

How the News Covers History: A Thematic Analysis of the New York Times and Wall Street's
Journal's Coverage of Kamala Harris's 2020 Vice Presidential Campaign

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ACADEMIC ABSTRACT

Kamala Harris made history on November 7, 2020, when she was elected as the first female Vice President of the United States. In addition to being the first woman, she became the first African-American and Indian-American to attain this position. As a result, the media had to grapple with how to cover her historic campaign from the moment she was announced as the vice-presidential selection. This qualitative thematic analysis examined *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal's* coverage of her campaign with significant analysis on important events such as the initial buzz surrounding her selection, the convention speech, and the vice-presidential debate. Specifically, this study examines 70 news articles total from both newspapers from August 11-November 3, 2020 to determine the recurring themes from her coverage. Results indicated that although traditional media frames and themes were not a significant focus, Harris's intersectionality brought about a new set of frames to explore, with subtle differences between the two newspapers. Implications of these results and future considerations for the media are discussed.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Kamala Harris made history on November 7, 2020, when she was elected as the first female Vice President of the United States. In addition to being the first woman, she became the first African-American and Indian-American to attain this position. Throughout her campaign, the media had to learn how to cover an historic candidate effectively, since this moment had no precedent. This thesis chose to explore *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal's* coverage of her campaign because of their influence in shaping the news around the country and they both represent different sides of the political spectrum. Important events that are covered include the initial announcement, the convention speech, and the vice-presidential debate. This study looks to determine if the stereotypical frames that the media places on female candidates are still seen with Harris. Results indicated that although traditional media stereotypes were not a significant focus, Harris's identity brought about a new set of themes to analyze, with each paper focusing on different aspects. Implications of these results and future considerations for the media are discussed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2020, for just the third time in American history, a woman served as the vice-presidential nominee on a major party ticket in an American presidential election. New York Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro ran alongside Democratic presidential nominee Walter Mondale in 1984 and Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin served as Republican party nominee John McCain's running mate in 2008. Ferraro and Palin were on the losing party slate. Like Ferraro, Sen. Kamala Harris appeared on the Democratic party slate. Sen. Harris was selected as the running mate to former Vice President Joe Biden on the 2020 Democratic party presidential ticket. The Biden-Harris ticket ultimately bucked recent history by defeating the incumbent president and Republican party nominee Donald Trump and his running mate Vice President Mike Pence. The Biden-Harris victory ensured that Sen. Harris became the first female vice president in U.S. history.

As with her predecessors Ferraro and Palin, the selection of Kamala Harris as a running mate on a major party ticket generated a great amount of media attention. While only the third woman selected as a running mate on a major party ticket, Harris was also the first African-American and Asian-American woman to receive her party's vice-presidential nomination. As with most firsts, media coverage of Harris and her nomination is extensive. Prior academic research demonstrates that media coverage of female candidates is problematic. While Ferraro and Palin, and even 2016 Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, faced a great deal of media scrutiny, research also shows that the coverage of these women often presented gendered stereotypes.

Women have had to face stereotypes in media reporting, which has only added to the unique nature of their candidacies at all levels. However, that Harris is the bi-racial (African

American and Asian American) woman on a major party's presidential ticket begs the question of whether stereotypical views toward African Americans or Asian Americans will infiltrate media coverage of this American first.

This thesis will be a comparative inductive analysis of *The New York Times (NYT)* and *The Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* and their coverage of Harris. The objective is to determine if stereotypical portrayals still exist and to see if the news media have changed in their reporting given the context of the Trump era and the "Me Too" movement. Before completing the inquiry into media coverage of Harris and her candidacy, it is important not only to understand the context of Harris's candidacy, but also to explore previous literature regarding female candidates and the media coverage they received.

This thesis begins with a brief political background on the historic nomination of vice-presidential candidate Sen. Kamala Harris and then discusses her intersectionality as a woman, an African American, and an Asian American. It then discusses literature on gendered stereotypes of women candidates, explores framing theory and literature on the coverage and tone of coverage for prior women candidates. The thesis then addresses the history of the vice-presidential contexts and the media coverage for the two prior women vice-presidential candidates: Ferraro, Palin, and other notable female candidates. This thesis then poses the research questions aimed at exploring gender and race themes in *The NYT* and *WSJ* coverage of Kamala Harris and her vice-presidential candidacy. In addition, this thesis answered three research questions that analyzed the presence of themes for each newspaper and furthered discussion on the prominence of gender and race in political campaign coverage. The final chapter discussed framing results for Harris across both newspapers and offers recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Kamala Harris

Kamala Harris was selected as the presumptive vice-presidential nominee by Joe Biden on August 11, 2020, after a lengthy vetting process. Her selection made it the first time in American history that an African-American and Asian-American woman was chosen for the presidential ticket. In addition to Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro in 1984 and Gov. Sarah Palin in 2008, Harris became the third woman overall to become the vice-presidential nominee.

After being admitted to the California Bar in 1990, Harris was initially hired as a deputy district attorney in Alameda County, California. In 1998, she would become an assistant district attorney, eventually becoming the head of the Career Criminal Division and prosecuting sexual assault, robbery, burglary, and homicide cases. In 2000, she would transition to San Francisco City Hall, working on neglect and child abuse cases while representing the Family and Children's Services Division.

Harris's political career began when she served as the District Attorney of San Francisco from 2004 to 2011. She followed that stint ascending to the Attorney General of California from 2011 to 2017, bringing her total amount of time as a prosecutor in the state to 26 years. Harris became California's junior Senator when she was elected to the Senate in 2016. Harris thrust herself into the national spotlight by announcing her 2020 campaign for president while still in her first senatorial term, which is similar to former President Barack Obama's rise on the national political scene.

Harris's political career however, has also been met with intense scrutiny. During her tenure as San Francisco's district attorney, she faced criticism for not providing information concerning a police laboratory technician that had faced accusations of intentionally sabotaging

lab work and she also supported legislation that stated that parents whose children were consistently truant could face prosecution, despite fears that such a law would disproportionately impact communities of color (Bazelon, 2019).

Controversy surrounding her record extended to her time as California's attorney general. In 2014, she appealed an Orange County ruling that made the death penalty unconstitutional, opposed a bill necessitating that her office investigate shootings involving police officers, and refused to support regulations to require police officers wear cameras (Bazelon, 2019). She was criticized by left-leaning organizations like the ACLU.

Perhaps most notable was the conversation surrounding her record in wrongful conviction cases. Several high-profile cases, where Harris fought to hold convictions on cases where technicalities prevented additional evidence that might have altered court outcomes or sentencing. One prominent example was George Gage, an electrician who was charged and convicted in 1999 of sexually abusing his stepdaughter despite having no prior criminal record (Bazelon, 2019). Due to technicalities, Gage remains in prison despite concerns that his stepdaughter lied in her testimony used to convict Gage.

In fairness, her record is not all bleak from a progressive perspective. During her time as district attorney, Harris chose not to advocate for the death penalty in a situation concerning the murder of a police officer (Bazelon, 2019). In addition, she implemented a successful program that provided the opportunity for first-time nonviolent offenders to have their charges dismissed if they successfully finished meticulous vocational training (Bazelon, 2019). As attorney general, she required implicit bias training, and received an award for fixing a backlog in the assessment of rape kits (Bazelon, 2019).

During her time in the senate as part of the judiciary and intelligence committees, Harris gained significant attention questioning Trump administration officials. Her questioning of Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein in 2017 led to Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr and other male senators admonishing her for cutting off the witness, sparking claims of sexism (Herb, 2017). Her exchange with Judge Brett Kavanaugh during his Supreme Court confirmation hearings drew praise from abortion rights activists after she asked him to name a law that gave the government the power to regulate the “male body” (Arnholz, 2020). This probing during the confirmation hearings led to President Trump describing her as “extraordinarily nasty” upon her selection as Biden’s vice-presidential nominee (Arnholz, 2020). She would attract similar praise in 2019 when she questioned Attorney General William Barr on findings from the Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election, also known as the Mueller report, concerning Russian interference in the 2016 election (Arnholz, 2020). Other notable moments during Harris’s brief senate tenure include co-sponsoring a bill to make lynching a federal hate crime (Watkins & Barrett, 2019), and voting to convict President Trump on both charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress during his first impeachment trial.

Speculation that Harris could run for president started early during her time in the Senate, and she ultimately launched her campaign on January 21, 2019 (Kelsey, 2019). She started off with significant popularity initially as she drew approximately 20,000 people to her first campaign rally in Oakland (Solie, 2019). In addition, her campaign raised \$1.5 million in its first 24 hours, tying Bernie Sanders’s total for one day from his 2016 presidential bid (Cadelago, 2019).

Harris initially surged in the polls both nationally and in Iowa following her performance in the first Democratic presidential debate in June 2019 (Sparks, 2019). In that debate, she confronted Biden over the issue of race, in the wake of his comments regarding his relationship working with segregationist lawmakers and his opposition to integrated busing in the 1970s, asserting that his positions had been “hurtful” (Breuninger, 2019). Subsequent polls placed her among the top tier of candidates (Sparks, 2019).

However, Harris’s initial success eventually faded. Her performance in the second Democratic debate was not well received, as Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI) continually hit her on her prosecutorial record, demanding that she apologize for it (Panetta, 2019). Also, her attack on Biden eventually came off as disingenuous as she later admitted that her position on busing and the federal government’s role in shaping local policies was essentially the same (Detrow & Khalid, 2019). As previously mentioned, her record as a prosecutor faced much scrutiny from liberals. In addition, she was ambiguous on her ideology, as she initially stated that she supported Medicare-for-all but then released a plan that did not eliminate private insurance (Zhou, 2019). Any momentum that she may have had switched over to other candidates. Biden maintained both his status as the frontrunner and strong support of African-American voters, Senator Elizabeth Warren was able to successfully brand her candidacy around corporate accountability and structural change, and Mayor Pete Buttigieg was also able to emerge as an alternative in the moderate lane (Zhou, 2019). Zhou (2019) acknowledged that Harris’s campaign was burdened by the gender and race assumptions that resulted from her status as a Black woman and she ultimately dropped out of the race on December 3, 2019, citing a lack of funds to continue (Detrow & Khalid, 2019).

Even with her imperfect record and unsuccessful run for president, there was always speculation of Harris joining a ticket with Biden. As early as May 2019, members of the Congressional Black Caucus believed that a Biden-Harris pairing would be a “dream ticket” (Caygle & Bresnahan, 2019). Harris even quipped during a response to that question that Biden would make an “excellent running mate” as her second fiddle during a campaign stop in New Hampshire (Stracqualursi & Judd, 2019). Biden, for his part, praised Harris for being a “first-rate candidate” when he found out she had left the race (Manchester, 2019).

Many pundits opined that Harris was the frontrunner in the “veepstakes” as soon as Biden became the presumptive nominee. In fact, CNN political analyst Chris Cillizza ranked Harris first on his list of potential running mates in every one of his 17 weekly vice-presidential rankings (Cillizza, 2020). Her position only intensified after the death of George Floyd at the hands of police officers as that further sparked calls for Biden to select a Black woman as his running mate (Ulloa, 2020).

In addition, organizations advocating on behalf of women praised Harris’s selection. The National Organization of Women (NOW) called Harris a “feminist champion” and pledged its full support in helping with voter turnout in November (“NOW Salutes”, 2020). EMILY’s List, an organization committed to supporting pro-choice female candidates for office, called Harris the “perfect choice” to help Biden win the election (“EMILY’s List”, 2020).

Intersectionality Representation

It is important to acknowledge the complexity of Harris’s identity as a woman of color and a daughter of immigrants. In particular, political intersectionality differs from structural intersectionality, where the focus is on employment and workforce considerations, in that gender and race connect women of color to differing political agendas that are supported by passionate

grassroots movements (Crenshaw, 1990). Because of their unique race and gendered experiences, Black women find themselves in the middle of both the feminism and antiracism movements, a situation that white women and even men of color rarely ever face (Crenshaw, 1990). Feminism at times lacks a focus on race while antiracism at times fails to focus on patriarchy, leaving women of color in a difficult dilemma politically (Crenshaw, 1990).

Simply including Black women within this established political structure is not enough to solve this problem; the entire framework that has been utilized to present the Black and women experiences needs to be changed ultimately (Crenshaw, 1990). Race is an obstacle specific to minority women that is not applicable to Caucasian women (Weldon, 2006). Specifically, in the case of Harris, her political obstacles are more complex than Ferraro and Palin, as her intersectionality as a Black-American and Indian-American woman adds a unique component that the previous two female vice-presidential candidates did not have to deal with as white women.

The media in particular are responsible for helping to perpetuate social identities that are imposed on these women (Brooks & Hébert, 2006). Ultimately, the media reinforce societal values and norms that have been determined by the consensus (Hall, 1982). Therefore, it is important to consider Black representation in the news. Implicit racial comparisons can be created simply with the presence and absence of Black people in important roles in news coverage (Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Despite calls to diversify the news industry, there has been incremental change in hiring minority journalists, as many journalists of color have also been placed in large urban areas, meaning that the small towns and rural communities that are having increases in minorities as part of their population do not receive that perspective in their news

(Byerly & Wilson, 2009). As a result, this dynamic allows for the creation of anti-Black stereotypes to continue to be present in today's media culture.

This structure is evident in the political landscape as women seek to successfully attain political office. Analyzing a woman's political ambition and her ultimate success as a female candidate can be defined by the simple idea of supply and demand. Supply is defined as a woman's lack of self-confidence and the selection of career choices that fail to prepare her for political office (Holman & Schneider, 2018). For example, fathers in particular are less likely to discuss politics with their daughters, which trickles down to a low level of enthusiasm and engagement by girls in political affairs (Mayer & Schmidt, 2004). Demand is defined as the elite decision-makers working within political institutions and parties and their ability to determine access to public office (Holman & Schneider, 2018). If the political parties are evaluating female candidates as unlikely to be successful, then that is already a critical impediment for a woman to run for high office, especially in a political system that places much power in the parties. This explanation could be why there has only been one-woman major party presidential nominee. Women of color, such as Harris, also have to factor in their race as an added obstacle. This dynamic illustrates that framing can have different effects based on race and ethnicity (Holman & Schneider, 2018).

