

HOW ABOUT THE FEMALE VOICE?

Evaluating the Representation of Flemish Ministers in Newspaper Articles

Word count: 15.337

Elise Storme

Student number: 01304754

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Bram Wauters

A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Public Administration and Management

Academic year: 2019-2020

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

PERMISSION

I declare that the content of this Master's Dissertation may be consulted and/or reproduced, provided that the source is referenced.

Name of student: Elise Storme

PREAMBLE: COVID-19

This preamble is drawn up in consultation between the student and the supervisor and is approved by both.

In the original dissertation, I would investigate the fundamental reasons why women are still underrepresented in the current Flemish Government. Three main hypotheses would be investigated, based on the work of Mona Lena Krook and Diana O'Brien. I would analyse different sources using a relatively new method: process-tracing. For this, ten to fifteen elite interviews would be conducted with politicians, academics, policy experts, and journalists. However, due to the measures issued by the government and Ghent University, I was not able to collect any data through interviews.

After digital consultation with my supervisor, at the end of April, I chose to change my subject and research question. The theme, unequal representation of female politicians, remained the same. However, the work of the past few months was no longer usable and I had to start from scratch. In addition, I was only able to rely on digital sources due to the closure of the university libraries.

ABSTRACT

De vertegenwoordiging van vrouwelijke politici is het onderwerp van talloze onderzoeken binnen het gebied van de feministische mediastudies. Ze rapporteren bijna unaniem een numerieke ondervertegenwoordiging van vrouwelijke politici, evenals een ongelijke substantieve representatie. Zo wordt er vaker stereotiep gesproken over het privéleven, het uiterlijk en het geslacht van een politica.

Hoewel er tal van recente studies zijn, richt slechts een beperkt aantal zich op de situatie in Vlaanderen. Bovendien zijn er ook binnen het Vlaamse onderzoek enkele hiaten op te merken. De focus ligt voornamelijk op de numerieke representatie van vrouwelijke politici in het nieuws. Daarnaast wordt er vooral gefocust op de representatie van vrouwen in een electorale context. Deze studie wil die tekortkomingen aanpakken door zowel de numerieke als de substantieve vertegenwoordiging van mannelijke en vrouwelijke politici te bestuderen in de maand na de coalitievorming. Hierbij spitsen we ons toe op de negen ministers die zich tot de Vlaamse regering mogen rekenen.

We analyseerden 760 nieuwsberichten. Die artikels werden verzameld uit vijf Vlaamse kranten: *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *De Tijd*, *Het Laatste Nieuws* en *De Persgroep*.

De resultaten bevestigen de numerieke ondervertegenwoordiging van vrouwelijke politici. Drie kwart van de vermeldingen handelt over een mannelijke politicus, terwijl vrouwelijke politici in slechts 25% van de artikels worden vermeld. Vrouwelijke politici worden ook significant minder vermeld in de titel.

Op vlak van inhoudelijke representatie schetst deze studie een genuanceerder beeld dan voorgaand onderzoek. Verwijzingen naar de private sfeer, het geslacht, het uiterlijk en de leeftijd komen niet significant vaker voor in artikels over vrouwelijke politici. We rapporteren wel een groter aantal verwijzingen naar de persoonlijkheidskenmerken van mannelijke politici.

Dit suggereert een meer gelijkwaardige substantieve representatie vergeleken met eerdere studies. Als we de resultaten op een kwalitatieve manier bekijken, zien we echter nog steeds sporen van bepaalde genderstereotypen. Aanvullende kwalitatieve inhoudsanalyses worden daarom sterk aanbevolen in verder onderzoek naar het thema.

Keywords: Content analysis – newspaper coverage – gender bias – Flanders – numerical representation – substantive representation – women – politics

PREFACE

Diversity and gender equality have always been causes to which I am strongly committed. It is a subject that is very close to my heart. Therefore, it is with great pleasure that I present this master dissertation to you, the reader.

With this paper, the end of my university career is rapidly approaching. It is quite a bizarre ending, to say the least. Nevertheless, I look back with great joy on the seven beautiful years that I was able to spend at the University of Ghent.

Writing a dissertation is never an easy task. However, writing one during a global pandemic is something else completely. This work would never have taken on its current form without the help and encouragement of some very important people.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, prof. dr. Bram Wauters, for his help and useful feedback. Without his insights and quick responses, I would never have been able to adapt my ideas so quickly after the announced measures surrounding COVID-19. I am very grateful for the autonomy and trust he has given me to complete this paper in such a short amount of time.

Secondly, I want to thank my parents, from the bottom of my heart. Through their immense support and hard work, they have given me all the opportunities I could ever wish for in life. There is no doubt that they will continue to inspire me in the next chapter of my life.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my friends. Without them, I would not have become the person that I am today. I am especially thankful to two people in particular. Niels, for the external reliability check, but especially for his much-needed words of encouragement. Lastly, Jasper, who was willing to provide feedback and suggestions on the last draft of this paper. These past years, he has been one of my greatest friends, and I am very grateful that we were able to start this journey together, seven years ago.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. Theoretical Background: Women’s Representation in the Media	3
2.1. Numerical Representation	4
2.2. Substantive Representation	6
3. Influence of the Fourth Power	12
3.1. Power and Responsibility of the Media	12
3.2. (Adverse) Effects of Underrepresentation in Media	14
4. Methodology	18
4.1. Content Analysis: Definition and Purpose	18
4.2. Data Collection	20
4.3. Data Analysis	22
4.4. Reliability	22
5. Results	24
5.1. Numerical Representation	24
5.2. Substantive Representation	26
5.2.1. Private Sphere	26
5.2.2. Focus on Gender	27
5.2.3. Appearance and Age	28
5.2.4. Personality Traits	29
5.2.5. Political and Personal Information	30
6. Possible Explanations	32
6.1. Media Bias	32
6.2. Political Bias and Characteristics of the Politician	35
6.3. Party Logic	38
7. Directions for Further Research	39
8. Conclusion	41
References	X
Attachments	XX
Attachment 1: Registration Form	XX
Attachment 2: Codebook	XXIV

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIM	Centrum voor Informatie over de Media
GMMP	The Global Media Monitoring Project
MP	Member of Parliament
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America

LIST OF TABLES

Key Findings GMMP 1995 – 2015: Female Representation in Traditional Media	4
Key Findings GMMP 1995 – 2015: Main Story Topics	5
Feminine and Masculine Trait Stereotype Measures as Applied to Politicians	8
Distribution of Feminine and Masculine Issues	10
Average Number of Readers per Day per Paper	20
Cases per Paper	21
Kappa Values after Internal and External Reliability	23
Numerical Representation – Articles	24
Numerical Representation – Individual Mentions	24
Quality Newspapers Versus Popular Newspapers	25
Length of the Article	25
Mention of the Private Sphere	27
Focus on Gender	27
Mention of Appearance	28
Mention of Age	29
Mention of Personality Traits	29
Mention of Political and Personal Information	31
Gender of Author	33
Number of Articles per Minister	36
First Year of Holding a Political Mandate of Each Minister	37

LIST OF FIGURES

Stories by Female Reporters, by Major Topics

34

1. INTRODUCTION

During the 2018 municipal elections, as many women as men were present on the electoral lists. More and more women hold public top positions, and Belgium even has their first female prime minister. However, that does not mean that the fight for equal representation in Belgian politics is over (Lesaffer, 2018).

Nowadays, the struggle is no longer limited to political fronts such as the Parliament and the Flemish or Federal Government. Although newspapers often report on the negative consequences of female political underrepresentation, they often contribute to the problem (D'Heer, 2018).

The credibility of Maggie De Block, for example, as Belgian Federal Minister of Public Health, has long been a point of discussion due to her obesity. This criticism was discussed in detail by an unknown journalist of *De Standaard* (2014). Minister De Block then pointed to the inequality between male and female politicians concerning media attention for their appearance.

In the past, women have often addressed such inequalities in news reporting. The situation has been an obstacle for a long time. This experience of female politicians is also frequently mentioned in academic literature. A lot of international research within feminist media studies has shown how female politicians are less visible in the news compared to their male colleagues (Kahn, 1994a; Aday & Devitt, 2001; Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Besides, articles refer more often to their family life, personality, and appearance (Banwart, Bystrom & Robertson, 2003; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). According to Gaye Tuchman (1979), the media creates an erroneous world view among their readers and encourages gender-stereotyped thinking (Tuchman, 1979; Kahn, 1994a; Banwart, Bystrom & Robertson, 2003; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). George Gerbner (1976) calls this phenomenon 'the symbolic annihilation of women in the news.'

However, people see diversity as one of the most important characteristics of Western civilization. From a normative point of view, the media, therefore, should reflect this variety in their reporting (McQuail, 1992). If we apply this to news content, this job description assumes that news reports sufficiently reflect the demographic diversity in society. The fact that everyone, or at least every relevant population group, should be featured in the news is linked to their access to power. After all, who is mentioned in the media is visible to the public. Those who do not get a voice quickly disappear into oblivion (Vandenberghe, d'Haenens & Van Gorp, 2015).

These findings ensure that research into the representation of female politicians is of great social importance. The absence of comprehensive studies on the representation of women in Flemish news media is, therefore, remarkable. Only a few focus their efforts

specifically on female representatives, often as part of a broader study on women's representation in general (Vos, 2012; Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019; D'Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019). Most of these studies are limited to an analysis of the numerical representation of female politicians or media representation during election periods. Substantive representation and underrepresentation throughout the regular political years are often overlooked. Newspapers are only examined to a limited extent. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the presence of potential gender stereotypes in the Flemish written press. The conclusions we can draw cannot be compared with international studies on the topic.

That is why this paper aims to contribute to existing research by studying the newspaper coverage of nine Flemish ministers after the election period of 2019. We will conduct an in-depth quantitative content analysis of articles from *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *De Tijd*, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, and *Het Nieuwsblad*. These pieces were all published in October 2019, which is the month after the formation of the Flemish coalition. This event makes it a period with an abundance of political news and, therefore, gives us a large amount of data to analyse.

The central objective of this study is to examine the situation regarding the numerical and substantive media representation of Flemish female politicians, in comparison with the representation of male representatives. That is why both articles on female ministers and articles about their male colleagues will be analysed. We want to check whether women are mentioned as much compared to their male counterparts, whether female politicians are more often represented in a gender-stereotyped way, and whether there are differences in representation depending on the news medium (quality newspapers versus popular newspapers).

