as rankings may be unknown or may change over time, even over the course of voting on the convention floor. The ranking of the candidates on the first ballot is a good indicator of standing as, regardless of the leadership convention method, convention or direct ballot, there will be at least one ballot, and even in a multi-ballot convention the first ballot is crucial to the outcome.

While elections and leadership selection processes are framed as games, news values also come into play to shape the application of this frame to particular candidates. The news value of an event, actor or issue is assessed by editors based on its importance, proximity, timeliness, conflict or unusualness (Scharrer, 2002: 395). The strength of the party (as opposition, governing party, or newly formed opposition party) will likely influence the overall level of attention accorded the race by the press. A leadership candidate who seems likely to win the race and thus become prime minister will have considerable news value because of the significance of the event (see Courtney, 1995: 86). As well, the nature of the leadership selection process can affect the coverage by shaping the media's opportunities and techniques for assessing who is winning. Delegated conventions featuring several candidates and no clear first-ballot winners among them are likely to be reported differently than a process with universal balloting selection where the popularity of the candidates can be gauged via surveys of party members. In short, the competitiveness, importance and voting process of the leadership contest are important to the news media when reporting the leadership "game" and must be considered when examining the visibility of candidates, male or female.

If candidates receive more or less coverage than their ranking on the first ballot suggests is appropriate, gendered framing may be a factor. The gender-specific hypothesis is that gendered framing will tend to boost the visibility and prominence of competitive female candidates. Gendered mediation of news visibility can show up in one of two ways depending on the closeness of the leadership contest and the relative standing of the female candidate. First, if the female candidate is considered to be in the lead, she may benefit from the intersection of the game frame and gendered mediation because her front-runner status plus her sex will enhance her news value by coupling competitiveness with unusualness. Secondly, if a male candidate is in the lead, a female candidate may gain prominence due to the novelty value of her femininity via the spectre of a woman playing a "man's game." However, whether winning or trailing in the race, the female candidate who gains visibility due to her sex may framed in a manner suggesting that she is not "in the game" by according more attention to her persona and private life than to her political career and aspirations.

Method

Content analysis, the "objective and systematic counting and recording procedures to produce a quantitative description of the symbolic content in a text" (Neuman, 2000: 293), was used to analyze all news stories about the Conservative party's 1976, 1993 and 2004 leadership contests printed in Canada's national newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*. The *Globe and Mail* was chosen as the news source for this study because it has covered Canadian politics since 1844, maintains a large nationwide readership, and has a well-recognized and undisputed agenda-setting role among the Canadian media (Taras, 1999: 18). Moreover, the *Globe* has devoted considerable resources to covering political party leadership contests, including the various Conservative leadership races.

For the 1976 Conservative leadership race, a search of the Globe and Mail's full-page digital archive used the search terms "Conservative" and "leadership" to identify stories that were digitally "clipped" and printed for analysis. Globe and Mail articles about the 1993 and 2004 leadership contests were available on the Factiva data base and were accessed with the same search terms that were used for the 1976 race. All stories about each of the races in the Globe and Mail were included in the analysis, be they hard news stories, features, editorials, columns and opinion pieces; thus the sample is in fact a census of *Globe* stories about the three races. While it is the case that opinion-columns and editorials-reflect different journalistic standards than do hard news stories (see Aday and Devitt, 2001: 58), they contribute to news visibility for party leadership candidates. A candidate is arguably more visible to readers when his or her name appears in a headline of a column or editorial than when mentioned in passing at the end of a hard news story. Therefore it is essential to analyze both hard news and opinion coverage when assessing overall news visibility.⁴ A total of 471 news items were coded and analyzed, 149 about the 1976 race, 203 stories regarding the 1993 contest and 119 focused on the 2004 leadership competition. The fact that there were significantly more stories about the 1993 race, when the party was in government, than there were in 1976 and 2004, when the party formed the official opposition, indicates a relationship between the strength of the party and the overall amount of news coverage accorded the leadership contest.

For the 2004 race, coverage of all three candidates was assessed; because Belinda Stronach finished second, I wanted a male comparator other than the victor. For the other two races, I focused my analysis on the front-runners. They were easily identified in 1993; Kim Campbell and Jean Charest were the only candidates of five who stood a chance of winning. However, in 1976 the field was rather more crowded. Initially sixteen people declared interest in the leadership, and while they were pared to eleven prior to the convention, the press could not easily determine who was at the front of the pack. For my purposes, analyzing coverage of the five male candidates who finished in front of Flora MacDonald on the first ballot allowed a comparison of the female candidate with men who were similarly situated in the race.