Harris being both a woman of color and a descendent of immigrants makes it difficult to make one aspect of her identity more salient than the others. In a general sense, women of color are less likely to be seen as having the necessary "male characteristics and fitness to serve in political office (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

Party elites are less likely to recruit women of color, and when they do it is often in races where they are significant underdogs (Thomas & Bodet, 2013). These factors can also influence

decisions by qualified women to run for office, considering women of color are likely to shoulder enormous familial obligations and less financial resources overall (Farris & Holman, 2014). These structural components ultimately lead many women to believe that they will never be qualified to run for office (Elder, 2004).

Framing plays an important role in the creation of this intersectionality because politics is not a profession for the sensitive because it is full of scrutiny (Holman & Schneider, 2018). Media narratives may actually further promote supply-side frames regarding underrepresentation of female candidates (Holman & Schneider, 2018). For example, when the media cover a female candidate from a feminist perspective, the subsequent message that is portrayed is that her candidacy derives from her individual experiences rather than the structural components that are in place that might benefit or hurt her candidacy (Carroll, 2009). In addition, female candidates have the additional burden of balancing not only their image as leaders but also how their personal lives might impact media coverage and ultimately voter decisions (Ward, 2000). It is not a surprise then those other factors accounting for intersectionality among Black women seen as fit for political office include income, wealth, and educational background (Silva & Skulley, 2019).

Intersectional stereotyping can be defined as evaluations or judgments that address multiple identities together (Eaton, 1993). For example, an Asian woman will need to contend with the intersection of her identity as a female and as member of a minority racial group. But intersectionality extends beyond race and gender and may include immigrant status, native language, veteran status, class, and sexual identity. When assessing intersectional stereotyping, however, most of the literature has focused on gender and race and fails to take into account other factors such as sexual orientation that highlight intragroup differences between gender and

race stereotypes (Doan & Haider-Markel, 2010). Research is limited in studying gay and lesbian candidates since open members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) have only recently come to the forefront, but they are still routinely viewed with less favorability than heterosexual candidates (Doan & Haider-Markel, 2010).

In addition, African-American women in politics face a narrative that is rooted in an intersectional experience of racism and sexism (Michener, Dilts & Cohen, 2012). Scholars have hidden the political traditions of Black women through two measures. They define Black women's involvement in politics through institutional spheres such as through lobbying and voting, thereby refusing to acknowledge their initial exclusion from politics (Michener et al. 2012). Black women since this nation was founded have had to overcome many obstacles on the path to equality, and Harris's selection as the running mate in 2020 after nearly 250 years only emphasizes that point. Any recap of American political history involving African-American women should acknowledge that they hold an important position in American politics (Michener et al. 2012).

Given the context of the previous literature, Harris most notably could face scrutiny given that she is married to a white man and that she had previously dated a man who was 30 years older. Unlike other women who have previously run for office, Harris's intersectionality is unique in that she has never had children or raised children. Since she does not share in some of the defining experiences that many women share, her identity is complicated by these additional facts. Overall, Harris's intersectionality on the national stage places her in a historic moment, and in turn affects media coverage of Harris in the framing of her unique identity as a participant in the highest levels of politics.

Gender Stereotypes

While some may believe that gender role stereotypes have been removed from the conversation, in actuality there are three ways that female candidates/politicians are viewed differently from their male counterparts. To begin, voters perceive female politicians to be less qualified to serve in spite of on average having more experience (Carroll & Strimling, 1983). While this research was from 15 years ago, no systematic or current research suggests this trend is going away anytime soon. Approximately 25 percent of voters believe men are better to serve in public office (Lawless & Fox, 2006). Secondly, female politicians tend to be associated with feelings of indecisiveness and weakness (Dolan, 2004). These perceptions are especially critical in defining the U.S. Presidency as a masculinized office (Duerst-Lahti, 2007). Thirdly, voters view men as more capable in regards to dealing with national security issues, an impression that has led to a notable decrease in support for a female president following the 9/11 attacks (Lawless, 2004).

As a result, women have to be able to successfully navigate through these stereotypes. One example of this dilemma is Senator Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign for the Democratic Party nomination. She had to show that she was "tough" on issues such as national security, but was also criticized for not being "human" enough at times (Heldman, 2009). Her attempt at being human when she teared up in New Hampshire during the primary race was seen as a sign of weakness (Heldman, 2009). In addition, her previous experience in the federal government was seen as the "status quo" as opposed to Barack Obama's campaign theme of "change" (Carroll, 2008). This scenario creates a double-bind for women's leadership, and as a consequence stereotypes of what should be "proper" leadership collide with stereotypes of good leadership (Jamieson, 2007).

Women running for all levels of office have had to deal with disparities in coverage, especially when comparing and contrasting policy-related content to more personal content such as appearance and family. Despite what previous history may suggest there have been promising trends recently. Disproportionate negativity has disappeared in races not involving the presidency (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008). This trend may be due to the fact that since there has already been a significant number of women who have been elected to statewide leadership, the novelty of a woman running for those positions is not as prevalent.

However, just because there appear to be some positive trends does not mean that all of these hurdles have been cleared. There have been a handful of women who have run for president, and only Clinton has actually won a major party's nomination. Other women seeking office have garnered unfair comparisons. Carol Moseley Braun's campaign, for example, was constantly compared to Al Sharpton's campaign even though the latter had never served in elective office, and Braun had been the first African-American woman to become a senator in American history (Smooth, 2006). There simply have not been enough successful women's campaigns, especially on the presidential level, for them to be compared.

Other factors contribute to women being underrepresented at all levels of elected office. For example, incumbency advantage leads to slow progress for these marginalized groups when the men in the office have the incumbency advantage (Carroll & Jenkins, 2001). In addition, there are few women currently in powerful positions in public office (Lawless & Fox, 2006). Even 15 years after this research, there are only 24 women serving as senators and eight women serving as governors. Women tend to not be as heavily recruited by political parties, diminishing their chances of actually winning their respective races (Sanbonmatsu, 2002).

Media Coverage

Media coverage is a factor that has received a substantial amount of research. On the statewide level, male and female candidates tend to garner the same amount of coverage (Kahn & Fridkin, 1996). However, on a federal level, female candidates in senate races secure less coverage, even when competitiveness and incumbency advantage are factored into the coverage (Devitt, 1999). In a similar vein, Sen. Elizabeth Dole garnered considerably less print media coverage as opposed to her similarly competitive male counterparts during the 2000 Republican presidential primary contest (Heldman, Carroll, & Olson, 2005).

Gender differences in media coverage as a result are prevalent in previous research. Women running in gubernatorial and senatorial races do not get the same amount of issue-related coverage, thus signaling that their campaign is not taken as seriously (Devitt, 1999). Women receive more scrutiny when it comes to personal lives, wardrobe, appearance, and personality traits (Heldman et al., 2005). In addition, reporters group male candidates with “male policies” and characteristics, while female candidates are associated with “female policies” and characteristics, which as previously mentioned can lead to negative perceptions (Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid, & Robertson, 2004).

This thesis uses the established definition of frame as “a central organizing idea or theme ‘that supplies context and suggest what the issue is through the use of selection emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration’” (Yioutas & Segvic, 2003). This theoretical framework will now be explored further.

Framing

Framing plays an integral component in creating the identity of a female candidate and political candidates in general. Media frames are critical in influencing how voters feel towards a

certain candidate or their policy (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Frames allow news reporters to create narratives that help in shaping those perceptions since it is argued that frames may function in a role similar to a summary of an article's key points (Entman, 1993).

Some scholars argue that media frames are most influential when they reach low-information contexts (Miller & Peake, 2013). Voters lean on information from the media when they do not know much about a candidate (Mutz, 1998). This scenario could definitely apply to candidates such as Ferraro and Palin who were less recognized by the country when they were selected as running mates than Harris is today.

One particular frame that seems to be attached to many female candidates is the idea of the "first woman" frame (Heldman, 2009). In certain cases, this narrative wrongly portrays the candidacy as a pioneer in politics (Heldman, 2009). In addition, this frame can negatively impact electoral prospects because it implies that women getting involved in politics is a rare occurrence (Braden, 2014). The voters as a result may view them in a "bench warmer" role rather than as a vital component of their leadership, or that the "first" is already sufficient progress (Braden, 2014).

Coverage Tone

The tone of the media coverage is also an important aspect to analyze. Female candidates tend to garner much more negativity than their male counterparts and much of that coverage focuses on the female candidate's viability (Heldman et al., 2005). In a system that already favors incumbents, negative media and questions of viability are extra weights that women in politics often carry. As a result, media coverage plays a critical role (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). This role has only been exacerbated with the advent of social media.

Emphasis may be placed on certain components over others. The media serve as an important channel between public officials and citizens, but when they appear to favor certain types of candidates over others for irrelevant reasons, they do not serve the best interests of democracy (Heldman, 2009). Thus, coverage of an unknown candidate, especially as it relates to national office, can have a critical impact on their ability to gain traction in a campaign (Miller & Peake, 2013).

Media roles have evolved considerably in American history. Since 2000, social media has caused considerable changes in the ways Americans consume news, and those changes especially within the last decade are being recognized in scholarship (Jenkins, 2008). Older media can be defined as magazines, newspapers, and broadcast television networks (Halperin & Harris, 2008). Older, often referred to as “traditional” media, media is currently losing viewership to new media that includes the Internet and the different platforms that come with that, talk radio, and cable news television (Halperin & Harris, 2008). This new lens through which to view the media figures to be a critical component of the 2020 presidential race.

This reality comes with positives and negatives. The technological age has allowed the media to produce content faster (Heldman, 2009). However, some argue that new media is more concerned with entertainment than they are with delivering hard news (Davis & Owen, 1998). The media have taken character attacks and extremes ideologically to another level, especially in the absence of editorial filters (Halperin & Harris, 2008).

The Vice Presidency

There is limited existing scholarship on the office of the vice presidency as a whole despite the fact that there has been plenty of literature written about specific occupants of the

office. Earlier in the 20th century, the role was initially selected by the party elites, and was mostly viewed as a figurehead position (Nelson, 1988a).

However, the influence of the mass media has led to an increased profile of the vice presidency in addition to presidential power and campaigning becoming more powerful and aggressive (Heldman, 2009). Ulbig (2010) highlights several different markers that have led to increased coverage of vice-presidential nominees in recent history: relative newness to voters nationally, a unique characteristic, a distinct shortcoming, and a scandal. The job description of the vice presidency has also grown to encompass specific policy projects, national security involvement, and an overall stronger working relationship with the president, since the selection of Mondale in 1976 (Light, 1984).

In recent times, vice-presidential picks have been made with loyalty to the president in mind, as there is a chance that they may become president at some point (Nelson, 1988b). The idea that a vice-president can suddenly become president manifested itself into reality during 1988 especially given what had happened between 1945 to 1975, as Truman, Johnson, and Ford ascended to the presidency due to either the death or resignation of the president. Additionally, George H.W. Bush temporarily functioned as the leader of the country while Ronald Reagan was recovering from an attempted assassination attempt.

On the campaign trail, the vice-presidential candidate can serve a multitude of roles. Previous history suggests that vice presidential candidates assist as “attack dogs” and do the heavy lifting in sparring with their ticket’s opponent (Sigelman & Buell, 2003). They can also serve to help expand the presidential nominee’s appeal across the country and bring the party together after a hard-fought primary (Nelson, 1988b). For example, Sen. Biden was selected to be Sen. Obama’s running mate because he could apply to the blue-collar demographic having

been raised in Scranton, PA (Bennett, 2008). In addition, Obama hoped Biden could balance the ticket with experience given his lengthy tenure as a senator with an expertise in foreign policy and other defense issues. These jobs are critical, especially in the more critical and more partisan primaries (Heldman, 2009).

Conventional wisdom states that the pick of a running mate should not hurt the top of the ticket. However, there have been instances where vice-presidential choices have arguably backfired. George McGovern was forced to take Sen. Thomas Eagleton off his ticket in 1972 after just 18 days because of mental health issues (Clymer, 2007). Michael Dukakis's pick of Sen. Lloyd Bentsen was seen as a mistake by some because Bentsen at times appeared to outshine Dukakis (Heldman, 2009). Other candidates such as Sen. Dan Quayle in 1988 and Gov. Sarah Palin in 2008 were framed as inept by the media (Heldman, 2009). The vetting process is integral in selecting a running mate that will be the most beneficial to the presidential candidate.

With the context for the vice-presidential selection laid out, this thesis will next discuss the candidacy of the first woman to be selected as the running mate, Geraldine Ferraro.

Geraldine Ferraro

Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro made history in 1984, when she was selected as the first female major-party vice-presidential nominee to run with former Vice President Walter Mondale. A three-term congresswoman in the House of Representatives from New York, she was also the first, and to date the only, Italian-American to appear on a national ticket.

The historical observations of Ferraro's vice-presidential candidacy are taken largely from Schudel (2011) unless otherwise noted. She was initially elected to Congress in 1978 after being an assistant prosecutor in the borough of Queens, and ran under the campaign slogan "Finally, a Tough Democrat. Ferraro was selected with the hopes of energizing voters in an

uphill battle against popular incumbent President Ronald Reagan. Her speech at the Democratic National Convention garnered an eight-minute ovation, and her popularity carried over to the campaign trail where she more often than not drew larger and more energetic crowds than Mondale.

Ferraro did not come without legislative accomplishments. Her key victory during the early 1980s was sponsoring the Economic Equity Act, which banned unequal treatment of women when it came to workplace salaries and pensions. She quickly climbed up the House hierarchy becoming a favorite of then-Speaker Tip O’Neill also became a member of the influential Democratic Steering and Policy Committee. She easily won reelection in her 1980 and 1982 races.