Before answering these three research questions, this paper provides a clear picture of the existing literature on the subject. Both studies on numerical and substantive representation are discussed in detail. The fourth chapter of this paper will contain an explanation of the methodology used while conducting our research. The results of the analyses are discussed in the subsequent chapter. Some possible explanations for these results are reviewed in chapter 6, after which some suggestions and guidelines are given for further research on the topic. The dissertation ends with a short summary of our results and answers to the research questions mentioned above.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA

'Over the last few decades, women's representation in the media has been examined by a myriad of studies' (Shor, van de Rijt, Ward, Blank-Gomel & Skiena, 2014). This research domain found its roots in feminist media studies during the 1960s and 1970s as a result of second-wave feminism. During this time, gender was first put forward as a specific analysis category (Storey, 2015).

In the early years, academics mainly focused on the pleasure experience of women regarding popular media such as soap operas and films. A few years later, the newspaper followed, and news coverage was studied more thoroughly (D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). The relative absence of women in the political sphere makes studying the relationship between gender, politics, and media is still 'a juvenile sub-discipline' (Ross & Comrie, 2012). However, in the thirty or so years in which researchers have focused on the relationship between the three, studies have discovered two 'gendered patterns' in the media (D'Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019).

Women are both underrepresented in volume and therefore visibility (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Kahn, 1992; Braden, 1996; De Clercq & Saeys, 2000; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Adcock, 2010; GMMP, 2015) and receive different types of media attention (Banwart, Bystrom & Robertson, 2003; Wauters, Weekers & Maddens, 2010; Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). They are portrayed in a 'stereotypical way reflecting traditional domains and roles in society' which are often degrading and sexualised portrayals (D'Heer, Vergoote, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019). This unequal representation of women compared to their male counterparts is what George Gerbner (1976) called the 'symbolic annihilation' of women in the news. Media content does not correctly echo politics and its (female) actors (Vos, 2013). This is especially the case in the written press, such as magazines and newspapers (Davis, 1982; Potter, 1985; Greenwald, 1990; Duncan, Messner & Williams, 1991; Zoch & Turk, 1998; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

This double gender bias has become an emerging research topic in studies on women's political representation in North America, Australia, India, South Africa, and several European countries.

My research wants to contribute to this trend by investigating whether the same patterns can be found in the Flemish press in the specific case of the current nine ministers of the Flemish Government.

To give a better picture of the previous research from which this study flows, we will discuss their findings in the following sections. Both the numerical (under)representation and the substantive (under)representation of female politicians will be looked at in more detail.

Most of the variables and hypotheses that we will investigate in the fifth chapter of this dissertation stem from this previous research.

2.1. NUMERICAL REPRESENTATION

As we previously discussed, the study of female politicians and their representation in media is a relatively young subfield (Larson, 2001). Kim Fridkin Kahn (1994a) was one of the first to methodically analyse the aforementioned gender bias and concluded that women do receive less coverage than their male contenders. More current studies validate her verdict (Niven, 2005; Heldman, Carroll, & Olson, 2005; Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007; Adcock, 2010; Vos, 2013; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

The most comprehensive study of numerical representation is the Global Media Monitoring Project. Every five years, the organisation publishes a report which provides an image of the representation of women in news coverage from 114 countries, as well as a global picture of the recent situation. The newest report is expected to be released at the end of 2020. Universally, a strong underrepresentation of women has been reported since to start of the project in 1995 (GMMP, 2015).

Table 1: Key Findings GMMP 1995 – 2015: Female Representation in Traditional Media

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		%Change (Δ)
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	
A. People in the news											(%F)
Newspaper, Television, Radio	17	83	18	82	21	79	24	76	24	76	▲ 7
Newspapers	16	84	17	83	21	79	24	76	26	74	▲10
Television	21	79	22	78	22	78	24	76	24	76	▲ 3
Radio	15	85	13	87	17	83	22	78	21	79	▲ 6

Even though the position of women in society has improved significantly over the last years, longitudinal data of the GMMP project display a different result. The number of women in the global news has only increased with 7% over the course of twenty years (from 17% to 24%). The representation of women in newspaper coverage has progressed a bit more (from 16% to 26%). However, the increase here only amounts to 10% as well over the span of twenty years. The figures for Belgium are in line with the global results as there is a 25%-75% (women – men) distribution of representation in traditional media (GMMP, 2015). The increase in female representation seems to stagnate as the number (24%) stayed the same over the last five years of the research project (2010-2015). Future analysis will show whether this is only a temporary slump, or, whether female representation in news coverage has reached a ceiling (GMMP, 2015).

Table 2: Key Findings GMMP 1995 – 2015: Main Story Topics

Science & Health	27	73	21	79	22	78	32	68	35	65	▲ 8
Social & Legal	19	81	21	79	28	72	30	70	28	72	▲ 9
Crime & Violence	21	79	18	82	22	78	24	76	28	72	▲ 7
Celebrity, Arts & Sport	24	76	23	77	28	72	26	74	23	77	▼ 1
Economy	10	90	18	82	20	80	20	80	21	79	▲ 11
Politics & Government	7	93	12	88	14	86	19	81	16	84	▲ 9

If we look at Table 2, the amount of female representation is even lower for so-called ‘typically male subjects,’ such as economics (21%) and politics (16%).

When women do function in the news, it is mostly because of their personal experience (45%). Only 18% of the cases include female subjects as a spokesperson, politician, or a minister (GMMP, 2015).

The GMMP research provides us with a trustworthy picture of current trends in female representation in the most common media sources (newspaper, radio, and television). Nonetheless, we do need to keep some aspects of the study in mind when looking at these numbers. While the GMMP’s methodology is ‘quite rigorous,’ the collection of their data only happens one day every five years (Shor, van de Rijt, Ward, Blank-Gomel & Skiena, 2014). Therefore, the data are ‘highly susceptible’ to unusual occurrences or newsworthy events, which are not necessarily gender-neutral (Shor, van de Rijt, Ward, Blank-Gomel & Skiena, 2014).

Nevertheless, the patterns seem widespread as other studies on the theme of underrepresentation notice the same results. A study on television news, for instance, leading up to the 1997 British general election, discovered how women accounted for only 5% of national politicians appearing in the traditional media. Even though women, at the time, were responsible for 9% of the British Parliament (Gallagher, 2001).

The same pattern is visible in a study on the media coverage of the 1999 South African elections. In the African country, 9% of news sources were female. If we compare this with only 1% during the 1994 elections, it seems to be an immense improvement. However, given the high percentage of women who hold political office in the country, the result remains meagre (Gallagher, 2001).

Nonetheless, the intention to repeat the results does not always present the same outcomes (Smith, 1997; Aday & Devitt, 2001; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; Atkeson & Krebs, 2008). On the contrary, studies on the representation of female politicians in the United States of America show several inconsistencies (D’Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

Kevin B. Smith (1997), for example, discovered how female candidates received more attention than their male opponents during the 1994 governor elections. This is the opposite conclusion of what Kim Fridkin Kahn (1994a) mentioned when discussing the 1988

governor elections. He attributes his findings to a so-called 'novelty effect' (Smith, 1997). As the election of governors has always been strongly male-dominated, the large presence of women was seen as something new and, thus, more newsworthy. This 'novelty effect' has also been cited in other studies as a possible reason for a (temporarily) larger representation of female politicians in the media (Bystrom, 2006; Atkeson & Krebs, 2008).

An important nuance, however, is that these studies are all conducted within the USA, and these conflicting results are largely limited to the election of governors. Therefore, generalizations to all elections within US territory or the representation of female politicians in other countries would be unjustified (Meeks, 2012; GMMP, 2015; Lühiste & Banducci, 2016; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

For Flanders specifically, no equal representation of male and female politicians has yet been found. These studies, however, focus mainly on election news (D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Other studies have been conducted in countries such as Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. There too, the same conclusion has been reached: women remain a minority in media coverage (Spee & De Swert, 2005; Niven, 2005).

Furthermore, despite the increasing equal numerical representation some studies detect, they always emphasise the fact that the representation is not equal in terms of content and, more specifically, stereotypical depictions (D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). This phenomenon will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.2. SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

Although some discussion occurs regarding the quantity of news coverage female politicians receive, most researchers are in unison that the coverage they do receive differs from that of their male counterparts (Vos, 2013). This pattern is even noticeable in countries with a strong tradition of equal representation in political offices such as Norway (Skjeie, 1994), Sweden (Börjesson, 1995), and Finland (Gallagher, 2001).

As a result, many studies have been conducted within feminist media studies into the substantive representation of women (Mendes & Carter, 2008; Vos, 2014; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Rather than discussing female representation as a whole, this type of research tends to focus on a particular group of women such as businesswomen (Grandy, 2010; Poutanen, Kovalainen & Jännäri, 2016), sportswomen (George, Hartley & Paris, 2001; Bernstein, 2002), and politicians (Kahn, 1994a; van Zoonen, 1998). The main reason is that reporting on economics, sports, and politics has traditionally been dominated by men, which often raises the question of how women are represented in these segments of the news and if it differs from the stories about men in the same profession (GMMP, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

In the case of female politicians, journalists tend to highlight the personal in reporting on women by focussing on their marital status, appearance, attire, lifestyle, and whether they have children or not. In contrast, when writing about men, the media focus more on the professional such as their positions on certain issues, their accomplishments, and featuring their overall experience (Aday & Devitt, 2001). In the following paragraphs, we will discuss some of these gender biases in more depth.

One of the primary findings is the disproportionate attention to the **private lives** of female politicians by mentioning, for example, their children and marital status (Walsh, 2001; Adcock, 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen & Ye, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). This unconsciously refers to the predated distinction in which women belonged to the private sphere, while men entered the public sphere. It implies the idea that women do not 'belong' in politics as it is an integral part of the public sphere in our contemporary society (Wahl-Jorgensen & Ye, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Liesbet van Zoonen (1998) places this within the broader trend of 'personalization' in news reporting, which has made politicians' personal lives more central to the stories.

While certain types of media seem to stress the family relationships of both male and female politicians, they are not always presented similarly. Liesbet van Zoonen (2002), for instance, discovered how the Dutch gossip press showed the families of male politicians as 'a source of support,' while it was portrayed as a 'source of conflict' for women in pursuit of a political career (Gallagher, 2001). Other studies confirm these findings. While the father role of male politicians is shown in a positive light, references to the mother role often emphasise the split responsibility between the public and the private sphere. Journalists often wonder how female politicians will combine their careers with their family life, a way of reporting that minimises their credibility (Muir, 2005). The father role of male representatives, on the other hand, serves their agenda, as it illustrates their reliability and empathy (van Zoonen, 1998).

Another way to highlight the difference between the family life of male and female politicians is, in the case of women, by focussing on certain characteristics that are considered necessary for the role of mother or wife such as warmth, compassion, honesty, kindness, care, and softness (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Wahl-Jorgensen & Ye, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven; 2019).