I completed coding of all news stories based on a detailed coding instrument.⁵ The content analysis design makes a methodological contribution to the analysis of news visibility by employing several distinct measures of news presence and distinguishing between presence and prominence. As the inconclusive results of studies measuring Elizabeth Dole's news visibility relative to her male counterparts indicate, more than one variable is required to adequately measure news presence. For instance, a male and female candidate may receive an equal number of mentions in the news stories overall, but one of them may be advantaged by virtue of being named first in the story, mentioned more often, or appearing more frequently in front-page stories. It is particularly important to measure the presence of candidates in headlines as they define stories by summarizing the main topic of the news event, and they signal who or what is important in the story. Moreover, headlines are more likely than the body of the news story to be read, and recalled, by readers (van Dijk, 1991: 50). Discrete measures of visibility were employed in this study to account for both presence and placement. For each news story I coded whether or not each candidate was: 1) named in the story; 2) named first in the story: 3) named four or more times in the story: 4) named in the headline; and 5) named first in the headline. As well, the location of the news story was coded and factored into the analysis, on the grounds that front-page coverage is an important indicator of news visibility.

Markers of visibility can have a cumulative impact on the newspaper reader. For instance, a leadership candidate who is named first in the headline and body of the story and mentioned several times in the text of the article will be more noticeable to the reader than a candidate who is only mentioned once in story. To capture this, prominence indices were constructed for each candidate with a value of one granted for each of the five measures of visibility listed above, with a minimum score of zero (signalling invisibility) and a maximum score of five (illustrating a maximum level of news visibility).

To determine whether the *Globe* framed the male and female candidates differently, the main focus of each story that highlighted a candidate by mentioning him or her four or more times was identified. If the story was primarily concerned with the candidate's place in the leadership race or other strategic concerns, it was coded as a horse-race story. Stories that foregrounded the candidate's issue positions or policy ideas were classified as issue-based. Those stressing the candidate's career, personal life or other aspects of his or her background were coded as having a candidate background focus. Another important indicator of gendered news framing is higher levels of attention to the family lives and looks of female leadership candidates than to the families and looks of male candidates. In this study, any reference made to the candidate's looks, clothing, sexual allure or body was coded as an allusion to appearance. All mentions of a candidate's marriage, spouse, marital status or children were coded as a reference to their family life.

Findings

Sex of the candidate, news visibility and prominence

The results for each of five measures of visibility are reported for each candidate in Table 1 and mean scores on the prominence index are reported for each candidate in Table 2. Since stories carried on the front page of the newspaper are most noticeable for readers, the overall prominence index scores are compared to prominence scores for front page stories about the 1993 and 2004 leadership contests (see Table 2). A mere eight stories of 149 about the 1976 leadership race appeared on the front page of the *Globe and Mail*, thus these numbers are too small for the prominence index score per candidate for front page stories to be meaningful.⁶

As Tables 1 and 2 reveal, the gender-neutral hypothesis that a candidate's news visibility and prominence are determined by his or her standing in the race, measured by ranking on the first ballot, finds only modest support in the 1976 and 1993 leadership contests and no support for the 2004 race. In 1976, Flora MacDonald actually garnered as much attention, if not slightly more on some measures, than did male

Measures of Visibility					
Named in story (as % of total stories)	Named first in story (as % of total stories)	Named 4 or more times in story (as % of total stories)	Named in headline (as % of total stories)	Named first in headline (as % of total stories)	
73 (49%)	28 (19%)	26 (17%)	18 (12%)	17 (11%)	
82 (55%)	31 (21%)	34 (23%)	19 (13%)	14 (9%)	
60 (40%)	17 (11%)	18 (12%)	9 (6%)	7 (5%)	
30 (20%)	6 (4%)	6 (4%)	3 (2%)	3 (2%)	
54 (36%)	20 (13%)	20 (13%)	10 (7%)	9 (6%)	
66 (44%)	22 (15%)	18 (12%)	10 (7%)	10 (7%)	
198 (98%)	149 (73%)	157 (77%)	108 (53%)	100 (49%)	
162 (80%)	52 (26%)	109 (54%)	55 (27%)	34 (17%)	
100 (84%)	53 (44%)	62 (52%)	31 (26%)	28 (24%)	
108 (91%)	59 (50%)	78 (66%)	48 (40%)	45 (38%)	
81 (68%)	7 (6%)	29 (24%)	10 (8%)	7 (6%)	