Her candidacy also did not come without intense scrutiny. To begin with, being the first woman to be in this spot already placed her in a precarious position. Her support for abortion rights did not sit well with Catholic leaders, and she was even criticized by members of her own party who felt that she was too willing to compromise or indulge in pork-barrel politics in order to help her constituents (Schudel, 2011).

Perhaps the fiercest investigation she came under had to do with the professional records of her husband, John Zaccarro. He walked back a previous promise to release his tax records, and Ferraro only added to the controversy by alluding to Italian stereotypes. The couple had an estimated net worth of four million, and when they finally released their documents, they hurriedly paid over \$50,000 in taxes and other interest. This investigation continued even after her vice-presidential run, when the House ethics committee determined that she had broken ethics rules by not sharing details concerning her husband’s finances, although she was not handed a formal punishment.

Ferraro also faced personal attacks from the opposition. Second Lady Barbara Bush implicitly referred to her in vulgar terms saying, “The \$4 million-- I can’t say it, but it rhymes with rich” (Schudel, 2011, para. 27), while later claiming that the word she was looking for was witch. Vice President George H.W. Bush’s press secretary was more explicit, saying that Ferraro was “too bitchy”. Bush even participated in the conversation with a jab, remarking after the vice-presidential debate that “We tried to kick a little ass last night” (Schudel, 2011, para. 28).

Any excitement that Ferraro brought did not make a difference in the end. The Mondale ticket for a brief time ran even in the polls, but Reagan and Bush ultimately won in a landslide. The incumbents won 49 of 50 states and 525 of 538 electoral votes becoming the largest presidential victory ever. In addition, despite Ferraro’s presence Reagan was able to capture 55 percent of the female vote.

With the context of Ferraro’s candidacy laid out, this this thesis will now discuss the second woman to become the running mate, Sarah Palin.

Sarah Palin

Sen. John McCain selected Sarah Palin to be his running mate on August 29, 2008, shortly before the start of the Republican National Convention. In doing so, McCain was looking to add energy to his ticket, as he knew his opponent would be bringing in enthusiasm as the first African-American major party nominee in Obama. Enthusiasm was critical especially since he would be tied to the unpopular incumbent President George W. Bush. Palin was a governor of Alaska who also brought an outsider’s perspective to balance the decades of experience McCain had in Washington (Mason, 2008).

In addition, at 44, she brought youth to a ticket that needed it with McCain as he would become the oldest president to be inaugurated if he won at the age of 72. McCain had originally

considered picking his friend Democratic senator Joe Lieberman in order to showcase a never before seen “unity ticket” in the spirit of bipartisanship, but his advisers convinced him that such a pick would alienate the conservative base he needed to energize (Heilemann & Halperin, 2010). A self-described “hockey mom”, Palin like McCain had a large family with five children ranging from 18 years to five months old (Mason, 2008).

Her selection was met with surprise from the political world. To begin with, she was a relatively unknown figure nationally, especially when compared to other candidates who were being vetted for the vice-presidential spot such as former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty (Mason, 2008). The day after she was picked, a Gallup poll showed that most Americans did not know enough about her to form an opinion (Newport, 2008). She had only been governor since 2006, and the one previous elected office experience that she had was being the mayor of Wasilla (Mason, 2008). It also undercut McCain’s line of attack criticizing Obama for not having enough experience to become president, as Palin like Obama was serving in the first term of her present office. It was speculated that although Palin could shore up support with conservatives, she could alienate independent and moderate voters, two demographic groups that were critical for McCain to win.

In addition to her lack of federal experience, her personal life was met with intense scrutiny. Shortly after she was announced as the running mate, it was revealed that her 17-year-old daughter Bristol was pregnant and planned to keep the baby as well as marry the father (Bash, 2008). McCain indicated that he knew about this matter before selecting Palin, and Obama even stated that families should be off limits, noting that he had also been born to a teenage mother (Bash, 2008). Palin also had to hire a lawyer to represent her as Alaskan state legislators started an investigation into whether or not she abused her power in firing the state

public safety commissioner for refusing to fire her ex-brother-in-law, who happened to be an Alaska state trooper (Bash, 2008).

Another reason for selecting Palin was the hope that she could help the GOP appeal to disaffected supporters of Hillary Clinton who had just concluded a long and brutal primary campaign losing to Obama (Mason, 2008). Despite the public not knowing much about her, they were eager to see how she fared to national exposure. Her convention speech saw approximately 37.2 million viewers tune in (Miller & Peake, 2013). Her debate with Biden drew nearly 70 million people, thus making their meeting the “most widely viewed vice-presidential debate in history” (Benoit & Henson, 2009, p. 48).

Palin, however, sought to go about creating her own definition on what it means to be a woman. To start, she rejected the typical wardrobe of pantsuits for women candidates, and chose instead to style her hair differently, talk about her family often, and make her children a focus at the convention (McGinley, 2008). Her convention speech especially focused on folksy colloquialisms as well as incorporating a more personal tone and other anecdotes (Gibson & Heyse, 2010).

Palin’s goal to highlight her uniqueness continued even after the convention. At campaign events Palin wore short skirts, high heels, and tailored jackets, while at the same time the campaign shared images of her hunting and using firearms (Miller & Peake, 2013). Even her aforementioned self-characterization as a “hockey mom” saw the campaign trying to weave the balance of Palin being feminine and maternal while concurrently having masculine traits such as toughness and aggressiveness (Beail & Longworth, 2012). Her joke that hockey moms were like “pit bulls with lipstick” is one example of that. Instead of trying to carefully walk the aforementioned “double-bind” that women candidates face for portraying feminine or masculine

traits, Palin seemed comfortable promoting hyperfemininity and hypermasculinity (Miller & Peake, 2013).

However, Palin did hit a roadblock coming out of her well-received speech at the convention, and it was not just her personal life that was coming under intense examination. Arguably, the McCain team did not help matters especially as it related to her exposure to the media. The campaign's initial desire to shield Palin from the media only fueled speculation about her competence (Kenski, Hardy, & Jamieson, 2010). That sentiment was only emboldened after disastrous interviews with ABC's Charles Gibson and CBS's Katie Couric that saw the Governor give unsure and rambling performances (Kenski et al. 2010).

The Couric interview in particular was a disaster for Palin. During the conversation, she cited Alaska's proximity to Russia as a credence to her foreign policy experiences and stumbled when asked to name a single newspaper or magazine that she regularly reads (Mak, 2012). She was also unable to name a Supreme Court case besides *Roe v. Wade* that she disagreed with, appeared to not know her running mate's record, and was unable to discuss examples of when he was willing to legislatively go against his own party (Mak, 2012). Thus, a negative frame concerning her readiness for the office garnered momentum (Miller & Peake, 2013). As previously mentioned, these frames ignited the stereotype that women are less prepared on commander-in-chief issues such as defense and foreign policy (Lawless, 2004).

Ultimately, Palin's selection did not lead to victory for McCain. Obama won a convincing victory in the electoral college, carrying 365 of 538 electoral votes, as well as capturing an absolute majority of the popular vote at nearly 53 percent. However, the exit polls suggest that Palin did have some impact with the electorate. McCain won the white women

demographic 53 to 46 percent, an improvement for the GOP from previous elections (Kuhn, 2008).

Media Coverage of Female VP Nominees

Historical review of the three women vice presidential candidates in US history reveals that there were considerable obstacles for the women candidates. In fact, academic research has explored media coverage of women candidates in systematic ways. The next section of the thesis reviews prior research exploration into the content and tone of media coverage for women candidates.

Previous Studies

One previous study (Heldman, 2009) examined media coverage of these women through several factors, including gendered and sexist coverage. Gendered coverage was defined as “Coverage that focuses on stereotypically female aspects/traits, including dress and appearance, mention of their family and caretaking, and use of the First Woman Frame (for Ferraro)” (Heldman, 2009, p. 8). Sexist coverage is described as “Discussion of the candidate’s body, dress, physicality, femininity, etc. in sexually explicit, objectifying, and/or openly degrading ways (Heldman, 2009, p. 8). Other variables tested include the tone of coverage and old media (newspapers) versus new media (blogs). Tone of coverage is analyzed looking at primary frames for each candidate and how trait mentions are used to describe Ferraro and Palin (Heldman, 2009). The timeframe for new media were the 2004 and 2008 elections, as those were the only races at the time that had featured online blogs (Heldman, 2009).

The dataset for new media spanned five political blogs: *Slate.com*, *Politico*, *The Drudge Report*, *The Daily Kos*, and *The Huffington Post* (Heldman, 2009). The authors felt that the selection of these blogs encompassed the ideological spectrum. They classified Huffington and

Kos on the left, Slate and Politico in the middle, and Drudge on the right. A search was carried out for any mentions of each of the vice-presidential candidates in these respective elections, and that resulted in 99 articles for 2004 and 348 for 2008 (Heldman, 2009).

The old media dataset was made up of a representative sample of news articles on Ferraro in 1984 and Palin in 2008 comparing them with their male counterparts (Heldman, 2009). To make it a comparison study, the authors also looked at the coverage of the male vice-presidential candidates in the campaigns in between 1984 and 2008, which included Bentsen, Quayle, Gore, Cheney, Lieberman, and John Edwards. The articles chosen ranged from the announcement of their selection through Election Day (Heldman, 2009).

Both datasets were coded for the aforementioned frames in order to compare the male and female candidates. Specific frames included mentions of the candidate's dress or appearance, family or caretaking responsibilities, trait coverage, tone of the coverage ranging from very positive to very negative, sexist language to describe the candidate, and the issues that they were associated with (Heldman, 2009). Each candidate had positive and negative frames, and the number of frames for each candidate also varied. For example, Cheney in 2004 and Bentsen in 2008 had three frames, while Sarah Palin had ten specific frames in 2008 (Heldman, 2009).

The results showed that there has been a noticeable increase in running mate coverage over time. The 1984 race saw approximately 2,872 articles written on Bush and Ferraro, and that number ballooned to 14,180 in 2008 with Biden and Palin (Heldman, 2009). The overall increase in vice-presidential coverage suggests that the position has become more important (Heldman, 2009). The new media dataset shows Palin having received more coverage than Biden, Cheney, and Edwards (Heldman, 2009). There was also a correlation with gendered coverage, as descriptions used to describe Ferraro and Palin were disparaging and sexual at times. According

to Heldman (2009), “Reporters described Ferraro as slender, blond, and blue-eyed, with an adoring smile, while Palin looks like every librarian in a cinemax movie” (p. 14).

Palin faced significant coverage criticizing her parenting, focusing specifically on her teenage daughter’s pregnancy and whether or not she was spending quality time with her special needs child (Heldman, 2009). Ferraro did not campaign on her family but allowed the media narrative surrounding her were suspect business dealings that her husband John Zaccarro was involved in to become a significant issue (Heldman, 2009). In regard to sexist coverage, Ferraro and Palin were four times as likely to receive such coverage in print media (Heldman, 2009).

Other factors to consider when comparing tone of coverage in regard to gender is the aforementioned incumbency advantage. Incumbents tend to be framed more positively, which would disadvantage Ferraro and Palin as challengers as both of their campaigns were also considered underdogs going into the general election (Heldman, 2009). One key factor in selecting both women was to add excitement for tickets that badly needed it. Ferraro and Palin received more media coverage, but it does not mean that all of it was positive. In addition, while this study did look at new media, it is important to note that they only analyzed blogs. In 2020, candidates have to figure out how to be able to successfully navigate many social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. Harris will be subjected to more scrutiny than either Ferraro or Palin ever were, especially in the constant news cycle.

Miller and Peake (2013) analyzed media coverage in the 2008 campaign between Palin and Biden, focusing on several hypotheses concerning the scope of Palin’s coverage: gender, appearance, family status, overall negativity, and the relationship between reader opinion and the tone of coverage. Each hypothesis was tested using articles and editorials from the top newspapers in all thirteen battleground states, which were picked because of polling before the

election and results in prior presidential elections in addition to the local papers, *The Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post* due to their nationwide influence (Miller & Peake, 2013). Data collection started August 29, 2008 (the day Palin was selected) through election day on November 4th. Articles and editorials had to explicitly discuss the presidential race and be at least five sentences long, and only weekday and front-page articles were selected for the sample, adding up to 753 articles in total, in addition to 1,839 articles and editorials that were randomly selected, making the total sample come out to 2,592 (Miller & Peake, 2013).

Information that was coded included headline mentions and the tone of the headline, whether it be positive, negative, or neutral, and the number of sentences committed to each candidate and whether their gender, parental status, marital status, and clothing/appearance received a mention (Miller & Peake, 2013). Finally, the article's overall tone regarding the candidate was also tested, and results of the intercoder reliability offer that it was moderate to high.

The results agree with the aforementioned hypotheses and the effects of media coverage. Palin's content was more extensive and had more headline and article mentions than Biden, and her coverage was also more negative than his, as 43 percent of the headlines concerning her were negative, contrasted with 36 percent for Biden (Miller & Peake, 2013). Readers are unlikely to significantly sway opinions if coverage is minimal, so Palin facing constant reporting showcases conditions that lead to impactful media effects (Miller & Peake, 2013).

Palin's campaign provided a rare opportunity to study how the media covered a woman running on a presidential ticket opposed by a male counterpart, and its subsequent effect on reader opinion. This study largely confirmed previous research that Palin's coverage would be

negative and with a significant focus on her gender. Her gender, appearance, and family status were a significant focus of her coverage, as has been the case for the handful of female candidates in presidential elections. However, being the first woman on a Republican presidential ticket provided she also garnered positive coverage (Miller & Peake, 2013). Overall, the effects of disproportionate negativity and an extended focus on gender only makes public opinion cynical and can even skew well-intentioned coverage. In general, women running for office for the first time have obstacles that they have to overcome. Even with her historic candidacy, Palin uniquely brought much attention to an underdog Republican ticket.