Some of these **personality traits** are equally attributed to men and women (Schneider & Bos, 2013). Yet, male politicians seem to benefit more often from these attributes than their female counterparts. As a result, male politicians take advantage of both female and male gender stereotypes, such as competence, assertiveness, and self-confidence. This is in large contrast to female politicians who cannot enjoy female gender stereotypes and are rejected when showing signs of typical male personality traits (Banwart, 2010). In this context, reference is regularly made to the 'double bind' women often

experience (Jamieson, 1995; Carlin & Wingrey, 2009; Banwart, 2010; Curnalia & Mermer, 2014; D’Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). People link femininity to incompetence, while competence is seen as a non-feminine trait (Jamieson, 1995). Thus, a female politician who wants to be successful must have stereotypically masculine characteristics, but not to such a degree that her personality deviates too much from the classic expectations of femininity (Banwart, 2010; D’Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Women politicians must, therefore, walk a thin line if they are not to be subject to disapproving news reports.

If we look at Table 3, we can see prevalent uniform differences in the personality traits ascribed to female and male politicians (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). There is ample consensus across a large number of psychological studies that an exemplary woman is seen as affectionate, compassionate, honest, sensitive, warm, and kind, whereas a typical man is visualised as assertive, tough, and rational (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

Table 3: Feminine and Masculine Trait Stereotype Measures as Applied to Politicians

	Feminine Traits	Masculine Traits
Rosenwasser & Dean (1989)	Affectionate	Assertive
	Cheerful	Defends own beliefs
	Compassionate	Forceful
	Sensitive	Self-sufficient
	Warm	Strong personality
Alexander & Andersen (1993)	Ability to compromise	Ability to handle a crisis
	Compassionate	Decisiveness
	Hardworking	Emotional stability
	Honest	Tough
Huddy & Terkildsen (1993)	Cautious	Active
	Compassionate	Aggressive
	Emotional	Ambitious
	Family-oriented	Articulate
	People skills	Assertive
	Sensitive	Rational
	Trustworthy	Self-confident
	Warm	Tough
Kahn (1994a)	Integrity	Knowledge
	Honesty	Leadership
	Compassion	

Huddy & Capelos (2002)

Caring	Competent
Honest	Dynamic
Kind	Effective
Moral	Inspiring
Trustworthy	Qualified
Warm	Strong leader

These same results have been documented in studies where respondents are asked to define male and female characteristics (McKee & Sheriffs, 1957), check off adjectives that are fitting to a typical man or woman (Best & Williams, 1990), assess men and women on a bipolar adjective rating scale (Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman & Broverman, 1968), or rate themselves by using the same bipolar rating scale (Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1974). The findings remain consistent across a varied array of countries (Best & Williams, 1990).

Not only family life and personality traits receive more attention. Liesbet van Zoonen (1998) notes that **gender** itself is also receiving more attention in current news reporting. Female politicians are still given the prefix 'woman' or are mentioned as 'leading lady,' which marks them out as 'different to the traditional (male) politician' (Ross & Comrie, 2012). This, too, is considered a consequence of the personalization of politicians and is confirmed, among other things, in the tendency of news reports to emphasise the gender of female politicians as something special (Ross & Comrie, 2012).

Language itself is also a powerful tool that can convey stereotypes and prejudices more subtly (Braden, 1996; Adcock, 2010; Ross & Comrie, 2012; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Female candidates are often described in negative and even 'aggressive' terms when journalists try to interpret their behaviour (Vos, 2013). This creates a negative impression of female politicians (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003).

The obvious sexist language regarding female representatives is especially prevalent in the United States of America, where animal terms are regularly used to describe female candidates or legislators. Words such as 'catfight,' 'foxy,' and 'shrew' make women in politics seem less human and negatively affect their election chances or credibility (Nilsen, 1977; Sutton, 1995).

Furthermore, Karen Ross and Margie Comrie (2012) discussed how the same quality is named differently among female and male politicians. Men, for example, are 'assertive,' while female representatives are 'harsh' or 'sharp.'

Moreover, female politicians are more common in news reports on traditional **feminine issues** than those regarding male domains (Kittlson & Fridkin, 2008; Vos, 2013). Lonna Rae Atkeson and Timothy Krebs (2008) found similar results as they saw a slight

inclination for coverage of female representatives to focus on ‘compassion issues’ and for reporting on men to focus on ‘hard subjects’ (see Table 4). Several academic studies have also suggested that women are often confronted with questions and remarks that focus on personal matters instead of the current political topic or issue (Eide, 2000; Ross & Sreberny, 2000; Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011).

Table 4: Distribution of Feminine and Masculine Issues (Krook & O’Brien, 2012)

Masculine	Agriculture, Food Safety, Fisheries, & Livestock	Foreign Affairs
	Communication & Information	Government/Interior/Home Affairs
	Construction & Public Works	Industry & Commerce
	Correctional Services/Police	Labor
	Defense, Military & National/Public Security	Religious Affairs
	Enterprise	Science & Technology
	Finance & Economy	Transportation
Neutral	Civil Service	Parliamentary Affairs
	Displaced Persons & Expatriates	Public Works
	Energy	Planning & Development
	Environment & Natural Resources	Regional
	Housing	Reform
	Justice	Sports
	Minority Affairs	Tourism
Feminine	Aging/Elderly	Health and Social Welfare
	Children and Family	Heritage
	Culture	Women’s Affairs
	Education	Youth

In addition to a greater focus on family life, marital status, gender, personality traits, and feminine issues, female politicians are also confronted with a larger spotlight on their **appearance** (Devitt, 1999; Aday & Devitt, 2001; Devitt, 2002; Baird, 2004; D’Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). This was strongly reflected in the coverage of Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton during the 2008 presidential campaign (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). Palin was ‘sexy’ and a past beauty contestant while Clinton’s suits were described as ‘not feminine enough’ (D’Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

Furthermore, Susan Carroll and Ronnee Schreiber (1997) mention how the media barely cover female Members of Congress as **individuals**. Instead, they focus on their collective contributions as female legislators.

Against all this, several researchers argue that there is a noticeable improvement in the substantive representation of female politicians (Smith, 1997; Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012). They found no more attention to the appearance or the personality of female politicians compared to male representatives. However, research that does not report any obvious discrepancies in coverage is non-existent.

Finally, positive evolutions are once again largely confined to the investigation of certain elections within the United States of America (D’Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). That is

why we have to be careful when making generalizations. Concerning Flanders, studies into the substantive representation of female politicians outside an electoral context are lacking.

Therefore, in this dissertation, we will focus on the numerical and substantive representation of female and male politicians outside the much-discussed electoral context by focussing on the ministers of the Flemish Government. To paint a picture of the numerical representation, we will look at the number of mentions per politician, the length of the articles, and if a politician is mentioned in the title or not. Regarding the substantive representation, we will focus on the variables: private sphere, gender, appearance, and personality traits. The variables language and issues will not be discussed due to the greater subjectivity they are associated with. Instead, the variables from the literature study are supplemented with other variables that turned out to be interesting during our data collection. These include age, political information, and personal information.

3. INFLUENCE OF THE FOURTH POWER

'The media are important in shaping our notion of the world beyond what we can experience directly – and the world of politics is almost entirely beyond the reach of our direct experience' (Erbring, Goldenberg & Miller, 1980). Mass media, in its relation to politics and (under)representation, are no longer regarded as 'insignificant' (Goldenberg & Traugott, 1987). On the contrary, it has rapidly become one of the most crucial research areas in social and political communication studies. Therefore, the influence of mass media, often referred to as the fourth power, and the potential adverse effects they can have on the representation of women in the political field will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

3.1. POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEDIA

Apart from someone's school environment and their family, media have an extensive influence on the process of identity construction (Gunter, 1995; La Ferle, Edwards & Lee, 2000; Goodall, 2012; Milestone & Meyer, 2012). The Global Media Monitoring Project (2015) even considers it the 'most influential' source of present-day information, opinions, and ideas for most people around the world. Across the globe, the 'cultural underpinnings of gender inequality and discrimination against women' are, therefore, often reinforced through the media (GMMP, 2015). 'People today are the most media-saturated and media-engaged people in history,' which makes news one of the most influential sources of information and opinions, especially amongst the newer generations (Wood, 2011).

Most people do not experience politics directly, and as a result, their perceptions of this specific world are largely carved by the mass media and the images they create (Kahn, 1994a). Thus, it is important who and what appears in the news and how people, ideas, and events are portrayed. Who is left out and what is not covered are equally influential when we construct opinions and ideas (GMMP, 2015). A 'realistic and varied' gender representation concerning politics is therefore of the utmost importance (D'Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019).

News media play an increasingly significant role in modern politics as there is an ongoing trend towards the 'mediatization' of the domain. This is characterised by 'an increasing intrusion of the media in the political process' (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). It used to be the case that the media were 'subordinate' to the political sphere. Today, media have a much broader influence over the issues on which they write, who should represent a party/idea in the media, and how political events, actors, and processes are potentially 'framed' (Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011).

Because we move from a 'party democracy' to an 'audience democracy,' characterised by a more central role for 'personae,' modern media advanced to the center of political processes (Brants, De Vreese, Möller & Van Praag, 2010). According to Debby Vos (2014), the focus has shifted from parties to politicians and leaders, and it is individuals who appear in the news. Therefore, visibility is extremely important for their political success (Vos, 2014).

As we saw in one of the previous paragraphs, modern politics can be considered as 'mediated politics' in which the media constitute the 'most important source of information and interpretation' (Bennett & Entman, 2001). Modern media play a crucial role in connecting citizens to political actors as voters often rely exclusively on the news for their information regarding their representatives (Vos, 2014). It is, therefore, essential for political actors to be noticeable in the media. British MPs, for example, have observed that voters do not believe Members of Parliament work for the constituency's common interest unless they have a high-profile media presence (Ross and Sreberny, 2000). This suggests that what matters most is not reality per se, but the 'social constructions of reality shaped by media coverage' (Nimmo and Combs, 1983).

Furthermore, media coverage is also expected to be advantageous during policy-making processes as legislators use news media to gain public support and influence their counterparts to get legislation passed (Vos, 2014; Fogarty, 2008; Kedrowski, 1996).

Although coverage of individual politicians has increased, it remains, until this very day, a 'highly selective' procedure (Vos, 2014). Every day, significant events take place, and news organizations do not have the time and resources to cover all these affairs in the same depth (Kahn, 1994a). Politicians must, therefore, vie for the attention of editors, journalists, and readers in an already immensely competitive news environment (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999).