TABLE 1 Measures of visibility by candidate, 197

Candidate Name (in order of finish

on the first ballot)

Claude Wagner Brian Mulroney

Joe Clark Jack Horner

Paul Hellyer

Kim Campbell

Stephen Harper

Tony Clement

Belinda Stronach

Jean Charest

Flora MacDonald

Leadership Race

1976

1993

2004

TABLE 2

	Candidate Name (in order of finish on the first ballot)	Mean Scores on Prominence Index (out of 5)		
Leadership Race		All stories	Front page stories	
1976	Claude Wagner	1.70	n/a	
	Brian Mulroney	1.62	n/a	
	Joe Clark	0.87	n/a	
	Jack Horner	0.39	n/a	
	Paul Hellyer	1.03	n/a	
	Flora MacDonald	1.02	n/a	
1993	Kim Campbell	4.11	4.15	
	Jean Charest	2.36	2.19	
2004	Stephen Harper	2.04	2.71	
	Belinda Stronach	2.84	2.68	
	Tony Clement	1.13	1.19	

Mean scores on prominence index by candidate, 1976, 1993 and 2004 Conservative leadership races

candidates who won more votes on the first ballot. MacDonald had the fourth highest score on the prominence index, above her sixth place ranking on the first ballot. The man who led after the first ballot, Claude Wagner, had the highest score on the prominence index but was bested on all discrete measures of visibility apart from being named first in the headlines by Brian Mulroney, who was second on the first ballot. Joe Clark's candidacy seemed well below the *Globe and Mail's* radar, and he scored lower on the visibility measures than all candidates but one, Jack Horner.

In 1993 Kim Campbell was first on the first ballot: thus, it is not surprising that she outscored her chief male competitor, Jean Charest, on all five visibility measures (see Table 1). Yet Charest ran a very close second to Campbell at the end of the campaign and his candidacy was competitive enough that the race required a second ballot. Despite Charest's standing in the contest, Campbell's score on the prominence index was significantly higher than that of Charest, suggesting that other factors were at play in Campbell's news visibility. A Campbell victory was hailed as a first for women, thus meeting a key news value, unusualness (Scharrer, 2002: 395), and undoubtedly explained, in part, the high level of media attention to her candidacy. That Campbell's mean score on the prominence index was significantly higher than any other candidate's, in any of the three Conservative leadership races, at 4.11 out of a possible 5, may also indicate that the media coverage granted a candidate reflects not only his or her ability to win the race but the importance of the win itself. Campbell's success, a first for women, guaranteed the top job, prime minister of Canada; thus her bid for the leadership had considerable news value.

In the 2004 race, media and candidate surveys of party members revealed that Harper was in the lead, followed by Stronach, with Clement a distant third, and the *Globe* predicted Harper would win on the first ballot. The surveys were accurate and Stronach finished a strong second, with 35 per cent of the vote, on the first and only ballot. Yet she attracted significantly *more* coverage than did the victor, Stephen Harper, on all measures of visibility and on the prominence index. However, as Table 2 shows, Harper scored slightly higher on the prominence index for front-page stories than did Stronach, suggesting his candidacy was taken more seriously.

There are two possible explanations for these findings. The first is that gendered framing of female candidates enhances their news value, thus boosting their visibility. But before this can be considered, a second explanation, based on the changing competitiveness of the race and the resultant news value of the leading candidates, must be ruled out. Perhaps the overall results obscure changing levels of media attention to particular candidates over the course of a leadership campaign in response to changes in the strength of campaigns and resultant levels of support. There are arguably distinct phases in any leadership contest. The first few weeks comprise an entry phase during which the media concentrate on the candidates and their campaign launches (Fletcher and Drummond, 1988: 99). Coverage then shifts to candidate activities, especially televised debates, changes in levels of support and policy pronouncements. Finally, the last few weeks of the campaign are, for the media, the "end-game," when front-runners are highlighted in an effort to predict the outcome of the race. Therefore even those candidates who get off to a slow start should have higher levels of media visibility at the end of the race, especially if they emerge victorious.