Now that the context and previous studies about the two previous female vice presidential candidates has been laid out, this thesis will next discuss media coverage of other female candidates in previous national races.

Media Coverage of Female Candidates in National Races

Previous literature is not just limited to the two female candidates who have become vice-presidential nominees. As previously mentioned, there have been other women who have run for prominent positions in national politics and have been successful in some cases. One particular study focuses on the media coverage of four female political candidates across a diversity of federal offices including president, vice president, governor, and senator. The four candidates discussed in this study are Palin, Hillary Clinton, Elizabeth Dole, and Claire McCaskill.

Although Ferraro had set the bar in 1984, it was not until the 2008 campaign that a woman representing the two major political parties faced serious consideration for the presidency or vice presidency. Even in the buildup to the campaign however, these women faced challenges via stereotypes in news coverage. *Washington Post* columnist Joel Achenbach asserted that he knew Clinton was running for president because of the way she was arranging her hair

(Achenbach, 2006). When Palin was selected to be McCain's running mate, *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd stated that she had ushered in a new kind of woman candidate focusing on guns, babies, and bibles (Dowd, 2008).

Clinton and Palin by no means are the first women to face these challenges. U.S. politics can be a masculinized space combined with the lack of representation for women in elected offices across the country (Heldman et al., 2005). For example, in 2011 only 17% of the U.S. Congress was made up of women, placing the United States 70th out of 132 countries in an analysis of female representation in comparable positions ("Women in the US Congress", 2011).

That number has marginally increased since then. After the 2018 midterm elections that saw record turnout especially for female congressional candidates, 102 women are currently serving in the 116th Congress, making up 23.4% of members (DeSilver, 2018). In the process the Democrats gained the majority handing over the House speaker's gavel to Nancy Pelosi, marking her return to the position since her term from 2007 to 2011 and maintaining her status as the first and only female speaker in American history. The midterms also saw five new women elected to the senate, increasing the total number to 25 female senators (DeSilver, 2018).

News coverage plays a pivotal role in reinforcing gender issue ownership. A previous study looked at news coverage regarding a mixed-gender governor's election and found that the news media included more positive mentions concerning the candidates' experience in correlation with gender-congruent topics even though they had more experience dealing with gender-incongruent issues (Major & Coleman, 2008).

Concurrently, they still garnered more coverage in totality of gender-incongruent issues (Major & Coleman, 2008). In this specific race, the female candidate had more positive mentions on three separate feminine issues with more sustained focuses added than the man did on the

single masculine issue raised by economics (Major & Coleman, 2008). In this case, the candidates garnered gender associated praise but gender inconsistent emphases. It is also important to note however that both of these candidates were breaking boundaries in their own right. The man (Bobby Jindal) was vying to become the first Indian American and the woman (Kathleen Blanco) was looking to become the first female to occupy this respective office. Needless to say, it is possible that this particular study's results were attributed to the novelty and uniqueness of the focused candidates (Major & Coleman, 2008).

This intense political focus on masculine traits can influence the media to not highlight feminine traits, which was a key component of media coverage in the 2008 presidential campaign (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). This predicament will disadvantage women candidates in two ways. First, lesser exposure of feminine traits will minimize any political benefits that they could receive if they try to be more personal and self-disclosing (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996). Secondly, maximum news coverage on masculine traits will force women to exhibit a masculine personality to show that they are "man enough" to handle high political offices (Meeks, 2012).

For example, two presidents that have remained popular and are perceived as strong leaders are Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. They are typically ranked among the most successful presidents. These iconic leaders that have portrayed feelings of masculinity only aggravate novelty labeling around women in politics, thus influencing the media to speculate and analyze further the traits that they exhibit.

With these trends in mind one particular study discusses U.S. news coverage of elections with at least one female and one male candidate for the aforementioned four women who ran for senator, governor, president, and vice president multiple times between 1999 and 2008:

Elizabeth Dole, Claire McCaskill, Hillary Clinton, and Sarah Palin (Meeks, 2012). The scope of this study is focused on media coverage of male and female candidates in three gendered rhetorical lanes that are prevalent in American politics: novelty labels, political issues, and character traits (Meeks, 2012). Novelty labels can be defined as references made concerning gender or the “uniqueness” of a candidacy, such as the “first female” or “lone women” (Meeks, 2012). Positive labels may discuss components such as a historic quality to a woman’s candidacy or refer to her as a transformative figure, both of which could appeal to voters and is usually implicit coverage (Meeks, 2012).

Masculine stereotypes tend to be associated with views that men are financial providers and protectors (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). Masculine issues include crime, the economy, foreign policy, and military and defense (Heldman et al., 2005). Previous research suggests that voters hold masculine issues in a higher regard especially within races for higher offices (Rosenwasser & Seale, 1988). The news media can play an integral role by further focusing on this subtype, as women candidates could be depicted as unsuccessful if they are unable to show they can handle typically masculine issues, such as foreign policy (Meeks, 2012).

Another component that voters consider are character traits, and typically those are also divided based upon gender-role stereotypes (Meeks, 2012). Feminine traits include compassion, warmth, honesty, emotionality, altruism, and congeniality (Banwart & McKinney, 2005). Masculine traits include assertiveness, strength, independence, confidence, and aggressiveness (Banwart & McKinney, 2005).

The method conducted for this study was a content analysis looking at news coverage of eight mixed-gender elections in eight newspapers between 1999 and 2008 (Meeks, 2012). The

four female candidates selected ran in two elections concerning the offices of senator, governor, president, and vice president, and were divided into two categories: legislative and executive.

The process of choosing the newspapers for the study were selected the two largest circulation newspapers in each candidate's state: North Carolina, Missouri, New York, and Alaska (Meeks, 2012). The variables that were coded for were categorized as "present" or "absent" in each article, with a specific focus on masculine and feminine issues (Meeks, 2012).

The findings show that women overall garnered more gendered media coverage across all offices. The number of gender and uniqueness labels attached to women increases when discussing the executive branch, and masculine issue coverage received nearly three times as much coverage than feminine issues when it came to the White House (Meeks, 2012). The results agree with previous literature that executive offices are typically viewed as more masculine.

Another study takes a look at the 2016 election cycle, focusing on how gender influenced media coverage of Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Ted Cruz and comparing those frames with the candidates' campaign messages through Twitter pages and advertisements (Allen, 2016). This election appeared to be a prime opportunity for the country to elect a female president, with Clinton widely viewed as the frontrunner. However, she had to deal with 57% of Americans finding her untrustworthy (Cillizza, 2016). Her long public service tenure as a first lady, senator, and secretary of state made her a common target for attacks from the GOP and intense media scrutiny.

The author examined nine newspaper articles a week divided into three articles from three newspaper sources for each respective candidate through an eight-week span, and the coverage of Clinton, Sanders, and Cruz during the primary in the two months leading up to the

Iowa Caucuses is the specific timeframe utilized for this study (Allen, 2016). This time period was chosen because the candidates had campaigned long enough to advertise their platform, but still well before voting took place.

The three newspaper sources selected were *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Des Moines Register*. The two national newspapers were chosen because they are in mass circulation and help provide a broad national perspective to the election cycle and for their balance, as *The New York Times* is viewed as more liberal, and *The Wall Street Journal* is seen as more conservative. *The Des Moines Register* was selected as the most highly circulated paper in Iowa (Allen, 2016). The articles selected were strictly news and did not include op-eds or editorials. Priority was given to the ones that focused all of its coverage on the candidate, and overall, 216 articles were examined dividing up into 72 per candidate (Allen, 2016).

The authors chose to study three media framings that are commonly associated with presidential candidates: horse race, issue, and personal (Allen, 2016). Horse race frames are defined as stories specifically with polls concerning the candidate and their current standing. Issue frames contain stories that discuss key issues that the candidate supports or opposes. Personal frames refer to the personal history and character of the candidate. Articles that used multiple frames multiple times helped narrow the sample.

Clinton ended up garnering more personal coverage and less horse race coverage than her male counterparts at 64% and 33% respectively (Allen, 2016). Clinton's perceived frontrunner status could be attributed to less horse-race coverage. The study does not contend that gender is the reason for Clinton's increased personal coverage, but as previously mentioned, her long career in the public eye could be the reason for this dynamic, making her case unique to other female candidates and harder for her to change any popular narratives created by the media.

As previously mentioned, there are significant obstacles that have prohibited women from making inroads in the executive branches. To date, only 44 women have become governor in American history. There are currently nine female governors in the continental United States, in addition to three female leaders in Guam, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico. 20 states in the union have yet to have a female occupant in their governor's office. On top of there having been no female president or vice president prior to Harris, there has never been a female head of the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, or Treasury (Dolan, Deckman, & Swers, 2016). With these trends, it is clear that gender plays an important role into who gets critical roles in executive offices.

Executive offices in general tend to be associated with language that is primarily masculine. Campaigns have often come to be described through analogies such as war and sports, both of which are usually linked with masculinity (Carroll & Fox, 2006). In a similar vein, this language often emphasizes that a war hero is the perfect candidate to be president, another model connecting the office to a man (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Conversely, women have had greater success running for legislative offices, as those positions focus more on collaboration as a governing body and "soft" issues such as education and health care (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). Some scholars have argued that the governmental system of the United States is an impediment to women, given that the presidency enjoys a significant amount of concentrated power (Jalalzai, 2013). Female politicians have tended to have more success winning elections for executive offices in parliamentary systems where they have less unilateral power, do not have set terms, and are elected through their own party rather than the general public (Jalalzai, 2013). Other scholars have delineated that the founding fathers

through the constitution have put in place masculine ideals that even today continue to shape the public's views on how a president should look like and how they should act (Monopoli, 2006).

As has been discussed in previous literature, the media play a vital role in structuring public opinion. Their decisions in choosing the stories that are told and the ones that are not have the power to dictate political campaigns and candidacies (Kahn, 1994). Understanding whether or not the media have a bias towards women is critical to understanding any obstacles they may face to success in politics (Allen, 2016). Even if this bias does not have a direct impact on election results, sexist coverage can embolden preexisting gender norms and can further depress female involvement in politics (Falk, 2008).

One concept that has been discussed as an obstacle for women is the idea of a double-bind, which allows for the existence of subtle forms of sexism, an example of which is the “womb/brain” bind. This bind implies that women need to either have children or put their personal intellect to use, but they cannot do both (Jamieson, 1997).

Jamieson argues that the media chose to focus its attention on one small comment rather than the full context of an entire interview. There were only a few cameras on hand that even recorded Hillary's clarification which took place only a few minutes later (Jamieson, 1997). The context in which the media decide how to report stories are integral in identifying any potential biases (Allen, 2016).

There is also historical evidence that points to the continued existence and use of double-binds. Communications scholar Erika Falk asserts that gender media bias can be traced all the way back to the late 20th century, and specifically looks at media framing of eight female presidential candidates from 1972 to 2004. A central piece of her argument is that despite the progress that women have made in becoming more prominent in politics, the media still has an

antiquated view in how they cover female candidates (Falk, 2008). Through a systematic analysis of newspaper coverage comparing these female candidates against their male opponents, Falk (2008) reported that women garner almost twice as much attention in being described as emotional, emphasizing stereotypical views that they operate more with emotions and less with rationality. In addition, the families of these female candidates were mentioned in one out of every five articles while the families of the male candidates were mentioned in one out of every ten articles. Falk's results support Jamieson's (1997) argument that the womb/brain bind is ever present in any instances with female candidates, as the reminders of their families and the fact that they are mothers and wives only perpetuate that stereotype (Allen, 2016).

Another key difference spotted in Falk's results is how the newspapers decide to name the candidates in their articles. Of the four women that were picked for Falk's study that held electoral titles, those titles were not mentioned 32 percent of the time (Falk, 2008), while titles for the male candidates in comparison were only dropped 11 percent of the time. In addition, the study confirms that female candidates were more likely to be referred to by their first name and significantly more likely to be part of the vice-presidential selection conversation than male candidates. The frame of the vice presidency as a goal for women was prevalent throughout the sampled articles despite their insistence to the contrary, while at the same time it was rare if male candidates were ever framed in this way (Falk, 2008). This dynamic depicts a clear illustration of how the media manipulate the true intentions of female candidates while at the same time emboldening the assumption that they are longshots in their bid for the presidency (Allen, 2016).

Another study evaluates the media coverage of Elizabeth Dole during the 2000 presidential primaries and compares it to the coverage of her male counterparts (Aday & Devitt, 2001) by analyzing issue, personal, and strategy frames and their incorporation into newspaper

articles about candidates. Although there was no significant difference in the raw amount of coverage that Dole received, the personal frame was used more for her than the policy frame when compared to her male counterparts (Aday & Devitt, 2001).

Other scholars however may not be so eager to agree that gender plays a role in electoral success for executive positions. Brooks (2013) argues that a double-bind does not exist and instead argues that there are a wide range of factors that can affect a candidate's chances and there should not be an immediate assumption that gender plays a role in why a woman loses, such as the case with Clinton and Palin. She also asserts that as the more women continue to get involved in politics, any novelty labels will no longer be attached to them by the media and voters (Brooks, 2013).

In the case of Hillary Clinton, she has been subject to intense media scrutiny given her aforementioned long career in public service, and thus unique even when discussing the small group of women who have run for president. She has set the bar high for those who have ran before her and those that will run after her. Lawrence and Rose (2010) however argue that any woman would have been as successful as she has been in running for president had they possessed her name recognition, fundraising skills, and career credentials.