Because of this, news media gained a much bigger influence over politicians' behaviour as political actors are expected to adapt to a so-called 'media logic' to become more perceptible (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Cook, 2005). Media logic refers to 'factors that are likely to raise public attention.' For instance, media are more prone to cover a story if it meets specific news values, such as 'personalization, negativity, conflict, continuity or exclusiveness' (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Bell, 1991; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001). This has fuelled widespread frustration with political actors, political parties, and the political sphere in general (Heidar and Saglie, 2002).

Nowadays, both the political sphere and the media sphere are 'intertwined' and have to depend on each other to survive (Wolfsfeld & Sheaffer, 2006). Modern media need interesting stories, and politicians need publicity, making them highly dependent on one another. Therefore, the 'construction' of political news has become a 'co-production'

between journalists and political actors instead of a one-way street (Wolfsfeld & Sheafer, 2006).

According to Karen Ross and Margie Comrie (2012), this power is, to some extent, mitigated by the increased use of personal and party political blogs bypassing 'traditional media's gate-keepers' (Entman, 2010). Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, where politicians often have their own accounts, have a role to play as well. However, traditional media remain highly influential in providing the public with political information (Gibbons, 2007; Tapscott, 2008; Kalitowski, 2009). More than forty years of research on agenda-setting demonstrates how the media can, and will, set the agenda for which policy issues and politicians audiences think are important and worth their vote (Coleman, McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 2008).

3.2. (ADVERSE) EFFECTS OF UNDERREPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

Gendered news, in which women are underrepresented or covered in a stereotypical way, can generate two primary effects that should be avoided in a modern democratic society.

First and foremost, both numerical and substantive underrepresentation of women can harm the evaluation of female officeholders and candidates and, by extension, their chances of election victory or the preservation of their elected office (Goodyear-Grant, 2013). Edie Goldenberg and Michael Traugott (1987) showed, for example, how the more often a politician makes headlines, the greater the voters' ability to recognise him or her. Thus, if female candidates receive more attention in the media, then voters may have an easier time sympathizing with these nominees or thinking of them when they have to make a choice during elections. This 'hypothesised advantage in recognition' may be a crucial resource for female candidates since voters will rarely support a contender they do not recognise (Goldenberg and Traugott 1984).

Especially at the national political level, sufficient media coverage is an inconceivably important element to become elected (Kahn, 1994a; Kropf & Boiney, 2001; Van Aelst, Maddens, Noppe & Fiers, 2008).

Besides, media attention is not only important for candidate politicians. Elected representatives need ample recognition as well as they need to attract attention to their parliamentary work to get re-elected when the time comes.

Lack of media coverage can, therefore, have a detrimental impact on female politicians' (starting) careers (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015).

After recognition has been achieved, a candidate still needs to be positively evaluated if he or she wants to get elected (Kahn, 1994a). Assessments of nominees can be influenced by four factors: (1) 'the evaluation of a candidate his or her issue stands' (Markus

and Converse 1979; Page and Jones 1979); (2) 'assessment of the candidates' viability' (Bartels 1987; Brady and Johnston 1987); (3) 'the voter's party identification' (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Markus and Converse 1979); and (4) 'evaluation of the candidates' personality' (Markus, 1982). Media coverage can influence each of these four dimensions (Kahn, 1994a). When we vote, we consciously or unconsciously take into account what we have heard, read, and seen in the media. As we assume certain objectivity from reporters and editors, we create an image of politicians and parties that we consider to be impartial and true (D'Heer, 2018).

Accordingly, if the modern media differentiate between how they report on male and female politicians, these differences may influence voters' impressions and judgment of female and male candidates (Kahn, 1994a). For instance, if the media focus more extensively on policy matters concerning male candidates, voters may start to think that male candidates are more knowledgeable about those issues than their female counterparts. Likewise, if the coverage of the horserace is more pervasive and more negative towards female nominees, then people may develop more negative opinions towards female contenders (Kahn, 1994a).

Both survey and experimental work show that people differentiate between identically qualified male and female candidates (Adams, 1975; Mend, Bell, and Bath, 1976; Ekstrand and Eckert, 1981; Sapiro, 1982; Gallup, 1984; Sigelman and Sigelman, 1984; Mueller, 1986; Spohn and Gillespie, 1987; Rosenwasser and Seale, 1988; Leeper, 1991). People unconsciously believe, for example, that male nominees are 'stronger leaders' and have more knowledge about important political areas than their female counterparts. 'The presence of such stereotypes, if activated during campaigns, may be an obstacle for women as they run for office' (Kahn, 1994b).

It has already been shown, for example, that the substantive focus on gender, appearance, and marital status in press articles can be detrimental to female politicians as they could support already existing gender stereotypes among voters (Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid & Robertson, 2004; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Such representations may seem harmless. However, they are anything but. When voters already think according to certain old-fashioned gender stereotypes, stereotypical female representations in the news enlarge these ideas. This can then lead to fewer votes for women. By emphasizing aspects such as the marital status of female politicians or their role as a mother, women are placed within the private or domestic sphere. This may lead to the outdated idea that women do not belong in the public or political sphere (D'Heer, 2018).

As we previously saw, press coverage of female politicians is often biased and stereotypical. Nonetheless, the primary consequence of this is not what most people would think: 'that should a woman run, the press would make it less likely for her to win. The most

important consequence is that press coverage makes more women less likely to run' (Falk, 2008). This is our second negative effect of prejudicial reporting.

As reported by Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant (2013), gendered news coverage creates an 'important socialization effect' on the future generation of citizens as it may 'implicitly discourage' young women from contemplating the possibility of a political career when they grow up. This creates a shortage of women on the supply-side and guarantees an underrepresentation in political offices for years to come.

The main reason for this phenomenon is the fact that media, as seen in the previous paragraphs, are 'highly instrumental in shaping public perceptions' (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015). A lack of media attention for women in the political field fuels the idea that the democratic system is not 'open for everyone' (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015).

For instance, by systematically portraying women less often than men, the media indicates that women play a less prominent political role in society than their male counterparts. By not presenting or only presenting a certain group in specific contexts or roles, such as the political sphere, the media determine the social position of those groups (Silverstone, 2008).

This 'symbolic annihilation' plays a significant role in maintaining the 'gendered balance of power,' leading to what is often called 'the glass ceiling' (Tuchman, 1979). This metaphor characterises the struggles women often face when trying to climb up the political ladder. This poses an enormous problem as women will not even consider a political career anymore, because it seems as if they would never stand a chance against their male challengers (Humprecht & Esser, 2017).

The more female politicians are made visible through media coverage, the more likely young women are to show their intention to become politically active as they become more engaged with political topics. Even the simple presence of female role models in political roles make adolescent girls more likely to 'pay attention to and discuss politics' with their peers (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006). The visibility of female politicians makes sure their presence is noted and shapes the interests and behaviours of young girls. Visibility suggests that a woman's campaign is 'sufficiently viable' and the office 'sufficiently important.' The woman is perceived as a 'credible politician, rather than powerless, not serious, or a token' (Atkeson, 2003; Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006).

Visibility, thus, leads girls to have more confidence and interest in political institutions. As 'fellow women' are involved in politics, teenage girls have the feeling that political institutions are more 'responsive to their concerns' (Burns, Schlozman & Verba, 2001) and, therefore, 'worthy of their trust' (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006). As a result, the likelihood of girls engaging in conversations about politics will increase sufficiently. By contributing to the

daily political discussions, they get more familiar and at ease with politics and political ideas, which leads to more anticipated political involvement (Campbell & Wolbrecht, 2006).

Gender bias and differences in mass media coverage is an important topic for several reasons. We deal with 'the simple question of fairness.' If we look at the issue from a normative perspective, the press should be unbiased in the work they do while covering politics so that voters can make informed and rational decisions (Atkeson & Krebs, 2008). If young women stay alienated from seeking political office due to media and gender bias, the result will be 'a continuation of women's political underrepresentation for the foreseeable future' (Goodyear-Grant, 2013).

Modern media are active within a democratic system, and therefore it is expected that the media 'adapt to new social realities' such as increasing gender equality in high-profile domains such as politics (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015). However, we have seen in previous studies that this is not always the case.

4. METHODOLOGY

According to our literature research, we can distinguish two prominent gendered patterns in the (written) news. Women are often underrepresented (De Clercq & Saeys, 2000; GMMP, 2015; De Vuyst, Vertoont & Van Bauwel, 2016) and if they are present in the media, they are mostly described in a stereotypical way (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015; D'Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019).

This study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining whether this is also the case in the Flemish press, and more specifically, in regard to the nine ministers of the Flemish Government. We will determine whether female politicians are represented as much as their male counterparts, whether they are portrayed differently compared to male politicians, and whether differences can be found in the media representation depending on the gender of the journalist and the news medium.

Following previous research on the topic, we will use in-depth quantitative content analysis to answer these questions (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Kahn, 1992; van Zoonen, 1998; D'Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019).

4.1. CONTENT ANALYSIS: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

Content analysis is a research method that has been around for decades. According to Klaus Krippendorff (2018), it is 'indigenous' to communication and political research and could be seen as 'one of the most important research techniques in the social sciences overall.' The term was first mentioned in 1941. However, the systemic analysis of texts to identify patterns was already around in the seventeenth century (Krippendorff, 2018). Due to its long history, the research method has been defined in various ways. Sapiro and Markoff describe content analysis as 'any systematic reduction of text (or other symbols) to a standard set of statistically manipulable symbols representing the presence, the intensity, or the frequency of some characteristics relevant to social science' (Krippendorff, 2018). Berelson, on the other hand, speaks of 'a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication' (Krippendorff, 2018).

In these aforementioned definitions, the quantitative aspect of content analysis is present. Quantitative analysis focuses on the specific words or themes to describe certain phenomena in a text (Babbie, 2012).

The uses of content analysis are abundant. Researchers can, for example, find out how minorities are portrayed in the media or discover how written media report on politicians

(Krippendorff, 2018). As this is perfectly in line with our own research topic, we thought content analysis a good fit.

Various types of data can be studied using in-depth content analysis, including written documents such as books, magazines, newspapers, audio-visual material such as political speeches or interviews, but also pictures, paintings, and other images (Krippendorff, 2018). In our specific case, we will focus on offline newspapers.

The term 'content' takes on a narrow meaning. We look at the specific words mentioned in the article, not its underlying message. The analysis has to be both objective (replicable) and systematic (valid). Objectivity means that the methodological procedure of the content analysis is 'well-defined' and 'shaped in a way that other researchers would obtain the same results' if they would perform the same analysis. Systematic implies that the analysis involves a certain system, a 'step-to-step manner,' in which we analyse the data (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). All data has to be analysed according to the same procedure. By making use of such a coding system, long-winded data becomes more feasible to analyse and easier to compare (Krippendorff, 2018).