Longitudinal analysis of game framing and news prominence

To determine whether candidate visibility changed over time, the campaigns were divided into two-week phases, excluding post-election coverage because it focuses almost exclusively on the victor. Figures 1, 2, and 3 illustrate the results of a longitudinal analysis of prominence for the various candidates in the three leadership races, each of which will be discussed in turn.

Figure 1 shows clear changes in the news prominence of four key candidates over the course of the 1976 race. While columnists and commentators agreed Wagner would not prevail, they felt the vagaries of convention politics gave three candidates, namely Clark, Mulroney and MacDonald, a "fair shot" at winning (*Globe*, Feb. 21, 1976: 6). Flora

Figure 1

1976 Conservative Leadership Race: Mean Scores on Prominence Index by Candidate, Phase in Race



MacDonald's prominence in the first phase of the campaign was equivalent to that of Claude Wagner, the perceived front-runner on the first ballot. The graph shows that MacDonald's entry into the race had news value, but MacDonald's star dimmed after the first phase of the campaign while Brian Mulroney captured the *Globe and Mail's* attention. By the last two phases of the campaign Mulroney was the candidate most likely to appear in news stories and headlines about the race. Joe Clark's prominence score placed him lower than his third-place standing on the first ballot suggested was appropriate, and throughout the campaign Clark was eclipsed by Wagner, MacDonald and especially Mulroney.

Figure 2 also tells a very interesting tale, one that highlights the utility of analyzing changes in candidate visibility throughout the campaign. Kim Campbell was the widely acknowledged front-runner in 1993 but while the *Globe* felt she was unstoppable, Charest's campaign gained force and his delegate strength forced a second ballot. Indeed, as the line graph shows, in the last two weeks of the campaign Charest was boosted by the *Globe* to a slightly more prominent position than Campbell in its campaign coverage. Charest's prominence index score in this phase was 3.59, marginally higher than Campbell's 3.43. Thus Charest was more prominent in media coverage of the last phase of the campaign than his





FIGURE 3

2004 Conservative Leadership Race: Mean Scores on Prominence Index by Candidate, Phase in Race



ranking on the first ballot and his overall results suggest he should have been.

As in 1993, the 2004 campaign had a clear front-runner, Stephen Harper. Yet Belinda Stronach's presence and prominence in *Globe and Mail* coverage exceeded her (second) place in the race until the last two weeks of the campaign. Attention to Stronach at the beginning of the campaign was unsurprising, as she was a political unknown whose candidacy was kept well under wraps until a week before her declaration. Stronach's highly anticipated campaign launch received a lot of press even before she announced her candidacy. As Figure 3 shows, attention to Stronach far outstripped media coverage of her male counterparts in the first two phases of the campaign. Yet Stronach's media prominence persisted well past the entry phase and did not wane until the end phase of the campaign when Harper's sure win became the focus of the *Globe and Mail*'s attention.

Overall, the findings show that the campaign matters; presence and prominence in news coverage can change over the course of the leadership contest. However, it is also clear that visibility is not a straightforward reflection of support or "winnability," as the perceived front-runner may not be as interesting to the press as other candidates. The sex of the candidate may play a role, thus framing and news values must be taken into account. News media may foster interest in the contest by focusing attention on one of the candidates if that candidate exhibits news values such as difference, newness, novelty, or excitement. This is where gendered mediation⁷ can shape visibility.

Gendered Mediation and News Visibility

Gendered framing is illustrated by how male and female candidates are situated in relation to the horserace (or game frame). If the *Globe* coverage of the leadership races evidenced a differential application of the game frame, with stories placing men more firmly in the race while giving more attention to the personal and/or career backgrounds of the female candidates, then gendered framing can be seen as an important factor shaping visibility. To determine whether the *Globe* framed the male and female candidates differently, the main focus of each story that highlighted a candidate by mentioning him or her four or more times was coded into one of three categories: the horse race, issues, or candidate background. Table 3 confirms the dominance of the game frame in *Globe and Mail* stories about party leadership races.