Therefore, it is important to understand the total history of Clinton's media coverage, as seen in Tucker-McLaughlin and Campbell (2012) and Lawrence and Rose (2010). To begin with, she was already in a unique position comparatively to most women given that her husband served as the President of the United States. In an extensive analysis examining Clinton's media coverage from 1993 to 2008, The authors found two contrasting themes during their study; one type of coverage portrayed her as innovative while the other type characterized her as voiceless (Tucker-McLaughlin & Campbell, 2012). Similarly, Lawrence and Rose (2010) argue that

Clinton's 2008 coverage had a specific gendered focus, as Clinton's daughter and husband were discussed noticeably more than Obama's daughters and family. Clinton ended up with fewer overall soundbites on television, implying that she did not have as much control over her own messaging with the media as Obama did, as her horserace coverage also tended to be negative (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Table 1

An Overview of Research on Media Coverage of Female Candidates

Source	Sample	Major Variables	Findings
Aday & Devitt (2001)	Media coverage comparing Elizabeth Dole to George W. Bush, John McCain, and Steve Forbes during the 2000 presidential primaries. Population ($N= 462$) from five newspapers (<i>The Des Moines Register</i> , <i>The New York Times</i> , <i>The Los Angeles Times</i> , <i>USA Today</i> , and <i>The Washington Post</i>)	Issue, personal, and strategy frames	Personal frame used more than policy frame in comparison to her male counterparts. Male Reporters significantly more likely to use personal traits, rather than policy frames, when reporting on Dole.
Allen (2016)	Media coverage of Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Ted Cruz in the 2016 election through Twitter pages and newspapers (<i>The New York Times</i> , <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> , and <i>The Des Moines Register</i> . $N= 216$ and $N= 72$ for each candidate.	Horse race, issue, and personal frames	Clinton's coverage more personal and less about horse race
Heldman (2009)	Traditional media and new media coverage of Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin from announcement day to Election Day. Political blogs: <i>Slate</i> , <i>Politico</i> , <i>The Drudge Report</i> , <i>The Daily Kos</i> , and <i>The Huffington Post</i>	Candidate's dress or appearance, family or caretaking responsibilities, trait coverage, tone of coverage (positive or negative), sexist language, issue coverage	Political blogs show more coverage for Palin than recent VP nominees. Both Palin and Ferraro faced significant coverage about their family. The two were four times as likely to receive sexist coverage in print media.
Heldman, Carroll, & Olson (2006)	Content analysis examining print coverage of Elizabeth Dole's 2000 presidential campaign in comparison to George W Bush, John McCain, Alan Keyes, Gary Bauer, and Steve Forbes. $N= 421$ articles from 40 different major US newspapers	Length and placement of story, gender of reporter, candidate mentions, proportion of the story devoted to each specific candidate, the order of mention, presence of name in headline, headline tone, primary focus of story, issue-related coverage, traits, personal appearance, family	Dole received significantly more gendered coverage than her male counterparts despite being second consistently behind Bush in the polls. The press paid more attention to her personality traits and appearances.

Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid, & Robertson (2004)	Content analysis examining 2004 presidential candidates' presentation of themselves through television advertisements and web sites	Television advertisements and websites of male and female candidates	Reporters pair male candidates with "male policies" and female candidates with "female policies", which can lead to negative perceptions that women are not as capable to lead.
Kahn & Fridkin (1996)	Content Analysis examining newspaper coverage of female candidates in senate and governors' races in the 1980s	Feminine issue frames and feminine image frames	Press focuses coverage of female candidates more on personal lives, personalities, and appearance than they do issue-related coverage
Lawrence & Rose (2010)	Examining major newspapers and nightly television news coverage and new media (blogs) of Clinton during 2008 campaign	Three main variables: the presence of gender in politics, how the media cover presidential campaigns, and strategic decisions of the Clinton Campaign	Gender In Politics: Clinton could not find balance between utilizing established gender frames and trying to separate herself from traditional stereotypes Media coverage: Despite receiving gendered coverage, it was a product of Clinton being the front runner and a design to emphasize horse race coverage Clinton's strategic decisions to stay in the race as her chances of winning decreased and diminished any significant impact of gendered coverage
Major & Coleman (2008)	Examined news coverage of mixed-gender gubernatorial election in 2004 in Louisiana between Kathleen Blanco and Bobby Jindal	Mentions of candidates in regard to gender-congruent issues and gender-congruent topics	Blanco received more positive mentions on feminine issues and more emphasis on the masculine issue of the economy
Meeks (2012)	New York Times Coverage of Hillary Clinton (2008: January 2007 to June 2008) and Sarah Palin (2008: August 2008 – Election Day) – 20% sample N = 228 for Clinton's primary campaign and N = 48 for Palin's general election campaign.	Gender labels (woman, man, mother, husband); Uniqueness labels (first, pioneer, lone); feminine issues; masculine issues; feminine and masculine traits.	NYT coverage placed heavy emphasis on women's novelty. More coverage to masculinized content. Male counterparts received more issue and trait coverage than Clinton or Palin.

Miller & Peake (2013)	Newspaper coverage of Joe Biden and Sarah Palin (August 29, 2008-November 4, 2008). Local newspapers and <i>The Los Angeles Times</i> , <i>The New York Times</i> , <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> , and <i>The Washington Post</i> . N= 2592, including front-page articles and editorials.	Gender, appearance, family status, relationship between reader opinion and tone of coverage	Palin's coverage more extensive, more headline and more article mentions, but more negative than Biden's.
Tucker-McLaughlin & Campbell (2012)	Examining major network coverage of Hillary Clinton from ABC, NBC, and CBS from 1993-2008. Selected events used in sample spanning 15 years.	Themes in Coverage: Traditional First Lady, Supporter, Photo Op, First Lady as Advisor, Woman as Advisor, Woman as VP, Fighting Back, Criminal, Invisible, Voiceless, Positioned behind Part, Campaign Strategy	Fewer soundbites and more negative horserace coverage for Clinton in comparison to Obama

As table 1 illustrates, there is a body of research that explores media coverage of women candidates. Previous literature delineates that media coverage in the past has focused on personal characteristics of these candidates, ranging from their appearance to family and issues typically associated with feminism. In addition, the historical novelty of the Ferraro and Palin candidacies contributed to an extended discussion on the relative newness of a female candidate in a prominent national campaign. It is possible for Harris's campaign that the media may choose to focus on those same themes or examine other characteristics within the context of the 2020 race and current times.

With the context for Harris's vice-presidential candidacy and previous prominent female political candidates having been discussed, here are the research questions posed for this study:

What are the themes in The NYT and The WSJ coverage of Kamala Harris and her vice-presidential candidacy?

Do gendered themes exist when discussing Kamala Harris in the context of the 2020 presidential election?

RQ1A: What, if any, gendered themes exist in New York Times coverage of Kamala Harris?

R1QB: What, if any, gendered themes exist in Wall Street Journal coverage of Kamala Harris?

Chapter 3: Method

The qualitative method of thematic analysis was utilized to explore media coverage of Sen. Harris and the subsequent frames, or themes, used to describe her through selected newspapers spanning from August 11, 2020 to November 3, 2020. Similarly, Gamson and Modigliani (1987) previously defined a media frame as “A central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (p. 143). Like previous research, this study used theme and frame interchangeably (Yioutas & Segvic, 2003), since themes are typically referred to as the “implicit and explicit ideas within data” (Guest et al., 2012, p. 10).

Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis can be defined as a method for “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The method, which authors assert is the most efficient way to group any complexities in textual data, tries to “move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes” (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012, p. 10).

A theme can be defined as “capturing something important about the data in relation to the research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). The essence of a theme “represents some level of patterned response or meaning within a data set” (p. 82). Nowell et. al (2017) add that themes help to group significant sections of the data set together. Researchers from the University of Auckland’s Department of Psychology (n.d.) add that “a theme captures a common, recurring pattern across a dataset, clustered around a central organizing concept” (para. 1). The idea that themes “cluster around a central organizing concept” positions the theme as an equivalent of a frame.

In addition, a thematic analysis can be partnered with several different theories as the method is not connected to one particular theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a result, there exists a freedom with this process and an independent approach when exploring for potential themes (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). The themes that emerge from the data become a form of pattern recognition and thus the units of analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Several researchers have outlined the process by which to complete a thematic analysis (Aronson, 1995; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2002). Aronson (1995) identifies four steps for conducting a thematic analysis: gathering data, identifying patterns within the data, “combine and catalogue related patterns into sub-themes,” and construct a rationale as to why those themes are valid (p. 2).

Sample

The collective data for this comparative study of newspaper coverage of Kamala Harris was narrowed down to two national newspapers: *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. According to AllSides Media, *The New York Times* is regarded as a left leaning newspaper and *The Wall Street Journal* is viewed as a center-right newspaper (AllSides Media, 2020). AllSides Media uses various methods, such as editorial reviews, blind bias surveys, and third-party research to thoroughly rate the bias of sources. In addition, this database was co-founded by conservative political consultant John Gable and progressive activist Joan Blades, which ensures that these ratings were developed through a bipartisan lens with consultants from both sides of the political aisle.

These two newspapers were purposively selected for specific reasons. *The New York Times* is universally recognized as the standard bearer in setting the news agenda for newspapers across the country and arguably the world. *The Wall Street Journal* also garners a favorable

recognition both domestically and internationally. Local papers were not chosen because of the potential difficulty of finding original content produced by local reporters. Hence, credibility should not be an issue with these respective sources. However, it should be acknowledged on the outset of this study that the alignment of these two papers closer to the middle of the bias scale might make identification of stereotypes less likely.

The data set covered a nearly three-month span from August 11, 2020 to November 3, 2020. August 11, 2020 is the day that Harris was announced as Biden's vice-presidential running mate, and November 3 was Election Day, spanning 84 days in total. In the case of Harris, this time frame ensured that the coverage following her nomination at the Democratic Convention was analyzed since this would likely represent a significant amount of coverage. This time period also covered her nominating speech at the convention and the vice-presidential debate, other events that were certain to attract much media attention. In addition, ending with Election Day allowed the time range to account for full coverage of her campaign up to Election Day.

Newspapers were selected as the type of media because they are still reliably used as a news source for many people across the country and because they are widely available through online archives. Despite budget cuts, downsizing, and local newspaper closures, the total daily circulation of newspapers in the United States was 28.6 million on weekdays and 30.8 million on Sundays in 2018 (Trends and Facts, 2020). *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* have maintained their presence digitally, as the *NYT* saw a 27% increase and the *WSJ* saw a 23% increase in digital circulation from 2017 to 2018 (Trends and Facts, 2020). Both papers are already among the leaders in digital readership. Although print newspaper consumption has declined, newspapers remain influential in the digital sphere and reach a broad range of demographics.

The newspaper articles were accessed using personal subscriptions for each respective newspaper. In order to make the examined data manageable, only articles that actually made it on the printed version of *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* were selected. Presumably, if the article made the printed copy, then it was significant enough of a story to garner that placement. Only pure news articles were selected because they are supposed to reflect journalistic standards of objectivity and fairness. Editorial and opinion pieces were not included as part of the sample because they are not beholden to those same objectivity standards. However, it is recognized that opinion pieces may be the location for the most blatant of gender or racial stereotypes to appear. This thesis was focused on objective news.

An inductive analysis was used to identify themes in the selected articles, meaning that coding frames created by previous literature were not used to pair the data with a specific theme (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). The themes were developed as the reading progressed, as that helped to determine the prominent motifs that continued to present themselves in the articles. This analysis did not rely on the researcher's intentions, but instead the study's results more align with the meanings that the readers would assign if they closely read the newspaper articles. Ultimately, Strauss and Corbin (1990) have asserted that the data has to be analyzed repeatedly in order to fully understand any patterns or themes in the sample.

This study explored whether stereotypes make their way into objective news. Existing stereotypes were imposed on this inductive analysis. However, prior themes identified by researchers (e.g., Heldman, 2009; Meeks, 2012) were confirmed if they emerged through the close readings of the newspaper texts. As previously mentioned, researchers have evidenced gender stereotypes in past news coverage of women candidates (Heldman, 2009; Meeks, 2012), particularly through the use of novelty labels and various character traits. However, it was

important to understand the new context surrounding Harris's candidacy, especially since her intersectionality meant that she was uniquely different than previous women vice-presidential candidates. This election was the first time a woman of color had been in this position, and as a result it was not just gender stereotypes that needed to be considered but stereotypes that addressed her intersectionality, which includes race, ethnicity, and gender. It was not sufficient to confirm or challenge the existence of previously established stereotypes since media framing around Sen. Harris may have manifested different stereotypes. It was important to note that this thesis was completed in the post- "Me Too" environment, which may have result in increased avoidance of gender stereotypes.

Procedure

The researcher completed a systematic process to complete the thematic analysis. The steps followed include:

Step 1: To begin, the articles were read carefully in order to discern themes that are connected to the research topic (Hayes, 2000). In this thesis, all articles from Aug. 11 to Nov. 3 mentioning Kamala Harris in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* were read. The initial read aimed to establish whether Harris was talked about substantively or whether her name was only mentioned. Substantive articles were included in the analysis, but name mentions alone were not sufficient for inclusion in this thesis. Step one took three weeks to complete, from January 4-January 25.

Step 2: All substantive articles about Harris in the *New York Times* underwent a through read and extensive notetaking. Two laptops were used for this process: one for reading the articles and another one to take notes on themes. It was important to read one source at a time to ensure that the themes from each source remained distinct. In total, nine

themes emerged from NYT coverage. Step two took four weeks to complete, from January 25-February 22.

Step 3: All substantive articles about Harris in *The Wall Street Journal* underwent an exhaustive read and extensive notetaking. Similar to *The New York Times*, two laptops were used to analyze the articles and notes taken. In total, eight themes emerged from WSJ coverage. Step 3 took two weeks to complete, from February 22-March 8.