To guarantee this, we used a registration form (see Appendix 1) and a codebook (see Appendix 2). The registration form was created using the trial-and-error method. The codebook, on the other hand, explains the operationalization of the concepts from our registration form. This assures uniformity in the way our articles are coded and makes sure that external analysts can perform the same research using our registration form in combination with the provided codebook (Hansen, 2009). Both were drawn up based on insights from our literature research and supplemented with variables that proved interesting during our own data collection. In addition to the numerical representation, we also examine references to the private sphere of men and women (Adcock, 2010), their gender (van Zoonen, 1998), appearance (Aday & Devitt, 2001) and the personality traits of politicians (Wahl-Jorgensen & Ye, 2015).

In addition to these variables, we added variables such as length of the news item, personal information, age, and gender of the author. These variables pose a useful contribution to the variables that have been previously discussed in other studies on the representation of female politicians.

To be able to encode all variables in the most comprehensive way possible, we opted for a registration form that allowed us to give an additional qualitative interpretation to some quantitative variables. When a feature is identified as present, it is supported by excerpts from the article.

The qualitative component goes a lot deeper and lends itself more to interpretations of the newspaper articles (Frissen, Bouwman & Den Boer, 1994). It will allow the depth and nuance that quantitative content analysis cannot provide. Conversely, the quantitative

component of our research can lead to a more objective and systematic investigation. By combining both forms, we aim for complementarity and elaboration (Voets, 2020).

Finally, consistent with previous research, it is important to mention that we only focus on the text that was brought forward by the journalist. This means that quotes from politicians, as well as interview answers, are not included in our analysis. We made this choice as politicians regularly make impromptu references to their personal lives. This form of communication could be considered as more representative of how politicians present themselves in the media than how a journalist portrays them (D'Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019). Interview questions by journalists were included, as well as introductory descriptions. Nonetheless, for the variable 'length of the article,' the full article was studied (including interviews and quotes).

4.2. DATA COLLECTION

Due to a lack of time and resources, it is impossible to investigate every Flemish newspaper. That is why we based our content analysis on the five most important Dutch-language newspapers in Flanders: *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *De Tijd*, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, and *Het Nieuwsblad*. The choice was made to include two popular newspapers (*Het Laatste Nieuws* and *Het Nieuwsblad*) as well as three quality newspapers (*De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, and *De Tijd*). This makes it possible to find out if there are any differences to be found in the representation of female politicians between both types of papers. According to CIM, these five reach several million readers every day (De Morgen, 2019).

Table 5: Average Number of Readers per Day per Paper

Paper	Average number of readers per day
De Morgen	448.500
De Standaard	715.000
De Tijd	305.500
Het Laatste Nieuws	2.244.500
Het Nieuwsblad	1.626.100

There is a mix of media houses as well. *De Morgen* and *Het Laatste Nieuws* belong to DPG Media, while *De Standaard* and *Het Nieuwsblad* are part of Mediahuis. *De Tijd* belongs to Mediafin. By including a mix of newspapers in terms of type and media house, we try to facilitate the principle of objectivity as much as possible.

The content of the newspapers is studied for a period of one month, from 1/10/2019 until 31/10/2019. Since the Flemish coalition was only just created, we can categorise this month as a time with a large amount of political news related to the Flemish Government and its ministers.

To collect the articles, the GoPress database was used, which provides access to the archives of all Flemish newspapers and makes it possible to read articles that were published more than ten years ago. The database is freely available via the website of De Krook (the city library of Ghent). It uses search terms that function according to Boolean operators. For our specific research, we made several combinations of the nine politicians, the date, and the publication. We downloaded every article that met these conditions in PDF format from the GoPress database.

Originally, we collected 904 articles. After we cleaned our data, this collection was reduced to 760 usable publications. Articles that were not about a minister from the Flemish Government were left out, as well as articles that only consisted of a collection of short online comments on certain events. No duplicate articles were detected within the same media house.

Table 6: Cases per Paper

Paper	Number of cases
De Morgen	16,2% (n = 178)
De Standaard	19,5% (n = 214)
De Tijd	16,8% (n = 184)
Het Laatste Nieuws	24,5% (n = 268)
Het Nieuwsblad	23,0% (n = 252)
Total	100% (n = 1096)

In several articles, multiple politicians are mentioned. This brings us to a total of 1096 individual cases. Of the 1096 cases collected, 178 came from *De Morgen* (16,2%), 184 from *De Tijd* (16,8%), 214 from *De Standaard* (19,5%), 252 from *Het Nieuwsblad* (23%) and 268 from *Het Laatste Nieuws* (24,5%). The smaller number of news items from the quality newspapers *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, and *De Tijd* can be explained by the absence of articles that only appear regionally.

Because of the similarities between *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, and *De Tijd* and between *Het Nieuwsblad* and *Het Laatste Nieuws*, we chose to combine these newspapers in a separate variable. We obtained a variable with the codes 'quality newspaper' for *De*

Morgen, De Standaard and *De Tijd* (52,5%, n = 576) and ‘popular newspapers’ for *Het Nieuwsblad* and *Het Laatste Nieuws* (47,5%, n = 520).

One of the advantages of this study is that we do not use a sample as the database contains every article written on the male and female politicians of the Flemish government during the period of 01/10/2019 and 31/10/2019. We find it necessary to involve all articles in our investigation to make sure we can form a broad and complete picture of news reporting in the chosen time frame. Subsequently, no problems should arise concerning legitimacy and representativeness. This research has, therefore, a solid foundation in terms of objectivity and validity (Van Thiel, 2015).

Although the focus of this research is mainly on female politicians, the articles on male representatives have also been recorded and coded. This is necessary to draw meaningful conclusions about women in politics, but it can reveal possible stereotypes in the representation of male politicians as well.

4.3. DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data is put into an Excel-spreadsheet and analysed by using the statistical program SPSS Statistics 25. Since almost all our variables are nominal, and we are dealing with two independent samples (male and female politicians), we use frequency tables for the descriptive analysis. For all other analyses, we opt for a X^2 -test with a recommended reliability level of 95% (De Pelsmacker and Van Kenhove, 2018). This is also in line with previous research, which helps us compare our results to other relevant studies, discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation.

4.4. RELIABILITY

In a situation where several coders participate in a study, it is important to check the reliability of the process. One could ask the question to what extent a second or even a third measurement would yield the same result (Krippendorff, 2018).

In our study, which only used one coder, we also opt for an extra measurement. Five percent of the articles (n = 38), chosen at random, was reregistered and recoded one month after the initial registration. The Kappa values of each variable were then calculated via SPSS.

The Kappa value is a measure used to represent the correspondence of two or more observers. A value of 1 indicates a perfect match. Since there was a lot of time between the first and second measurements, we can be sure that we will not receive a high Kappa value based solely on the encoder’s memory. In other words, the first measurement is no longer

fresh in the coder's mind. Both an internal audit and an audit by an external person were performed to increase the assurance of reliability.

Table 7: Kappa Values after Internal and External Reliability Test

Variable	Kappa after internal audit	Kappa after external audit
Number of article	1,000	1,000
Title of article	1,000	1,000
Mention of name in title	1,000	1,000
Paper	1,000	1,000
Date	1,000	1,000
Length of article	1,000	1,000
Gender of politician	1,000	1,000
Name of politician	1,000	1,000
Gender of author	1,000	1,000
Mention of marital status	0,957	1,000
Mention of M/F role	0,957	1,000
Stress on gender	1,000	1,000
Appearance	1,000	0,957
Age	1,000	1,000
Personality characteristics	1,000	0,787
Political information	1,000	0,843
Personal information	1,000	0,787

To be able to call a variable reliable, we must obtain a Kappa value of at least 0,700 (Krippendorff, 2018). Thus, we can deduce, from the table above, that every variable studied is reliable since the values are between 0,957 and 1,000 after the internal check and between 0,787 and 1,000 after the external audit (see Table 7). In addition, the significance level for each test was 0,000. This means that we are dealing with a significant result.

When we discuss the reliability of a study, we should never forget to discuss the generalizability. In our case, we are dealing with a snapshot instead of a longitudinal study, where we compare political reporting on both male and female politicians in popular and quality newspapers. The period is one month after the formation of the Flemish coalition. Since we are dealing with such a snapshot, we cannot assume that our results will apply in every case. To guarantee generalizability, a comparison should be made over a longer period of time.

5. RESULTS

5.1. NUMERICAL REPRESENTATION

Of the 760 articles, 519 concern male politicians (68,3%) and 125 relate to women (16,4%). The other 116 articles mention both male and female representatives (15,3%). If we look at the number of specific mentions (n = 1096), we observe how male politicians are mentioned 819 times (74,7%). Their female colleagues occur only 277 times (25,3%). Therefore, in line with the aforementioned literature, this study reports a clear numerical underrepresentation of female representatives (Niven, 2005; Heldman, Carroll & Olson, 2005; Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007; Adcock, 2010; Vos, 2013; GMMP, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

If we compare these numbers with the gender division within the Flemish government, the underrepresentation persists. The Flemish government consists of six men (66,6%) and three women (33,3%). If we take this as a measure of how often women should appear in the media, there is an 8% deficit. Women are thus less visible in the media than we would initially expect.

Table 8: Numerical Representation - Articles

Male	Female	M/V	Total
519 (68,3%)	125 (16,4%)	116 (15,3%)	760 (100%)

Table 9: Numerical Representation – Individual Mentions

Male	Female	Total
819 (74,7%)	277 (25,3%)	1096 (100%)

A possible explanation for this imbalance in reporting is the presence of more male deputy prime ministers. Hilde Crevits is the only female deputy prime minister in the present Flemish Government. In addition, the only (former) party president¹, Wouter Beke, and the Flemish Prime Minister, Jan Jambon, are both men as well. Party presidents, deputy prime ministers, and prime ministers belong to the most important class of the so-called political elite. As a result, they receive more media attention than the other ministers as they often have more valuable information to tell (Midtbø, 2011).

¹ On October 8, 2019, Wouter Beke was replaced as party president by Cindy Franssen and Griet Smaers. They became party presidents *ad interim* until the appointment of current party president Joachim Coens.

An analysis of the news source shows how popular newspapers report less often on female politicians (n = 131; 25,2%) than quality newspapers (n = 146; 25,35%). However, the small difference is negligible and not statistically significant, according to our analysis ($X^2 = 0,003$; $p = 0,953$).