The findings from 1976 presented in Table 3 do not support the proposition that female candidates are "sidelined" by game framing. Fully 95 per cent of the articles mentioning MacDonald focused on her place in the race, similar to the results for Joe Clark and Brian Mulroney. None of the stories that mentioned MacDonald four or more times focused on her background. In contrast, gender differences in framing of the candidates in 1993 and 2004 are illustrated by Table 3. In 1993, the focus of attention was slightly different for Kim Campbell and Jean Charest, with stories about Campbell modestly more likely to centre on her background and less likely to concentrate on her place in the game. An even larger gap on this measure is indicated by coverage of the three candidates in the 2004 race. The male candidates, Harper and Clement, were more firmly situated in the horse race than was the female candidate, Belinda Stronach. Moreover, 27 per cent of the stories focusing on Stronach stressed her background compared to only 7 or 8 percent for the male candidates. It is possible that Stronach's background was emphasized due to her lack of political experience. When coupled with the finding that Stronach was less visible than Harper in front-page

TABLE 3

	Candidate (in order of finish on the first ballot)	Focus of Attention N (%)			
Leadership Race		Horse race	Issues	Background	
1976	Claude Wagner	24 (89%)	1 (4%)	2 (7%)	
	Brian Mulroney	33 (97%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	
	Joe Clark	18 (95%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	
	Jack Horner	4 (66%)	1 (17%)	1 (17%)	
	Paul Hellyer	18 (86%)	3 (14%)	0 (0%)	
	Flora MacDonald	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	
1993	Kim Campbell	111 (71%)	25 (16%)	21 (13%)	
	Jean Charest	84 (77%)	19 (17%)	6 (6%)	
2004	Stephen Harper	51 (82%)	6 (10%)	5 (8%)	
	Belinda Stronach	53 (68%)	4 (5%)	21 (27%)	
	Tony Clement	26 (90%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	

Focus of attention to candidate, by leadership race (Calculated from those of stories mentioning the candidate four or more times)

stories, this focus on Stronach's background suggests her candidacy, while prominent in *Globe and Mail* coverage, was not taken as seriously.

Another important indicator of gendered news framing is higher levels of attention to the family lives and looks of female leadership candidates than to the families and looks of male candidates. In this study, any reference was made to the candidate's looks, clothing, sexual allure or body was coded as an allusion to appearance. All mentions of a candidate's marriage, spouse, marital status or children were coded as a reference to their family life. The findings are reported in Table 4.

Table 4 offers little evidence of sex-stereotyped framing of Flora MacDonald in 1976. Indeed, the looks and families of the male competitors were, for the most part, of slightly more interest to the *Globe* than the appearance and family life of the female candidate. The *Globe* and Mail mentioned Brian Mulroney's appearance more often than it remarked on Flora MacDonald's looks. Similarly, Flora MacDonald's family was discussed less often than the wives and children of the men.⁸ Kim Campbell's appearance was discussed more often than Jean Charest's but the numbers are very low for both candidates and the descriptions were perfunctory (for instance, "diminutive" to describe Campbell, "curly haired" to describe Charest) rather than invasive or sexualizing. Looks were really not an issue for the *Globe* in this race. Family status was raised slightly more often because of the contrast

Stories mentioning the candidate's appearance, family, by leadership
race

TABLE 4

Leadership Race	Candidate (in order of finish on the first ballot)	Number of stories mentioning the candidate's appearance (% of stories mentioning the candidate)	Number of stories mentioning the candidate's family and/or marital status (% of stories mentioning the candidate)
1976	Claude Wagner	1 (2%)	3 (5%)
	Brian Mulroney	7 (9%)	4 (5%)
	Joe Clark	3 (6%)	3 (6%)
	Jack Horner	0 (0%)	2 (7%)
	Paul Hellyer	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
	Flora MacDonald	4 (7%)	1 (2%)
1993	Kim Campbell	16 (8%)	19 (10%)
	Jean Charest	3 (2%)	9 (6%)
2004	Stephen Harper	2 (2%)	3 (3%)
	Belinda Stronach	36 (33%)	14 (13%)
	Tony Clement	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

between the "family man" persona of Jean Charest (June 5, 1993: A1) and Campbell's "two failed marriages" (April 5, 1993: A4).