Step 4: Various themes that were similarly coded for had to be organized together in analytic categories and given working definitions (Hayes, 2000). Connecting themes into these categories as part of the second stage is referred to as axial coding (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). In this thesis, the notes for *The New York Times* and the notes for *The Wall Street Journal* were read to identify themes and subthemes. Subthemes were defined as smaller categories that were important to distinguish within certain themes. For example, a theme such as *Record* could have both positive and negative implications, which is why the latter two were separated into two different subthemes. Step four took two weeks to complete, from March 8-March 22.

Step 5: To ensure trustworthiness of the analysis, the researcher reviewed a selection of substantive articles from both newspapers in the final phases of analysis to ensure that the themes and subthemes that emerged from the first reading were confirmed in a second reading. Step five took two weeks to complete, from March 22-April 5.

Notes for themes were gathered electronically to ensure an organized method of taking and storing records. NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis software, was the platform through which these notes on themes were collected. This software also makes sorting codes within specific articles more manageable through its organizational tools. Within the software, words

and phrases associated with themes were searched for all the times they appeared in each newspaper to ensure the process of identifying themes was done efficiently.

Trustworthiness

It was important in this type of inductive thematic analysis to establish trustworthiness. To start, just because one example of a stereotype is found *in The New York Times* did not make it an indictment against the paper. In order to be pulled out as a theme, a phrase that indicated a stereotype had to be recurring throughout the collection of articles, and whether or not it was ultimately chosen as a theme was left to the discretion of the researcher. To ensure the consistency of the entire process, after an initial pass through of the articles and note-taking for themes, a second pass through with a sub-sample of articles was conducted. The note-taking process occurred again through randomly selecting 10-15 articles from the newspaper to see if any of the themes that were previously found were still present. This procedure ensured that the reader's judgments were consistent in looking for themes at both times that notes were collected.

Chapter 4: Results

This thesis applied thematic analysis to examine news articles from *The New York Times* ($n = 50$) and *The Wall Street Journal* ($n = 20$) to identify gendered or stereotypical coverage of Kamala Harris. News articles appearing in these two sources between August 11, 2020 to November 3, 2020 were included. This chapter provides the results of the analysis, which included eight themes and 12 sub-themes that were consistent topics in the newspaper coverage. This chapter begins with an overview of the themes identified through the thematic analysis. Next, this chapter identifies which themes were most prominent in *The New York Times* and in *The Wall Street Journal*. Finally, this chapter will outline specific differences in themes between the newspapers.

The first research question in this study asked the following:

What are the themes in The NYT and The WSJ coverage of Kamala Harris and her vice-presidential candidacy?

In order to answer this question, the themes used by each newspaper and their respective frequency of use were tabulated. The eight themes that emerged in this thematic analysis were as follows: *speculation*, *sentiment*, *record*, *race*, *personal*, *political uniqueness*, *gender*, *conflict*, and *truth*. *Race* emerged as the dominant theme. Table 1 shows the themes and their frequency. Important sub-themes included *speculation*, *sentiment*, *record*, *personal*, and *conflict*. *Gender*, *political uniqueness*, and *truth* appeared to be minor themes. *Race* was defined as conversations that centered around Harris's identity as a Black and Indian-American woman. *Speculation* was defined as commentary projecting into the future, such as Harris's presidential aspirations especially in regard to Biden's health and the value that she brought to the ticket's chances of winning in 2020. *Sentiment* included positive or negative attributes of public reaction to her

candidacy. Similarly, *record* had positive and negative attributes about her record of Senate votes or positions from the past. *Personal* referred to her private life and personal characteristics, while *political uniqueness* referred to an inability to define Harris politically, based on her record or attacks from the Trump campaign. The theme of *gender* referred to her physical attributes as a woman and explicitly sexist references. *Conflict* referred to commentary that framed Harris on the offensive in her attacks against Trump or in response to attacks against her from others. *Truth* referred to any statement about Harris that the newspaper was quick to point out was false.

Table 2

Frequency of Themed Coverage of Kamala Harris in The New York Times (N = 50) and The Wall Street Journal (N = 20)

Code	<i>The New York Times</i> (N = 50)	<i>The Wall Street Journal</i> (N = 20)
Speculation	28 (38%)	6 (30%)
Sentiment (positive)	13 (22%)	6 (25%)
(negative)	10 (18%)	5 (20%)
Record (positive)	15 (24%)	4 (20%)
(negative)	15 (22%)	8 (30%)
Race (woman of color)	5 (10%)	1 (5%)
(South Asian-American)	2 (4%)	0
(Jamaican)	13 (26%)	5 (25%)
(Indian)	28 (54%)	8 (35%)
(Black)	29 (52%)	13 (45%)
(Asian-American)	1 (2%)	1 (5%)
Personal (positive)	16 (22%)	3 (15%)
(negative)	5 (8%)	0

Truth	3 (6%)	0
Gender	5 (8%)	0
Conflict	21 (30%)	18 (65%)
Political uniqueness	7 (12%)	0

Research question 2 asked: *Do gendered themes exist when discussing Kamala Harris in the context of the 2020 presidential election?*

In order to answer research question two, the themes from *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* were explored. With regard to gender, the newspaper articles did not make blatant gendered or stereotypical gendered references. However, there are several instances where the qualities or features of voter preferences for candidates are revealed. For example, in an article titled, “Kamala Harris Tests America’s Relationship to Women in Power,” the article points to previous research that stated that voters want a female candidate who can find the balance between projecting confidence but also not taking herself too seriously (Hess, 2020). Another article mentions that female candidates have a tougher hill to climb than men when it comes to being evaluated as “likeable” since women tend to be punished for exhibiting traits that voters find favorable in men, such as aggression and ambition (Ember & Lerer, 2020a). Another example pointed to the extra standards placed on women of color as a result of being both a woman and a minority (Ember & Lerer, 2020a). However, this coverage is not targeted towards Harris. Instead, it provides a historical perspective on the obstacles female candidates have had to face in previous political campaigns.

When Harris was first selected as Biden’s running mate, there was commentary on how she presented herself as a maternal figure to her stepchildren, godchildren, and nieces, stating that “Momala” would always be the title she cherished the most (Hess, 2020). The only explicit

time her clothing was mentioned was during a recap of her convention speech in which *The New York Times* commented that although she usually wore a pantsuit, she has also been known for her collection of Converse sneakers and wearing a rainbow sequin jacket occasionally (Medina, 2020). As the literature review suggested, clothing and appearance have typically been a staple of sexist media coverage of female candidates. However, in this study it appears that those types of themes have become an afterthought in covering Harris's 2020 vice-presidential campaign. While the analysis does reveal a significant gendered focus, it may not always be explicit. Implicit references are made through a major focus on the themes of 1) *race*, 2) *sentiment*, and 3) *speculation*. For example, an implicit race reference appears in analysis of her selection, with some asserting that Biden may have been "under pressure" to select a woman of color as his running mate (Parti & Thomas, 2020). An implicit example of sentiment would be diminishing her selection by stating that it was a conventional and an expected selection (Goldmacher, 2020a). Finally, speculation is also implicitly discussed when suggesting that Harris would be unlikely to expand the electoral map for the campaign even as a historic female candidate (Goldmacher, Nagourney, & Medina, 2020).

RQ1A: What, if any, gendered themes exist in New York Times coverage of Kamala Harris?

As previously mentioned, gendered themes are not prevalent in *The New York Times* overall coverage of Kamala Harris. However, dominant themes that were present included 1) *speculation*, 2) *race*, and 3) *conflict*. An example of the prevalence of race can be seen with 14 articles published by the newspaper in August that made immediate references to Harris's identity upon first mention, whether it be the "first Black woman", "half Black and half Indian-American", etc. An example of speculation would be that as soon as she was announced as the

pick, many opined that she could become the de facto nominee in four or eight years depending on Biden's health (Burns & Glueck, 2020). An example of conflict would be as soon as she was announced as Biden's running mate, many pointed to Harris's exchange with Biden on busing in the primary debate, and her attack made some Biden allies continue to have their reservations about her (Glueck & Kaplan, 2020).

Other consistent themes included 1) *sentiment* and 2) *personal*. An example of sentiment would be that in most cases, the Democrats and progressives cited the urgency to defeat Trump (Parti & Thomas, 2020) as the reason for their support of Harris. Many Democrats and progressives rallied behind her selection even though she was viewed as a centrist and despite having supported one of Biden's other rivals during the primaries. An example of personal would be any discussions about her oratory skills, as she has been described as one of the Democratic Party's most appealing speakers (Goldmacher, 2020a).

R1QB: What, if any, gendered themes exist in Wall Street Journal coverage of Kamala Harris?

Like *The NYT's* coverage, gendered themes were not prevalent in *The Wall Street Journal* coverage of Kamala Harris. Dominant themes included 1) *race*, and 2) *conflict*. Articles in *The WSJ* also made references to Harris's racial identity at first mention. An example of conflict would be an article characterizing her rise to national prominence through being a chief antagonist of the Trump administration, citing her voting record with Trump's position just 16.2% of the time as an example (Bykowicz & Siddiqui, 2020). Other consistent themes included 1) *speculation* and 2) *sentiment*. An example of speculation would be a specific focus on Harris's ability to turn up the Black vote in Philadelphia, which had decreased in 2016 (Zitner & Puko, 2020). An example of sentiment would be that from a financial perspective, she helped

bring in new donors who were excited to support the ticket (Glazer & Day, 2020). Each specific prominent theme will now be discussed in further detail.

Table 3

Attributes of the Race Theme and Sub-themes in The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal Coverage of Kamala Harris

<u>Race and Subthemes</u>	<u>References</u>
Women of Color	6
South Asian-American	2
Jamaican	18
Indian	36
Black	41
Asian-American	2

Exploration of race

The first theme, *race*, emerged in 87 articles. This theme focused on Harris’s identity as a biracial woman and the historic nature of her as the first woman of color in her position. In particular, the Asian component of her identity was described in many ways. As Table 2 indicates, there were various ways in which the newspapers discussed her Asian heritage, potentially alluding to any ambiguity they felt in mentioning that part of her.

Forty-one articles overall mentioned Harris’s Blackness in relation to her identity. More often than not, an article would first mention Harris being “the first Black woman” when discussing her identity. This is not surprising because Harris primarily identifies herself as a Black woman, as even her Indian mother believed her daughters would be viewed by society as Black (Tavernise, 2020).

One reason for this extended focus on Harris's Blackness is because of the importance of Black voters. For example, *The NYT* had an article on November 2 titled "Inspiring Black Voters is Key to Biden's Prospects in Florida." Black voters have historically been the key voting demographic when Democratic prospects to win elections are assessed. In addition, critics of her prosecutorial record assert that her policies disproportionately affected the African-American community, with Black and Latina women feeling that early in the campaign she had yet to speak about race in personal way that could relate that specific demographic (Burch, Medina & Brown 2020). Her Blackness is also center of media reports about her time at Howard, a well-known historically black college and university (HBCU) (Herndon, 2020).

However, the Indian aspect of Harris's identity is also a prominent feature of newspaper stories as it is referred to in 36 articles, typically in reference to the influence of her mother in her life. To begin, Harris has spoken extensively about the influence of her mother and grandparents, especially as her parents divorced at a young age (Stevens & Ruiz, 2020). In contrast, her Jamaican father had become a footnote in her speeches and barely mentioned at all, which is a result of Kamala and her father growing apart as a result of her parent's divorce (Barry, 2020). *The NYT* included a feature story on the sentiment of Indian-Americans regarding the selection on August 13 titled "Feeling Seen for the First Time, Indian-Americans Cheer Kamala Harris's Selection" (Stevens & Ruiz, 2020) and another on August 19 titled, "Finally the Country Sees Us: Some Women of Color Cheer Harris's Rise" (Burch et al., 2020).

However, other than discussing her mother, the Indian aspect clearly took a back seat to her Blackness. Indian voters in comparison to Black voters were an afterthought in the newspaper coverage, as the only mention found came in an October article as a footnote that despite Trump's efforts to engage with the second largest immigrant group in the country,

Indian-Americans tended to still vote Democratic (Herndon & Karni, 2020). Even then, Harris was not seen as a primary reason for this trend. Instead, it was Trump's attacks on immigration and minorities that were the driving force.

The New York Times, by virtue of having more than two times as many articles over the allotted time period, spent significantly more time discussing race and the stories included features on her family and her upbringing. In total, *The NYT* had 77 references to Harris's race. *The Wall Street Journal*, in contrast, had 29 references. The historic nature of Kamala Harris's candidacy is a necessary feature of coverage of Harris. However, since *The NYT* devoted more resources to her campaign, they were able to give this theme a more thorough examination by discussing her family and upbringing.

Exploration of speculation

Speculation was another prominent theme and it appeared in 26 articles. It was defined as anything that commented or forecasted on the future and Harris's role to play. Speculation is not based in fact, but in assumptions or suppositions about the future. To start, there was speculation even when Harris was mounting her own presidential campaign that she would eventually become Biden's running mate. There were questions as to whether or not she would not only be able campaign effectively for the Democrats, but also carefully walk the tightrope of expectations that voters heap on female candidates (Ember & Lerer, 2020a). There was also speculation in regard to the current 2020 race, and whether or not Harris could energize turnout in the African-American community, a demographic critical to the Democrats' chance of victory (Goldmacher et al., 2020). In addition, it was suggested that she could advance the Biden campaign's fundraising efforts through attracting both traditional big donors and smaller donations online (Goldmacher, 2020a). It was also speculated that her selection would help to

shore up the moderate base of the Democratic Party, due to her relatively centrist positions (Glazer & Hoffman, 2020).

The speculation in Harris's case was even more unique given Biden's age and whether or not the public felt that she would be ready to step in should anything happen. This discussion was only reinvigorated for both Harris and Pence following the vice-presidential debate and Trump testing positive for the Coronavirus (Nagourney & Goldmacher, 2020). There was also a conversation on how she would govern, given her areas of expertise and Biden's expectations having previously been a vice-president himself (Parti & McCormick, 2020). There was already theorizing into how this relationship would work given the open confrontations that the two had during the Democratic primary. Given Harris's historic candidacy and Biden's advanced age, the speculation in her case was more purposeful even by the standards of previous vice-presidential running mates.