Table 10: Quality Newspapers Versus Popular Newspapers

	Male		Female		Total	
Quality newspapers	430	(74,65%)	146	(25,35%)	576	(100%)
Popular newspapers	389	(74,8%)	131	(25,2%)	520	(100%)
Total	819	(74,7%)	277	(25,3%)	1096	(100%)

Related to the numerical representation is the length of the news items. The cross-table below shows how male (26,7%) and female politicians (30,3%) are most often represented in the 400 to 599-word category. The other length categories largely correspond as well. For example, 8,3% of the articles on women can be placed in the longest length category of more than 1000 words, while the same can be said for 11,4% of the articles on male politicians. We can place 21,1 % of the 'male' entries in the shortest length category of 0 to 199 words. This was the case for 20,6 % of female representatives' mentions. Men are better represented in both the shortest and longest length categories, while women are the majority in the intermediate categories. The small difference in item length between male and female politicians is not statistically significant ($X^2 = 5,412$; $p = 0,368$).

Table 11: Length of the Article

	Male		Female		Total	
0 – 199	173	(21,1%)	57	(20,6%)	230	(21%)
200 – 399	167	(20,4%)	61	(22%)	228	(20,8%)
400 – 599	219	(26,7%)	84	(30,3%)	303	(27,6%)
600 – 799	100	(12,2%)	37	(13,3%)	137	(12,5%)
800 - 999	67	(8,2%)	15	(6,5%)	82	(7,5%)
≥ 1000	93	(11,4%)	23	(8,3%)	116	(10,6%)
Total	819	(100%)	277	(100%)	1096	(100%)

The average number of words per article is 556,31. On average, female politicians are assigned slightly fewer words (516,24) than their male colleagues (569,87). However, this difference is limited. The smallest article consisted of 33 words, while the longest was 3927 words. Both articles related to a combination of female and male politicians.

The most notable part of a newspaper article is the title. Anyone browsing a newspaper will hardly be able to overlook this part. That is why we also pay attention to how often a particular politician is mentioned in the title of an article. Here we see a clear difference between female and male politicians. While 86 titles (7,85%) point out male ministers, this is only 18 times (1,64%) the case for women. This difference is, according to our analysis, statistically significant ($X^2 = 3,861$; $p = 0,049$).

With these findings, we confirm the presence of an unequal representation for female politicians. We can, therefore, accept the hypothesis 'female ministers are less visible in the Flemish written press than their male counterparts.'

5.2. SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

5.2.1. PRIVATE SPHERE

Any reference to the marital status and the mother or father role is interpreted as an indication of the private sphere. If this occurs more often in the case of female politicians, this subconsciously refers to the old-fashioned distinction in which women belong to the private sphere and men to the public sphere. It implies the idea that women do not 'belong' in politics as it is an integral part of the public sphere (Wahl-Jorgensen & Ye, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

Such a reference is found in 23 cases (2%). Twelve (1,09%) of these refer to a politician's marital status and eleven (1%) to the mother or father role. If we divide these figures by gender, we see that eleven (1,34%) refer to the marital status of male politicians and seven (0,85%) to their responsibilities as a father. The marital status of female representatives is only emphasised once (0,36%), and their mother role is mentioned four times (1,44%) in total. No statistically significant differences based on gender were noted for both the marital status ($X^2 = 1,844$; $p = 0,175$) and the mother and father role ($X^2 = 0,724$; $p = 0,395$). This contradicts the literature we discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation (van Zoonen, 1998; Wahl-Jorgensen & Ye, 2015; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). The hypothesis 'the private sphere is mentioned more often in articles about female politicians than those about male politicians' is therefore rejected.

We do not notice a significant difference between the popular and quality newspapers when mentioning the marital status ($X^2 = 1,798$; $p = 0,180$) and the mother or father role ($X^2 = 2,848$; $p = 0,910$).

Table 12: Mention of the Private Sphere

	Male (819)		Female (277)		Total (1096)	
Marital status	11	(1,34%)	1	(0,36%)	12	(1,09%)
Mother or father role	7	(0,85%)	4	(1,44%)	11	(1%)

Remarkably, we do find evidence that women's private lives are more often cited as a 'source of conflict,' while men's family life is more commonly viewed as a 'source of support' (Gallagher, 2001). The children of Matthias Diependaele and Benjamin Dalle are usually mentioned as an extra motivational factor. Hilde Crevits, on the other hand, is asked several times about how she combines her life as a mother with her life as a politician. One journalist, for example, points out that the marriage of her son coincided with the landing phase of the new Flemish Government while he emphasises the waving daughter of Matthias Diependaele when he took the oath as minister. Both Benjamin Dalle and Hilde Crevits, however, indicate that their family always comes first and that they do not experience the shared responsibility between the public and private sphere as something difficult.

5.2.2. FOCUS ON GENDER

The explicit mention of a politician's gender includes words such as 'man' and 'woman.' References to male and female politicians via mergers with these words are also included in our analysis.

Such referrals were found in 1,7% (n = 19) of all 1096 items. This happens about as often in the case of male representatives (n = 11; 1,34%) as in articles about female politicians (n = 8; 2,89%). The vast majority of references to both male and female ministers are based on English-language compositions such as 'leading lady' in the case of Hilde Crevits. Jan Jambon, on the other hand, is often addressed as 'action man' while Benjamin Dalle is praised as the 'coming man' and a 'poster boy.' Such references evoke associations with the American press and, according to Joke D'Heer en Sarah Van Leuven (2019), result in more popularizing and trivializing reporting. In no case is there any negative connotation given to a specific gender by a journalist or editor.

Table 13: Focus on Gender

	Male (891)		Female (277)		Total (1096)	
Focus on gender	11	(1,34%)	8	(2,89%)	19	(1,73%)

According to our previous literature research, female legislators are often given the prefix ‘woman’ to mark them out as ‘different to the traditional (male) politician’ (Ross & Comrie, 2012). Nevertheless, this does not seem to be the case in our study as the difference between male and female ministers and the focus on their gender is not statistically significant ($X^2 = 2,900$; $p = 0,890$). The hypothesis ‘the gender of female politicians is mentioned more often in the media’ is thus rejected (Ross & Comrie, 2012).

There is no statistically significant difference between the coverage of popular and quality newspapers ($X^2 = 0,847$; $p = 0,357$).

5.2.3. APPEARANCE AND AGE

In 57 instances (5,2%), media referred to external features. This includes a politician’s origin, clothing, and physical attitude. Forty-six of those references were about the appearance of a male politician, while 11 of them related to the image of a female representative.

Table 14: Mention of Appearance

	Male (891)		Female (277)		Total (1096)	
Mention of appearance	46	(5,16%)	11	(3,97%)	57	(5,2%)

Zuhal Demir’s Kurdish heritage is noted, and Benjamin Dalle is described multiple times as CD&V’s new ‘poster boy’ for his ‘good looks.’ Jan Jambon, on the other hand, is mentioned as an ‘imposing, inelegant figure’ and journalists refer multiple times to his ‘literal and figurative big shoes’ that need to be filled. A reference is also made to his rolled-up shirt sleeves. Especially the appearance of Deputy Prime Minister Hilde Crevits cannot escape reviews. Journalists talk about her ‘beautiful eyes,’ but also the ‘dark circles around them’ do not go unnoticed. Two reporters also comment on her hair that ‘has been brushed in such a way that they believe an announcement would follow that she wants to succeed Queen Mathilde.’

However, no statistically significant difference is noted ($X^2 = 1,137$; $p = 0,286$). The hypothesis that the appearance of women is emphasised more often than the looks of their male counterparts in modern media is therefore rejected. Nor can we detect a statistically significant difference between popular and quality newspapers in this area ($X^2 = 0,081$; $p = 0,776$).

In addition, we can also draw conclusions about the references to the age of politicians, which often also indirectly says something about their appearance. Apart from the numerical indication of age, this study also examined implicit references such as ‘young’ and

'old.' Of the 1096 cases, 28 refer to the age of the subject. Of these, 23 related to male politicians and 5 to female ministers.

Table 15: Mention of Age

	Male (891)		Female (277)		Total (1096)	
Mention of age	23	(2,58%)	5	(1,8%)	28	(2,6%)

More than half of those references were about Benjamin Dalle's age. However, at 37, he is only 3 years younger than Matthias Diependaele and only 2 years younger than Zuhair Demir. Journalists talk about his 'fresh face' and describe him as a 'young talent' or someone who 'brings rejuvenation to the government.' One explanation we can give for this is his relative obscurity and status as a political novice. Despite being head of his party's political research department since 2016, this minister post is the first political mandate he has taken on.

No statistically significant difference was noted between men or women. The hypothesis that the age of women is emphasised more often than the age of their male colleagues is therefore rejected ($X^2 = 0,837$; $p = 0,360$).

However, our results do show that popular newspapers ($n = 20$; 1,82%) pay significantly more attention than quality newspapers ($n = 8$; 0,73%) to the age of politicians, regardless of gender ($X^2 = 6,628$; $p = 0,010$). We have no clear explanation for this.

5.2.4. PERSONALITY TRAITS

In 67 cases (6,1%), there is a reference made to the personality of a politician. Fifty-seven of these concern articles about male politicians. In only 10 cases do journalists refer to a personality trait of a female minister. According to our analysis, this difference is statistically significant ($X^2 = 4,046$; $p = 0,044$).

There is no statistically significant difference between the coverage of popular and quality newspapers ($X^2 = 2,136$; $p = 0,144$).

Table 16: Mention of Personality Traits

	Male (891)		Female (277)		Total (1096)	
Mention of personality	57	(6,4%)	10	(3,61%)	67	(6,1%)

The literature states that 'female' characteristics, such as compassion and fairness, are equally common among male and female politicians. Yet, male representatives seem to benefit more often from these attributes than their female colleagues. As a result, male politicians take advantage of both 'female' and 'male' gender stereotypes such as competence, assertiveness, and self-confidence (Schneider & Bos, 2013). These 'male' personality traits are rarely attributed to women. If this does happen, these politicians are often perceived negatively by the media and their readers (Banwart, 2010).

In the articles analysed, typical 'feminine' traits are indeed attributed to male politicians. Jan Jambon, for instance, is seen as 'hardworking,' but 'vulnerable' and Bart Somers is praised for his 'ability to compromise.' Hilde Crevits, on the other hand, is described as 'strong,' a typically masculine quality. However, no negative connotation is given to this.

Yet, female politicians are mainly fitted with stereotypical traits, and male representatives are linked to typically male personality traits. Hilde Crevits, Zuhair Demir, and Lydia Peeters, for example, are described as 'honest,' 'cautious,' 'compassionate,' and 'caring,' while male politicians have a 'strong personality' and show signs of 'leadership.' In addition, men are also considered 'ambitious,' 'articulate,' and 'competent' (Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989; Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Kahn, 1994a; Huddy & Capelos, 2002). Most of the stereotypical 'masculine' characteristics and the stereotypical 'feminine' features are regarded as positive. None of the personality traits receive a clear negative connotation.