The strongest support for the argument that women's looks and private lives are of more interest to the media than those of male politicians is offered by the *Globe and Mail*'s descriptions of the contenders for the 2004 leadership race. Harper and Clement offered the quintessential traditional family model, with wives and young children. That this was not of much interest to the *Globe* is indicated by Table 4. Stephen Harper's marriage and/or family were discussed in only three of the stories that mentioned him (3 per cent), and Clement's family was never mentioned. Like her competitors, Stronach has young children, but the fact that she is twice divorced set her apart and was discussed more frequently than was the case for Kim Campbell in 1993. Belinda Stronach's marital and/or parental status was raised in fully 14 (13 per cent) of the stories that mentioned her. Appearance was also a topic of discussion, but only for the female candidate. Stephen Harper's looks were discussed in only two stories, that is, in 2 per cent of the stories that mentioned him. Tony Clement's appearance won even less notice, one mention. In contrast, Belinda Stronach's appearance was discussed in 36 stories, 33 per cent of the news stories that referenced her. Her hair, wardrobe, body and sexual attractiveness were scrutinized and analyzed. In 15 of the stories mentioning her looks (41 per cent), Stronach's appearance was the first topic of discussion. In fact, Stronach's appearance was discussed before anything else about her in 14 per cent of the stories that included her. To test the argument that Stronach's visibility was boosted by coverage focusing on her looks, I compared Stronach's mean score on a 4-point prominence index⁹ on all stories that mentioned her appearance with her mean score on stories that mentioned Stronach but did not discuss her looks. Belinda Stronach was more prominent in news stories discussing her appearance, as her score was boosted from 2.5 (out of 4) to 3.06. That Belinda Stronach was more visible and prominent than Stephen Harper in much of the Globe and Mail's coverage of the 2004 Conservative leadership race was in part due to the novelty of her attractiveness and glamorous persona.

Discussion

Based on the findings from this content analysis, one could argue that the three female candidates received more than their fair share of *Globe and Mail* coverage of the 1976, 1993 and 2004 Conservative party leadership races. In 1976 Flora MacDonald received more attention than her eventual sixth place showing on the first ballot warranted. Kim Campbell's victory in 1993 was not the coronation the press predicted at the start of the race, yet she garnered significantly more coverage than her competitor. Jean Charest, until the last two weeks of the leadership contest. In 2004, Belinda Stronach was never predicted to finish better than second to Stephen Harper, but she was front and centre of the Globe and Mail coverage of the leadership race until the final few weeks of the campaign. Were these women more visible and prominent in the press coverage because of their sex? It is tempting to say yes, as the findings, especially regarding Belinda Stronach, lend support to this conclusion, but the evidence suggests the answer is more complicated. A close reading of the *Globe*'s coverage of each of the leadership contests offers additional insights about the newspaper's reportage of the races as they unfolded, as well as a holistic interpretation of the newspaper's application of the game frame in each case. This integrative approach to reading the data in combination with the news texts shows that gendered framing intersects with news values and the vagaries of the competition to mould news coverage of male and female candidates.

The findings presented here confirm that the game frame is the principal frame for party leadership contests, but its application by the news media is shaped by the competitiveness of the leadership race. The 1976 leadership contest was a "six-horse race" that could not be predicted by the press. "Never has a national political convention been so unpredictable, so wide open, so vulnerable to the dramatic and unexpected," said an editorial (Feb. 21, 1976: 6). The initial leader, Claude Wagner, did not have the potential to attract support from other candidates as the balloting process wore on, leaving six candidates who had the possibility of winning. That one of these six was a woman did not seem to be a key factor in the Globe and Mail coverage beyond some initial attention to Flora MacDonald's entry into the race and to her unusual fund-raising methods.¹⁰ As the findings from the content analysis show, MacDonald was as likely as her male counterparts to be framed within the game, and she received no greater attention to her looks and family life. As the campaign proceeded it was Brian Mulroney who captured more of the Globe and Mail's attention than did any other candidate. This may have been due to his difference from his competitors and the accompanying news value of his campaign. The Globe discussed Mulroney's looks more often than it did MacDonald's, suggesting that his physical persona played a modest role in garnering media attention. In sum, Flora MacDonald may have gained an initial advantage in a crowded, six-way race because of her sex, but the fact that she was more visible in the coverage than the eventual victor, Joe Clark, had as much to do with the fact that the *Globe* did not situate Clark as a more likely winner and genuinely believed Mac-Donald could succeed.¹¹