Exploration of record

In this thematic analysis, *record* as a theme appeared in 33 articles. *Record* was also divided into both positive and negative categories given the nature of how Harris's past political career was discussed. For example, her prosecutorial record was always discussed in a positive light as part of her work with the Senate Judiciary Committee during any mention of her questioning during hearings with Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh and Attorney General William Barr (Nagourney & Goldmacher, 2020b). In the aftermath of George Floyd's killing, she became a leading voice in advocating for police reform (Parti & McCormick, 2020). She was viewed favorably by many when she introduced the Justice in Policing Act and passionately confronted Senator Rand Paul after he blocked a bill making lynching a federal crime (Stevens, Kaplan, & Saul, 2020). She was also praised for being able to land strong attacks against Trump

both during the vice-presidential debate and her own presidential campaign (Goldmacher, 2020b).

However, there were also negative themes that recurred on her *record*. Her prosecutorial record was met with sharp criticism from the left as more progressive members of the Democratic party argued that she had not done enough to implement significant police reform when she was California's attorney general (Stevens et al., 2020). She also did not advocate for progressive policies such as ending capital punishment and decriminalizing marijuana (Parti & McCormick, 2020). In addition, some argued that one reason her own presidential campaign ended was that she struggled to create an effective strategy to compete and to frame her message in a way that was appealing to the party's progressive and moderate bases (Parti & Thomas, 2020). Criticism in framing a strong message was evident during the vice-presidential debate, when she was called out for not having a clear answer on whether or not the campaign supported expanding the Supreme Court beyond its nine justices (Goldmacher, 2020b). In many ways, Harris was viewed similarly to Biden for her uneven performances to pair along with her strong moments in her political career.

Exploration of sentiment

Sentiment was another prominent theme and it appeared in 29 articles. *Sentiment* was defined as the public's reaction to Harris's vice-presidential campaign, and it included positive and negative references. One article described her spot on the ticket as a measured form of progress that represented a rhetorical shortcut for hope and change (Hess, 2020). For many pundits, she seemed to be the best choice for the Biden campaign to meet the political moment (Burns, Martin, & Glueck, 2020). Because of her prosecutorial background, many voters believed that she would be an effective attack dog against Trump, especially since she previously

demonstrated her tenacity in questioning some of Trump's various appointees (Burns & Glueck, 2020).

However, there were also some question marks that came with her as well. Voters felt they did not have a good sense of her agenda due to her shifts during her own presidential campaign, which could have led her to exiting the race early before votes had even been counted (Flegenheimer & Lerer, 2020). She was unable to catch fire with voters because she could not decide on an effective strategy to appeal to both liberals and moderates (Ember & Herndon, 2020). One common sentiment surrounding her was that she could be extremely effective when she was prepared, but she could be gaffe-prone, like Biden, when she veered off script (Martin & Herndon, 2020).

Exploration of conflict

As with most political campaigns *conflict* is a prominent theme, and in this thematic analysis it appeared as a theme in 28 articles. *Conflict* was defined as commentary that portrayed Harris as an attack dog or pitted her against someone else as an opponent. As a former prosecutor, she appeared to be well-suited for the traditional attack dog role, having gotten into confrontations with U.S. Representative Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), U.S. Attorney General William Barr, and Supreme Court justice nominee Brett Kavanaugh all prior to the general election campaign (Nagourney & Goldmacher, 2020a). Her willingness to criticize other entities such as social media companies for their handling of election misinformation and other big businesses was also scrutinized in the *conflict* theme.

Exploration of personal

Personal was a minor theme and it appeared in 18 articles. *Personal* themes referred to mentions of Harris's private life and her personal characteristics both positively and negatively.

In many ways, her prosecutorial style has been described as a benefit to her political career, as she also has a skill for putting together viral clips (Ember & Lerer, 2020b). During her college days at Howard, she was described as a leader in her sorority who led a demanding pledging process and organized service projects (Herndon, 2020). In her personal life, both her and her husband Douglas Emhoff put together several viral videos about their love for cooking (Bykowicz & Siddiqui, 2020).

Exploration of political uniqueness

Political uniqueness was a minor theme and it appeared in six articles. Although this was a minor theme, it is important to discuss in regards to Harris. There was repeated commentary on the Republican Party's inability to launch an effective line of attack against Harris (Karni & Peters, 2020). For example, the Trump campaign attempted to label her as a "radical" or the "most liberal" senator while the Republican National Committee tried to paint her as an enemy of the left due to not being progressive enough (Goldmacher, 2020a). Her ability to remain undefined led some progressives to hope that she might be someone to work with in a potential Biden administration (Ember & Herndon, 2020). Even during her time at Howard, she was willing to find the balance between not only debating Black Republicans on campus, but also letting them know that occasionally the left activists were going too far (Herndon, 2020). Harris was unable to be ideologically defined in addition to already setting history with her candidacy.

Exploration of truth

Truth was a minor theme and appeared in three articles. *Truth* was defined as a criticism or attack leveled against Harris that the newspaper pointed out was false. So, truth is referring to the newspaper establishing a truth claim. For example, *The New York Times* explicitly stated that Trump's conspiracy theory that she was not eligible to become president or vice-president

due to her parents being immigrants was not only racist but false since she was born in California (Kaplan & Thursh, 2020). Additionally, the newspaper was also quick to point out that Republican advertisements stating that Harris wanted to confiscate guns by force and give cop killers a pass were false assertions (Karni & Peters, 2020).

Chapter 5: Discussion

This thesis examined how newspapers covered Kamala Harris's 2020 vice presidential campaign, specifically focusing on *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. In doing so, it addressed a first and revisited research regarding analyzing a successful vice-presidential campaign of a female candidate. Using a qualitative thematic analysis of 70 news articles from the newspapers, this study identified eight themes that were present in Harris's coverage. In addition, this thesis answered three research questions that examined the prominence of themes for each newspaper and extended discussion on gender and race in political campaign coverage. This chapter will discuss the framing results for Harris across the newspaper articles and offer implications and recommendations for future research.

The New York Times Findings

The New York Times extensively covered Harris. In the two months that comprise the hot phase of the presidential election, more than fifty articles appeared, which is more than twice the amount for *The Wall Street Journal*. The most prominent theme was *race*. The second most prevalent theme was *Record* (both positive and negative), which is probably due to the fact that candidates typically undergo an extensive vetting of their previous record by media anytime they begin a campaign. Like other candidates before her, Harris had positive aspects of her record that were well reported, such as her questioning of Trump administration officials as part of her role on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

As the results revealed, race was an important theme in both NYT and WSJ coverage of Harris. The results also identify six dimensions of race that constituted unique approaches to Harris's coverage. That race featured prominently in themes is not surprising since Harris is the

first bi-racial woman to be elected as vice president. She is also the first citizen of Indian descent to be on a presidential ticket.

In this regard, Harris's selection was like Palin's selection by McCain in 2008 in that it vaulted her to prominence in the party. There was also speculation on how Harris could help inspire voter turnout in the Black community and how she would be able to govern over moderates and progressives in the Democratic party.

Conflict prevailed as the fourth most prominent of the eight themes, with commentary that framed Harris as an attack dog and pitted her against other opponents. Given her record in the Senate, she was seen as an effective critic of Trump during her campaign speeches and soundbites and during her vice-presidential debate with Pence. There were also discussions of her battles with Biden during the Democratic primary, including the memorable debate when she went after him for his 1970s stance on busing. The conflict theme was followed by *personal* (both positive and negative,) which focused on aspects of her private life. *The New York Times* coverage decisively covered more positive aspects of her personal life, including her marriage to Douglas Emhoff and her association with Howard University, one of the nation's leading HBCUs. The personal theme tied closely with *political uniqueness*, which discussed the inability of the Republican Party and the Trump campaign to attack her effectively, whether it was accusing Harris of being in charge, instead of Biden, or her being a puppet of the radical left.

Finally, the two themes with the least number of occurrences were *Gender* and *Truth*. *Gender* referred to topics that have typically appeared in previous literature about female candidates, such as her outfit for the Democratic National Convention or the role she played as a maternal figure and stepmother in her family, while also mentioning the historical obstacles that female candidates have had to deal with in national campaigns. *Truth* referred to *The New York*

Times's willingness to explicitly state that an attack or characterization of Harris was untrue. So, the Truth theme applies to "fact-checking" assertions of accurate information regarding Harris. For example, the Trump campaign's desire to push a racist conspiracy theory that she was not born in the United States was challenged by *The New York Times* under the theme of *truth*. The newspaper was quick to point out that Harris, by virtue of being born California, was indeed eligible to serve as vice president.

The Wall Street Journal Findings

The Wall Street Journal covered Harris in 20 articles, which is significantly less than *The NYT*. Similar to *The NYT*, *Race* was the most prominent theme. The second most prevalent theme was *Conflict*, as the newspaper not only consistently reported about Harris's attacks on Trump, but also reported on her criticisms of Biden during their time as rivals in the Democratic primary field.

The third most present theme was *Record*, which had positive and negative attributes. Positive commentary on her record included her role as a leading voice of police reform following George Floyd's murder. Negative commentary included distancing herself from policies she supported in the primary and being silent on antitrust issues, which were associated with her ties to large technology companies from California. *Sentiment* followed as another theme. Positive sentiment included Harris's ability to bring in new donors to the Biden campaign and referred to her as a candidate who had undeniable talent. Negative sentiment included Harris's inability to attract voters during her own presidential campaign and her potentially offensive questioning of Brett Kavanaugh during his Supreme Court nomination hearings, which could have been offensive to Roman Catholics. The *Personal* theme included positive reference to Harris's ability to serve effectively as an attack dog and her leadership in the Senate on several

important issues. Unlike *The NYT*, *The WSJ* did not have any references for the themes of *Truth*, *Gender*, and *Political Uniqueness*.

Although *The WSJ* included fewer articles overall, a deeper understanding is needed when comparing the proportion of coverage to the number of articles. For example, the theme of *Black* as a way to describe Harris's race on the surface seems that it was mentioned more in *The NYT*, as they had 29 references to 13 for *The WSJ*. However, the theme appeared in 52 percent of *The NYT* articles and 45 percent of *The WSJ* articles, showing a comparable percentage. In fact, *The WSJ* actually had a higher percentage of coverage for the categories of *Sentiment* (positive and negative), *Record* (negative), *Race* (Asian-American), and *Conflict*. In fact, *Conflict* appeared in 65 percent of *The WSJ* articles, compared to 30 percent in *The NYT*. Consistent conflict topics included Harris's voting record with Trump's policies and her consistent attacks leveled against the Trump administration during the campaign.

It is also important to note the purpose of *The WSJ* when discussing its coverage. The newspaper not only is identified as right-leaning but also as a financial and business-focused based news entity. That could be an explanation for articles such as one published on August 13 titled, "Harris Draws Plaudits from Wall Street," or another on August 14 titled, "Harris Has Financial, Other Ties to Big Tech." Another article focused on the different residences that Harris and her husband Douglas Emhoff own. Since *The WSJ* is tailored to a financially literate audience, it can be expected that certain aspects of their coverage will focus on financial topics.

Findings in Contexts

This study confirmed the findings of previous literature while producing its own set of theoretical implications. To start, this thesis was unique because it focused on the first woman of color to become a vice presidential candidate. Due in part to novelty being an important news

value, the media spent an extensive amount of coverage reporting about her racial identity. The fact that she was a biracial candidate as a Black and Indian woman only added to that discussion. There were six different labels in which the newspapers described Harris's identity: South Asian-American, Jamaican, Indian, Black, and Asian-American. The idea of novelty labels established by Meeks (2012) could be applied to this thesis's analysis of race since a woman of color had never been in this position before. As a result, race featured prominently in the coverage of Kamala Harris's vice-presidential campaign. In this regard, this thesis would agree with Aday & Devitt (2001), which stated that Dole faced far more coverage with personal frames than with policy frames. In Harris's case, the constant coverage on her personal identity as a bi-racial woman would be a personal frame.

In assessing where this research stands in comparison to previous literature, it is clear that unlike previous female candidates, Harris's minority status is the label that appeared to be the most prevalent. This thesis differs from previous studies in that there was less focus on the stereotypical traits that have been a focus of coverage for female candidates, as had been established by table 1. When women candidates have been on the ballot for either president or vice president in the past, their gender was a prominent theme in coverage with stereotypical references to the novelty or character traits. In Harris's case, her gender appears to be subsequent to her race since themes of race were much more prominent than themes of gender. For example, there was less coverage on Harris's wardrobe, with one notable exception being the pantsuit that she wore for her Democratic Convention speech (Medina, 2020). References coded under *Gender* tended to be more historical perspectives about what voters have typically expected out of female candidates. Perhaps this is optimistic, but this study's findings suggest that the novelty of a woman vice-presidential candidate is diminished and there appear to be less explicitly

gendered coverage of her in these leading newspapers. Therefore, this thesis would differ from the results of Heldman et al. (2005), which stated that Dole received more gendered coverage than her male counterparts, and Heldman (2009) which stated that gendered coverage of Ferraro and Palin was much more sexist and explicit. For Harris, the newness of her candidacy was her biracial background.

However, it is important to note that just because the media may not be as focused on Harris's gender does not mean that constant coverage on her biracial identity should be viewed favorably. In many articles, descriptions such as "the first "Black woman" or "the first Asian-American woman" were usually the first note mentioned about her. This predicament is usually not the case for male minority candidates. Typically, male politicians who are of a minority ethnicity are not constantly described as a Black congressmen or other officeholder. This nuanced way of covering Harris does not mean that these newspapers are racist, but the lack of coverage on traditional stereotypes of female candidates at the expense of a heightened focus on her biracial identity and less about her legislative record does not contribute to informing voters about the totality of her candidacy in the long run. In that vein, this thesis agrees with the findings of Kahn & Fridkin (1996), which delineates that even over the last 25 years women candidates still face less coverage when it comes to the actual issues.