5.2.5. POLITICAL AND PERSONAL INFORMATION

The last part regarding the substantive representation concerns the mention of political and personal information.

Political information was reported in 83% of the cases. This concerns information about their political offices, political jobs, the party to which they belong, and other politically-related activities. Political info was reported more often among female politicians (n = 229; 82,67%) than among male representatives (n = 681; 76,43%). However, the difference is not statistically significant ($X^2 = 0,034$; $p = 0,854$). The hypothesis 'political information is more often mentioned concerning male politicians as opposed to female politicians' is, therefore, rejected.

In the case of a small number of politicians, personal information was also provided (n = 47; 4,3%). This includes information about their studies, non-political jobs, and hobbies. Reporters, for instance, speak about Jan Jambon's love for the opera, Ben Weyts' long study career, and Benjamin Dalle's West Flemish roots. Here, personal information was

mentioned slightly more regarding male ministers (n = 37; 5,15%). Personal information regarding female politicians was mentioned 10 times (3,61%). Although the difference is not statistically significant ($X^2 = 0,415$; $p = 0,519$), the results are still interesting as the low figure for personal information among both male and female representatives contradicts the statement of personalization within the political world (van Zoonen, 1998). Nevertheless, the hypothesis 'personal information is more often mentioned in the case of male politicians as opposed to female politicians' is rejected. There is no statistically significant difference between the coverage of popular and quality newspapers concerning both political ($X^2 = 0,131$; $p = 0,717$) and personal information ($X^2 = 0,258$; $p = 0,612$).

Table 17: Mention of Political and Personal Information

	Male (n = 891)		Female (n = 277)		Total (n = 1096)	
Political info	681	(76,43%)	229	(82,67%)	910	(83%)
Personal info	37	(5,15%)	10	(3,61%)	47	(4,3%)

6. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

The lasting interest of academics to analyse the nature of political communication and representation continues to evoke active discussions about who is responsible for 'the moveable feast of the news agenda' – journalists, editors, or politicians (Ross & Comrie, 2012). Several explanations are provided when looking at previous literature.

We can link the statements found to individual characteristics of politicians on the one hand, and the characteristics of media reporting on the other. If the political characteristics of male and female politicians can explain the gender bias, the more limited attention paid to female representatives is due to a distortion in the political world itself. If this is not the case and the characteristics of mass media influence the attention for female politicians, we can speak of a real media bias (Vos, 2012).

According to Debby Vos (2012), this dichotomy corresponds to the distinction between supply and demand. On the demand side, there may be a real disadvantage concerning women if journalists, consciously or not, choose female representatives less often as an important news source. The supply side, on the other hand, suffers from a shortage of women with a certain news value in the political world.

The influence of political parties is mentioned as a third possible cause for the differences in representation between the two genders (Lühiste & Banducci, 2016).

6.1. MEDIA BIAS

Researchers within feminist media studies mainly hold the dominance of men on the news production side responsible for the inequality in representation. A male-dominated editorial would supposedly lead to a male-dominated newspaper (D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). This proposition contains the idea that male journalists report differently than their female colleagues, including about women and specifically female politicians.

When David Hugh Weaver and Cleveland Wilhoit (1996) analysed journalists' self-selected examples of their 'best work,' they found that female journalists cited, on average, more female sources than did their male colleagues. The same results can be found in a content analysis of three southern USA newspapers (Zoch & Turk, 1998).

If we look at research from the past decades, we see that James Devitt (2002) also noticed a correlation between the reporting of male journalists and the stereotypical representation of female politicians, something that was not found among female reporters. This is because journalists tend to quote or select sources that are most like themselves (Zoch & Turk, 1998). He concluded that female journalists place the same emphasis on

personal elements among male and female politicians. Male reporters, on the other hand, focus more on the personal lives of women (Devitt, 2002).

Some authors argue that because of their gender socialization, female reporters use a different value pattern, leading to greater diversity in their choice of topics and news sources. In this case, we speak of a gender model, in which women are socialised differently in the editorial staff and, therefore, use different working methods (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003).

If these statements are correct, the predominance of male journalists does indeed contribute to the gender bias: less attention for female politicians, as well as more personal reporting on them (Vos, 2012).

Is this so-called male dominance truly present in our current newsrooms? Yes. The GMMP, being the most exhaustive research project based on global longitudinal analysis, demonstrates how internationally only 37% of visible reporters (e.g. in the byline) are women. The difference in gender distribution is even greater for printed newspapers (35%). If we look at Belgium, the most recent data show equal results. About 34% of reporters are female (D’Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019).

Our research shows a similar picture (see Table 18). Of the 760 articles consulted, 46,1% were written by male journalists, while only 10,4% were written by a woman. About 2% of the pieces were written by a combination of both male and female journalists. 41,6% of the articles had no known author.

Table 18: Gender of Author

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	350	46,1%
Female	79	10,4%
Male & female	15	2%
No known identity	316	41,6%
Total	760	100%

In recent years, the number of female journalists has risen steadily in many western countries. In some, they even reached a ‘critical mass’ (Byerly, 2013; Franks, 2013). Besides, women form the majority in most journalism education (Ross & Carter, 2011; Franks, 2013). However, this does not necessarily mean that the work environment is changing as well. This has to do with several structural obstacles (D’Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019). Vertical gender segregation, for example, makes it more difficult for women to establish a management position where they can introduce change regarding

the news agenda (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Horizontal segregation, on the other hand, ensures that male journalists are more often responsible for hard news topics such as politics, while their female colleagues write about subjects such as health and social issues (see Figure 1).

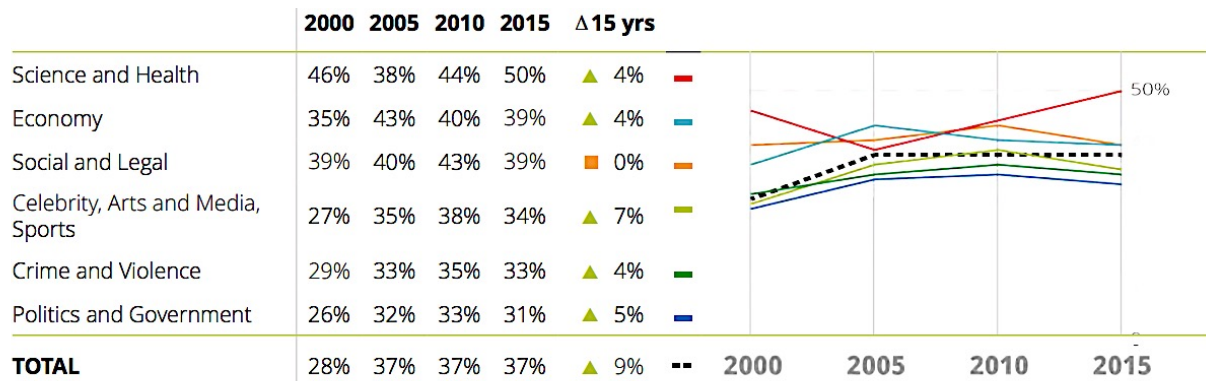


Figure 1: Stories by Female Reporters, by Major Topics (GMMP, 2015)

However, other researchers are not convinced of the gender model but assume a job model instead. Men and women would not use any other news values because they have the same organizational experience. Both of them are socialised within the newsroom and equally adopt existing value patterns (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003). Male and female journalists mainly use the same selection criteria. Therefore, more female reporters would contribute little to the number of female news sources (Vos, 2012).

The second argument put forward to contradict the gender model are the organizational factors of the newsroom (van Zoonen, 1998). According to Liesbet van Zoonen (1998), team efforts play a much more important role than individual endeavours. It is 'systemic constraints and other influential factors' who shape news items, 'beyond the worldview of the people directly involved' (Dimmick & Coit, 1982).

Other studies indicate that gender does influence the news but in the opposite direction. Kim Fridkin Kahn and Edie Goldenberg (1991), for example, found an uneven representation of female politicians, with female journalists more often using stereotypical female characteristics to describe female candidates than their male colleagues.

When we look at our data, no significant relationship between the gender of journalists and (under)representation is found ($\chi^2 = 9,580$, $p = 0,144$).

Because of these varying results, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions about the influence of a journalist's gender on the representation of female politicians in newspapers.

6.2. POLITICAL BIAS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLITICIAN

It is also possible that the supply side explains the underrepresentation of female politicians in the news. Politicians want to be featured in the news, but not all are equally successful.

Whether someone is mentioned in the media often depends on his or her news value since journalists base their news selection on some unwritten laws to determine whether an event or topic is 'newsworthy' (Meyer & Hinchman, 2002). Different personal and political characteristics of politicians influence their news value. If this is the case, no media bias discriminates against female politicians, but the underrepresentation in the news is simply a consequence of a certain political bias. After all, women are still not equal to men in the political world as they often hold lower positions (Vos, 2012).

When journalists select their stories, the power of a politician plays an important role. In the original work of Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge (1965), a person's power determines how relevant he or she is. The more power a certain politician has, the more influence his or her actions have, and, therefore, the more relevant he or she is (Schoenbach, De Ridder & Lauf, 2001). This power is generally determined by the position of a politician. Political leaders commit concrete actions and often possess exclusive information, which makes them newsworthy sources (Midtbø, 2011). Ministers, party leaders, and heads of government belong to this powerful political elite and are therefore receiving more attention.

This is also evident from our results (see Table 19). 260 articles were written about the Flemish Prime Minister, Jan Jambon (23,7%). This gives him a good lead over the three Deputy Prime Ministers as only 161 articles were written about Ben Weyts (14,7%), 125 about Hilde Crevits (11,4%), and 102 about Bart Somers (9,3%). However, there are some striking results to be noted among the other six ministers. Wouter Beke, for example, has a lot more mentions (n = 158, 14,4%) in our five Flemish newspapers than Deputy Prime Ministers Hilde Crevits and Bart Somers. This can be related to his position as (former) party president of CD&V at the time. Benjamin Dalle's low number of references is mainly due to the domains for which he is responsible. The Flemish minister of Brussels, Youth, and Media rarely receives much media attention.