The 1993 leadership contest was, in contrast, a "two-horse race" with a clear leader, Kim Campbell. Indeed, the strength of Campbell's initial

support was often highlighted in the Globe and Mail with the phrase "Campbell coronation." Kim Campbell's undeniable lead in the race, coupled with her news value as the first woman with the chance of becoming prime minister of Canada, propelled her candidacy onto the front pages and headlines of the national newspaper's coverage of this crucial leadership contest. The Globe was slightly more likely to focus on her background than her place in the race, and slightly more likely to discuss her looks and family life than those of Jean Charest, but these differences were modest. The real story was that a woman was seeking and likely to win the top job. Making this story even more compelling was Jean Charest's growing momentum as the campaign wore on, and the tantalizing but remote possibility that he could overtake the seemingly unstoppable Campbell. The Globe and Mail recognized the news value in suggesting Campbell's win was in peril. Charest was called the "turtle" to Campbell's hare, with the Globe fully aware of the result (and moral) of that tale. In the last few weeks of the campaign the *Globe* made much of Charest's momentum while telling readers that "Campbellmania" had "fizzled" (May 25, 1993: A1; May 29, 1993: N3). This gave the game frame more currency, and indeed an editorial run on June 1, 1993, said, "To the surprise of many ... we still have a horse race" (A22).

The contrast between the 1976 and 1993 leadership contests indicates that the nature of the party leadership race—who the competitors are, how many are seeking the job, who is in front, and what's at stake politically—shapes the media response to the story as it unfolds. An unpredictable, competitive and close contest among candidates who aspire to lead an opposition party may be reported differently than a "turtle-andhare" race to be the next prime minister. The number and qualifications of the candidates are also important factors. Two strong candidates concentrate media attention (Campbell and Charest in 1993) while several qualified candidates diffuse it (six serious competitors in 1976). When the party is in government, choosing the next prime minister, media attention is enhanced and particularly focused on any candidate who may re-articulate the role (Campbell in 1993).

The extent to which candidates and their campaigns exhibit drama, conflict, difference or unusualness can influence which candidates are in the frame and how they are framed in relation to the "game." This is illustrated by Brian Mulroney's visibility and framing in the 1976 race, and Jean Charest's prominence at the end phase of the 1993 campaign, but it is made especially clear by the gender-mediated coverage of Belinda Stronach in the 2004 leadership contest. Stronach became the focus of the *Globe*'s coverage, but not because she was regarded as likely to upset a Harper victory. The novelty value of Stronach's sex, physical attractiveness, and glamorous image helps explain her prominence in media coverage. As *Globe* columnist Margaret Wente asserted about the high level

of attention to Stronach, "The media are kissing the ground in front of her because she adds some spice and sex appeal to an otherwise terminally dull event" (Jan. 20, 2004: A17). Even had the race been competitive and exciting, I believe Stronach would have been quite prominent in the news coverage because of her aura of celebrity. Van Zoonen (2005: 70) argues that contemporary politics has become increasingly personalized, as evidenced by the rise of the "celebrity politician." As the media attention to Stronach's appearance during the Conservative leadership convention shows, and as van Zoonen warns, "female celebrity is still built primarily on the appearance of the body," and this notion of celebrity does not easily transfer to political life (2005: 94).

What does it matter? The news media play an agenda-setting role by according candidates more, or less, attention and may have a priming function by evaluating each candidate's competence, support and ability to win the next election. But does media coverage influence the opinions and decisions of those who vote to choose the new party leader? Surveys of delegates to leadership convention show that campaign literature and candidate materials are more influential sources of information than are media reports (Courtney, 1995: 89). However, surveys of delegates are unreliable indicators of media effects. Without results from studies designed to gauge the impact of media coverage on voter decision making, the answer to this question is unknown. Courtney suggests that the one-member, one-vote leadership selection process will enhance the role of the media, particularly in the early stages of the campaign when candidates are establishing credibility and viability (1995: 84). The agendasetting and priming role of the media may be quite important in direct voting selection processes as few party members have the opportunity to meet all of the candidates and hear their pitches directly, and most will seek information about the contenders from the mainstream media. Thus one-member, one-vote leadership selection methods may in fact create more opportunity for mediation, including gendered mediation, the tendency of the press to select, interpret, analyze and evaluate events and behaviours through a gendered lens.