As there are numerous examples of the intersectionality of woman and woman of color colliding at lower levels and now with Harris at the presidential level, it potentially offers an insight into new obstacles that they will face from the media. If the media continues to make identity prospects the focus of their coverage as opposed to legislative accomplishments, that should be a cause for concern as voters are not receiving the full scope of a candidate to truly judge them on their merits. This thesis showed that there was much more discussion of Harris's

racial identity as opposed to her legislative record despite being a United States Senator and a longtime California statewide official.

Therefore, this study agrees with the research of Crenshaw (1990) that Black woman such as Harris have a complex intersectionality this is not applicable to all woman. Woman of color candidates often find themselves having to appeal to multiple movements and interests. This concept has been reached in other studies such as Reid-Brinkley (2012) which discussed how Carol Moseley Braun had to avoid being characterized as a sellout to her own community in trying to be a pawn of the white political establishment in her ultimately unsuccessful 2004 presidential bid. Harris had to find a balance between connecting with the Black community and the issues surrounding them but also appeal to the broader electorate for the benefit of the Biden campaign. Furthermore, in combining topics such as gender, race, and immigrant status of Harris's parents when talking about her intersectionality are all subtle ways to spotlight differences and how she is not the typical mold that Americans have seen of other candidates.

In addition, Harris is also different from previous woman of color candidates being of Indian descent. It would be interesting to see if a study exploring Indian American politicians such as former United Nations Ambassador and South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) would analyze their "Indianness" with the same scrutiny that Harris's Blackness has been explored. There has been previous coverage of Haley and former Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal and their on-and-off relationship of embracing their Indian identity when it is politically convenient but also distancing themselves from it to appeal to the broader masses (Venkatraman, 2020).

There are a number of notes to consider when comparing the coverage of *The NYT* and *The WSJ*. As previously mentioned, *The NYT* had more articles overall. However, this fact just

by itself should not lead to hasty conclusions. *The NYT* is a bigger newspaper than *The WSJ*, so it is likely that they could have provided more resources to cover her campaign, which is evident in the number of feature stories they did covering a range of topics on Harris's family, her impact on voters, her college years, and more. In addition, when comparing the proportion of coverage and themes in the articles, *The WSJ* was comparable in many categories. Furthermore, as historic as Harris's campaign was, it is important to acknowledge that she was the vice-presidential candidate. The top of the tickets are obviously going to occupy most of the coverage during a presidential campaign, which was apparent even in *The NYT* coverage. The newspaper had 25 articles discussing Harris in August but only five in September, 18 in October, and two in November. In contrast, *The WSJ* had 14 articles in August, two articles in September, and four articles in October. It is clear that the two newspapers included in this study focused on similar events, such as Harris's initial announcement, her convention speech, and the vice-presidential debate, with a majority of coverage coming in the aftermath of the initial announcement. In that vein, this thesis could agree in some aspect with Miller & Peake (2013)'s findings, which found that in the 2008 race Palin received more extensive coverage than Biden. That was certainly the case for Harris especially early in the general election campaign, but as time went on, she garnered fewer sound bites, similar to what Tucker-McLaughlin & Campbell (2012) found for Clinton.

There was also a unique focus on speculation in the case of Harris. Similar to Palin, Harris was the running mate to an older counterpart at the top of the ticket. As soon as her selection was made public, both newspapers focused on the possibility of her becoming president some point during Biden's first term or in 2024 should he decide not to run for reelection. One major difference was that unlike Palin or Ferraro, Harris came onto a ticket that was viewed as a

favorite heading into the general election campaign. The speculation surrounding her focused more on how she could help the ticket win in November rather than speculating how she could help the Biden campaign catch Trump. In addition, there was much speculation about Harris's appeal to Black voters and whether her selection would help motivate Black voter turnout, which is critically important to Democratic party success. Neither Ferraro nor Palin had such speculation about their appeal to a specific racial minority. Through that lens, this thesis differs from Allen (2016)'s findings that a woman candidate such as Clinton garnered less coverage concerning the horse race. There was an abundance of such coverage when discussing Harris's future.

Additionally, the conflict theme established in this thesis is similar to the idea of a game frame found in previous literature, that everything is presented as a battle by the media with a winner and loser. In Harris's case, especially when examining the prominence of conflict in *The* WSJ's coverage, she is presented as being in the middle of several controversies, whether it be with her running mate, party, community, etc. This thesis does not suggest that this is an attempt by the newspaper to present her in a stereotypical way (e.g. angry Black woman), but researchers need to be mindful of the possibility that generic framing devices that are used in political communication might hide subtle forms of stereotypes.

The findings from this thesis suggest a number of theoretical implications, continuing research on media framing of female candidates. As Heldman (2009) discussed, the "first woman" frame is often attached to women, which continues to perpetuate the idea that their candidacies are a rarity. The extensive focus on race in a sense created its own "first woman of color" frame that still supported previous findings of novelty. In this study, with another election cycle has been added to the literature, Harris being the first woman of color to be placed into this

position on the national stage only emboldened this narrative, as her bi-racial identity also factored into frames associated with her.

As a result, this study can prove to be a test case for future candidates. In addition, two influential national newspapers known for having certain leanings across the political spectrum have helped to create a sense of what to expect in themes of coverage. Themes have also been established for future researchers to use as a guide in continuing to explore whether or not the media has truly moved on from the gendered aspect of a female candidate's campaign.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The focus of the sample of articles came from news articles exclusively. Since news is expected to be more objective than editorial or opinion article, it is possible that more problematic frames exist in the editorial pages of the two newspapers included in this thesis. As a result, the news content did not produce blatantly sexist or overtly racist coverage. In addition, this thesis chose to focus on newspapers, which represent traditional media. Traditional media also wield significant power online and on social media platforms. It is possible that exploration of online and social media content from these sources might reveal more problematic framing of Harris.

Although this thesis does not have a statement about personal biases, it is possible that some of the framing devices or themes used by reporters did not resonate with this researcher. As a male with Indian heritage, it is possible that some of the nuances in gender did not stand out in the evaluation of themes and it is possible that some subtleties in coverage or race were either overlooked or heightened by the researcher's status.

Future Research

There are several additional areas of study that could extend this area of research. It would be interesting for quantitative researchers to build from this qualitative evaluation of themes and to develop a more formal content analysis. In fact, a content analysis that includes more newspapers would be interesting. In this thesis, two prestigious and highly-regarded sources were used. It is possible that problematic frames are more prevalent in local or regional newspapers where journalists typically do not have the credentials of those at *The NYT* or *The WSJ*. Additionally, comparing news content to editorial content across national and state or regional newspapers could help identify whether editorial content more explicitly employ themes that are race- or gender-specific. Furthermore, since several Black women and several Indian women have been elected to state and federal offices, it would be interesting to see whether the level of race impacts the tone and type of coverage that these women receive. If exploring these elections historically, it might reveal an evolution in the use of themes newspapers use in their coverage of Black women specifically, Indian women specifically, or to see whether there are patterns used to portray all women of color seeking elective office.

Additionally, it would be interesting to compare the vice-presidential coverage of Harris with the presidential coverage of Barack Obama and to delineate differences between male and female candidates of color. Such a study would help to determine whether or not Black women in particular are disadvantaged because of their gender or race status.

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Appendix A

Table 1

An Overview of Research on Media Coverage of Female Candidates

<u>Source</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Major Variables</u>	<u>Findings</u>
Aday & Devitt (2001)	Media coverage comparing Elizabeth Dole to George W. Bush, John McCain, and Steve Forbes during the 2000 presidential primaries. Population (N= 462) from five newspapers (<i>The Des Moines Register</i> , <i>The New York Times</i> , <i>The Los Angeles Times</i> , <i>USA Today</i> , and <i>The Washington Post</i>)	Issue, personal, and strategy frames	Personal frame used more than policy frame in comparison to her male counterparts. Male Reporters significantly more likely to use personal traits, rather than policy frames, when reporting on Dole.
Allen (2016)	Media coverage of Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Ted Cruz in the 2016 election through Twitter pages and newspapers (<i>The New York Times</i> , <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> , and <i>The Des Moines Register</i> . N= 216 and N= 72 for each candidate.	Horse race, issue, and personal frames	Clinton's coverage more personal and less about horse race
Heldman (2009)	Traditional media and new media coverage of Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin from announcement day to Election Day. Political blogs: <i>Slate</i> , <i>Politico</i> , <i>The Drudge Report</i> , <i>The Daily Kos</i> , and <i>The Huffington Post</i>	Candidate's dress or appearance, family or caretaking responsibilities, trait coverage, tone of coverage (positive or negative), sexist language, issue coverage	Political blogs show more coverage for Palin than recent VP nominees. Both Palin and Ferraro faced significant coverage about their family. The two were four times as likely to receive sexist coverage in print media.
Heldman, Carroll, & Olson (2006)	Content analysis examining print coverage of Elizabeth Dole's 2000 presidential campaign in comparison to George W Bush, John McCain, Alan Keyes, Gary Bauer, and Steve Forbes. N= 421 articles from 40 different major US newspapers	Length and placement of story, gender of reporter, candidate mentions, proportion of the story devoted to each specific candidate, the order of mention, presence of name in headline, headline tone, primary focus of story, issue-related coverage, traits, personal appearance, family	Dole received significantly more gendered coverage than her male counterparts despite being second consistently behind Bush in the polls. The press paid more attention to her personality traits and appearances.
Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid, & Robertson (2004)	Content analysis examining 2004 presidential candidates'	Television advertisements and websites of male and female candidates	Reporters pair male candidates with "male policies" and female

	presentation of themselves through television advertisements and web sites		candidates with “female policies”, which can lead to negative perceptions that women are not as capable to lead.
Kahn & Fridkin (1996)	Content Analysis examining newspaper coverage of female candidates in senate and governors’ races in the 1980s	Feminine issue frames and feminine image frames	Press focuses coverage of female candidates more on personal lives, personalities, and appearance than they do issue-related coverage
Lawrence & Rose (2010)	Examining major newspapers and nightly television news coverage and new media (blogs) of Clinton during 2008 campaign	Three main variables: the presence of gender in politics, how the media cover presidential campaigns, and strategic decisions of the Clinton Campaign	Gender In Politics: Clinton could not find balance between utilizing established gender frames and trying to separate herself from traditional stereotypes Media coverage: Despite receiving gendered coverage, it was a product of Clinton being the front runner and a design to emphasize horse race coverage Clinton’s strategic decisions to stay in the race as her chances of winning decreased and diminished any significant impact of gendered coverage
Major & Coleman (2008)	Examined news coverage of mixed-gender gubernatorial election in 2004 in Louisiana between Kathleen Blanco and Bobby Jindal	Mentions of candidates in regard to gender-congruent issues and gender-congruent topics	Blanco received more positive mentions on feminine issues and more emphasis on the masculine issue of the economy
Meeks (2012)	New York Times Coverage of Hillary Clinton (2008: January 2007 to June 2008) and Sarah Palin (2008: August 2008 – Election Day) – 20% sample N = 228 for Clinton’s primary campaign and N = 48 for Palin’s general election campaign.	Gender labels (woman, man, mother, husband); Uniqueness labels (first, pioneer, lone); feminine issues; masculine issues; feminine and masculine traits.	NYT coverage placed heavy emphasis on women’s novelty. More coverage to masculinized content. Male counterparts received more issue and trait coverage than Clinton or Palin.
Miller & Peake (2013)	Newspaper coverage of Joe Biden and Sarah Palin (August 29, 2008- November 4, 2008). Local newspapers and <i>The Los</i>	Gender, appearance, family status, relationship between reader opinion and tone of coverage	Palin’s coverage more extensive, more headline and more article mentions, but more negative than Biden’s.

	<i>Angeles Times, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post. N= 2592, including front-page articles and editorials.</i>		
Tucker-McLaughlin & Campbell (2012)	Examining major network coverage of Hillary Clinton from ABC, NBC, and CBS from 1993-2008. Selected events used in sample spanning 15 years.	Themes in Coverage: Traditional First Lady, Supporter, Photo Op, First Lady as Advisor, Woman as Advisor, Woman as VP, Fighting Back, Criminal, Invisible, Voiceless, Positioned behind Part, Campaign Strategy	Fewer soundbites and more negative horserace coverage for Clinton in comparison to Obama

Table 2

Frequency of Themed Coverage of Kamala Harris in The New York Times (N = 50) and The Wall Street Journal (N = 20)

Code	<i>The New York Times</i> (N = 50)	<i>The Wall Street Journal</i> (N = 20)
Speculation	28 (38%)	6 (30%)
Sentiment (positive)	13 (22%)	6 (25%)
(negative)	10 (18%)	5 (20%)
Record (positive)	15 (24%)	4 (20%)
(negative)	15 (22%)	8 (30%)
Race (woman of color)	5 (10%)	1 (5%)
(South Asian-American)	2 (4%)	0
(Jamaican)	13 (26%)	5 (25%)
(Indian)	28 (54%)	8 (35%)
(Black)	29 (52%)	13 (45%)
(Asian-American)	1 (2%)	1 (5%)
Personal (positive)	16 (22%)	3 (15%)
(negative)	5 (8%)	0
Truth	3 (6%)	0
Gender	5 (8%)	0
Conflict	21 (30%)	18 (65%)
Political uniqueness	7 (12%)	0

Coding of themes enabled more than 1 theme per article. The frequency of the theme and the percentage is the number of stories that included one of these.

Table 3

Attributes of the Race Theme and Sub-themes in The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal Coverage of Kamala Harris

<u>Race and Subthemes</u>	<u>References</u>
Women of Color	6
South Asian-American	2
Jamaican	18
Indian	36
Black	41
Asian-American	2