Conclusion

The findings from this study contribute to and amplify the literature on news visibility and gendered framing of women politicians by demonstrating the utility of taking multiple measures of news visibility, some of which capture news prominence. Inclusion in a news story is important, but prominence in a news story, as indicated by placement in the headline, story, and newspaper, must be gauged as well. The value of including several measures of news visibility that can be combined to form a prominence index, and of examining the results by sex of the candidate and phase of the leadership race, is shown by the analysis of the data presented here.

As well, the results from this content analysis of Globe and Mail coverage of three Conservative party of Canada leadership races provides clear evidence that while the news media frame party leadership contests as games and thus focus on the horse-race elements of the campaign, candidate visibility is not necessarily proportional to standing in the race, measured by ranking on the first ballot. Other variables, such as the ways in which the nature of the competition influence the application of news values within the context of the game frame and the gendered nature of news framing, must be considered. Female politicians who aspire to political leadership may in fact gain visibility because their very presence on the male terrain of elite party politics accords them the news value of unusualness. As Kim Campbell's coverage indicates, when female leadership candidates are in the front of the pack, positioned as the first woman to have a chance at the top job, the novelty value of their success contributes to news attention and accords them prominence in the news story. Belinda Stronach's extraordinary visibility during the 2004 leadership contest confirms the importance of news values other than the capacity to win. In this context, gender-based difference did heighten media attention, albeit in a manner that situated Stronach outside the game by referencing her appearance and family life. Overall, the relationship between gender and news visibility is both complex and complicated. News values and the nature of the competition intersect with gendered mediation to influence the amount and prominence of news coverage accorded women seeking the leadership of political parties.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Ph.D. student Laura Way for her diligent work to test intercoder reliability and for collecting the news articles from the 1976 PC leadership race from the *Globe and Mail*'s digital archive.
- 2 Kropf and Boiney, 2001, 82, argue that money, visibility and political experience are the three key features of high quality political candidates. Flora MacDonald and Kim Campbell had all three; Belinda Stronach had considerable funding and powerful backers, but lacked political experience.
- 3 The story is more convoluted than this short description conveys; see Patten, 2006.
- 4 I determined that there were no statistically significant differences on any measure of visibility based on the type of story (hard news versus opinion).
- 5 The coding instrument is available from the author upon request. To test for intercoder reliability, 20 per cent of the news stories from each leadership contest were selected randomly for coding by an independent researcher. The level of agreement across all measures averaged 97 percent for the three leadership races.

- 6 That the 1976 candidates scored lower on all measures of visibility than did the candidates in 1993 and 2004 shows that the *Globe*'s reporting in 1976 was, overall, less likely to focus on the candidates, be it in the headlines or in the body of the news story, column or editorial. Clearly the news visibility of party leadership candidates has increased over time due to changing news formats and the enhanced news value of personalities (Trimble and Sampert, 2004).
- 7 See Everitt and Gidengil, 2003, 196.
- 8 While MacDonald's marital status was arguably signalled by references to her as "Miss," I did not count these as mentions of her singledom, however, because this was the proper form of address for unmarried women at that time. Campbell's and Stronach's marital statuses were similarly acknowledged with the label "Ms' and were not coded as fitting the familialization frame.
- 9 The variable "named in the story" was dropped from the visibility index for this test because it would artificially boost the visibility scores. For the appearance variable to be coded as yes or no, Stronach had to be mentioned in the story.
- 10 Flora MacDonald appealed to the public for small donations via ads run in 20 newspapers across the country. "Canada Needs New Leadership," said the ad; "Support Flora's campaign for the Progressive Conservative leadership. Give to the Five to Fifty for Flora Fund" (*Globe and Mail*, December 6, 1975: 10). Also see "Mac-Donald takes bid for money to sceptics," *Globe and Mail*, December 10, 1975: 8).
- 11 Flora MacDonald was described as "a believable winner" (*Globe and Mail*, February 18, 1976). About MacDonald's place in the race, one columnist said that, "given the right dynamics at the convention next week, she could become Leader of the Opposition" (*Globe and Mail*, February 12, 1976).

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