Table 19: Number of Articles per Minister

Jan Jambon	260	23,7%
Ben Weyts	161	14,7%
Wouter Beke	158	14,4%
Hilde Crevits	125	11,4%
Bart Somers	102	9,3%
Matthias Diependaele	82	7,5%
Zuhal Demir	82	7,5%
Lydia Peeters	72	6,6%
Benjamin Dalle	54	4,9%
Total	1096	100%

However, this last remark requires some nuance. ‘Holding an elite position initially overrules gender bias,’ as journalists cannot simply ignore female party presidents or female heads of state (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015). Nevertheless, when looking at the amount of media attention, academics still observe a distinct gender bias. This signifies the stubbornness of certain gender bias mechanisms. Even in countries such as Belgium, with a very high UNDP Gender Equality Index score, this type of bias remains visible. Accordingly, we can assume that this will also be the case in countries that are ‘far less successful in achieving gender equality’ as gender bias operates in subtle ways (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015).

Another political characteristic associated with a politician’s power and relevance is his experience in politics, also known as seniority. Politicians who have been in the business for some time increase their news value in two ways. First, they have better contacts with journalists and better understand the media logic that determines news selection (Van Aelst, Sehata & Van Dalen, 2010). Secondly, journalists attach more importance to experienced politicians because those politicians can leave a bigger mark on policy and are, therefore, seen as more important than their newer colleagues (Tresch, 2009). Research shows that established politicians do indeed get more media exposure but, according to Tor Midtbø (2011), this attention often turns out to be more negative and critical than articles about less experienced politicians.

Given that women’s political representation has only increased in the last decade, the lack of female politicians as fixed values in politics may explain the gender bias. However, this possible link between experience, gender, and media attention has not yet been thoroughly investigated (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015).

Looking at our data, there seems to be some truth to this statement. Yet, it does not apply in the case of Minister Peeters. Despite her extensive political experience of almost twenty years, only 72 articles (6,6%) were written about her. That is a big difference compared to politicians who have only been present in the political space for less than a decade (see Table 20).

Table 20: First Year of Holding a Political Mandate of Each Minister

Bart Somers	1994
Hilde Crevits	2000
Lydia Peeters	2001
Wouter Beke	2001
Jan Jambon	2007
Ben Weyts	2008
Matthias Diependaele	2009
Zuhal Demir	2009
Benjamin Dalle	2019

Another explanation cited by Marc Hooghe, Laura Jacobs, and Ellen Claes (2015) is the fact that women participate less actively and therefore produce less newsworthy content. However, this is not the case in Flanders. Looking at parliamentary records, it seems that men and women participate equally (Hooghe, Jacobs & Claes, 2015).

Nowadays, the majority of top politicians realise that ‘success in influencing and being visible in the media’ is an essential condition to gain political success (Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011). This can be accomplished, first of all, by upholding ‘frequent and close’ contact with political reporters and, secondly, by adapting their behaviour and role as politicians to the attitudes and conditions of modern media (Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011).

There is no one-sided opinion on how best to approach the media. While several politicians are very keen to please editors and journalists to appear on their front page, others are becoming more critical and are actively looking for a way to make the media report more honestly on political issues and politicians (Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011).

Such differences can have serious implications for the way politicians are portrayed and, therefore, their success in influencing the reader. If such differences are related to gender, for example, when men are more willing to adapt to media logic than their female colleagues, this may explain the underrepresentation of women in modern media (Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011).

When we ask journalists why female politicians are less quoted in the press, they link this to the fact that women are more 'reluctant' than men as a news source (Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011). This reluctance may be related to 'modesty or fear of exposure in the media' (Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011).

Whatever the cause, if women continue to appear in the news less often, it could have major negative consequences for their political influence (Aalberg & Strömbäck, 2011).

6.3. PARTY LOGIC

Maarja Lühiste and Susan Banducci (2016) also mention 'party logic' as a possible explanation for the underrepresentation of female politicians in the press. The main goal of political parties is to win vote shares and eventually a place in the coalition. That is why political parties shed more light on candidates who have the best chance of winning and try to make them visible through the media (Lühiste & Banducci, 2016).

When other factors remain equal, such as political experience, parties may be 'more likely to put forward male candidates' assuming male candidates, based on past results, have a greater possibility of leading the party to electoral success (Lühiste & Banducci, 2016). Besides selecting their most prominent candidates, parties also have a large influence on their electoral list ranking. Those positions have a major impact on the amount of media coverage a political candidate will receive. Parties with a majority or plurality system decide in which constituency a candidate will run. In PR list systems, on the other hand, there are ranked electoral lists, and parties decide on a candidate's viability by his or her electoral list standing. Maarja Lühiste and Susan Banducci (2016) suggest that this 'party-determined viability' will have an important impact on the amount of news coverage a candidate receives. Therefore, if women are placed in a less favourable spot than men, their election list rankings would make them less newsworthy and 'more obscure to media attention' (Lühiste & Banducci, 2016). For the Flemish elections, the electoral lists must always consist of an equal number of men and women. In addition, the first two candidates on each list must be of the opposite sex. Incomplete lists must also comply with these provisions. Nevertheless, this does not mean that women automatically get a good place on these lists, and the previous statements may therefore also apply to the nine Flemish ministers.

7. DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

After discussing the results and possible causes of the numerical and, to a lesser extent, substantive underrepresentation of female politicians in the Flemish press, we can present some recommendations and guidelines for future research on the subject.

This study focused on 760 news items concerning nine Flemish ministers. Very few references were found to the private sphere, appearance, gender, and personality traits of those politicians. The use of a larger sample could, therefore, be an interesting addition to this study as this can offer more possibilities to generate meaningful conclusions.

Another shortcoming of our study is the fact that this is a snapshot. The articles were all published in one month. Extensive longitudinal research is needed to make a generalizable conclusion. Such extensive research has not yet been done on the underrepresentation of female politicians in the Flemish press. Nevertheless, it can provide us with interesting information. Do we get the same results after several months of government formation, or are female representatives pushed even more into the background? Can we notice differences in the representation of women before and after an election period? Only longitudinal research can answer these questions.

Future research should examine whether the same results are collected elsewhere, as the current study only deals with one region: Flanders.

It is also possible that other characteristics of politicians, which we did not test, contribute to a possible gender bias in the media. This study focused on the political and social backgrounds of politicians. However, their (perceived) competence and efforts can increase their newsworthiness and visibility as well. To investigate this effect, we must shift attention to what politicians do instead of who they are (Midtbø, 2011). So far, no study has examined the impact of political activity on the representation of male and female politicians (Vos, 2012).

In our research, we discuss articles with many different focal points. It contains short and neutral pieces, but also in-depth political analyses that focus on a certain aspect of a politician. In short, the study contains a diverse array of articles. It can, therefore, be interesting to investigate whether differences in representation occur depending on the type of article (D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). We can include other forms of written media in such an analysis. *Knack*, for instance, often contains comprehensive opinion pieces while *Dag Allemaal* focuses more on the personal characteristics of a politician, such as their love life. A comparison like this can provide valuable information.

Not only the type of article can influence the underrepresentation of representatives. The layout has to play an important role as well. How does an editor present a story? In this

study, we only looked at the text itself. However, images or the place of an article (front page or not) could have an important impact on a politician's visibility as well.

Media representation of female politicians covers more than just newspapers. It is, therefore, interesting to include television news, radio news, and news websites when studying possible underrepresentation. Do we see similar trends in these media forms? According to the GMMP (2015), that would indeed be the case. However, little research has been done on this specific subject. Marc Hooghe, Laura Jacobs, and Ellen Claes (2017) explored gender bias in newsreels, but the last broadcasts date from 2011, about nine years ago. We, therefore, have no insight into the current situation. In Flanders, research has also been conducted on how news site Vice represents women. Nevertheless, this study deals with women in general, rather than politicians (D'Heer, Vergotte, De Vuyst & Van Leuven, 2019). Research into Flemish radio news has not yet taken place (D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019).

From previous literature research, we know that many journalists are not aware of the way they construct frames. What we know even less about is how readers 'deconstruct' those frames (Zoch & Turk, 1998). An interesting angle to explore is, therefore, how readers speak about female politicians during online discussions that arise in the comment section of online articles on social media, such as Facebook. We can look at how the underrepresentation of female politicians manifests itself in different cultures and how we can link them to national media portrayals (Humprecht & Esser, 2017). This form of media is more topical than ever since political parties and individual politicians have never devoted more time to their social media presence.

Finally, we should consider the dominant use of quantitative content analysis in studies on the representation of female politicians. Although quantitative analyses provide the necessary basis for determining whether an unequal representation is present, the obtained results have rarely been discussed in greater depth (D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Supplementing quantitative research with, for example, interviews or experiments can help us to better understand the problem. We can gain a better understanding of the attitudes of politicians towards the media and how they may differ between male and female (potential) representatives. Furthermore, we can find out what female politicians like Zuhair Demir, Hilde Crevits, and Lydia Peeters themselves think of their representation in the media. In addition, likely causes for female underrepresentation can be distinguished by talking to politicians, journalists, and academics about the subject.

In short, the underrepresentation of certain politicians is a broad research domain with countless possibilities that we should further investigate and keep exploring.

8. CONCLUSION

This study addressed the numerical and substantive representation of female and male politicians in newspaper coverage through in-depth quantitative content analysis. The focus was on the representation of politicians at the level of the Flemish Government.

Following previous research, the analyses reveal an uneven representation of female politicians compared to male representatives.

75% of the mentions discuss a man, while female politicians only appear in 25% of the reports. These figures do not correspond to the gender distribution within the Flemish Government (66,6% versus 33,3%) and, thus, suggest an unequal numerical representation of female ministers in the Flemish press. The average length of the articles is roughly the same for both sexes. On average, women get about 50 words less per article, which is no alarming difference when talking about articles of more than 500 words. Yet, they are mentioned less in the title of those articles (1,64% versus 7,85%). We can, therefore, accept the hypothesis 'female ministers are less visible in the Flemish written press than their male counterparts.'

However, we have to paint a more nuanced picture concerning the substantive representation of women. This study reports a greater number of references to the personality traits of male politicians. As stated in previous literature, men are assigned both female and male personality characteristics. In the case of female representatives, journalists only focus on female traits. Nevertheless, other differences do not appear to be statistically significant. Our analysis, therefore, contradicts most previous studies done on the subject.

There are hardly any significant differences in the news source. Only age or age category references are more often reported in popular newspapers than quality papers. There is no significant difference between quality newspapers and popular newspapers in terms of numerical representation.

If we look at the results in a qualitative way, we still see traces of certain gender stereotypes. As an illustration, we find evidence that women's private lives are more often cited as a 'source of conflict,' while men's family life is more commonly viewed as a 'source of support' (Gallagher, 2001). We also notice a different focus among female politicians compared to men in terms of appearance. To gain a better insight into this, supplementary qualitative content analysis is recommended.

Some possible explanations for these stereotypes can be found in the media, the political world itself, the traits of politicians, and the political parties they belong to. Here too, an additional qualitative study is advisable.

In contrast to comparable studies, we find very little references to substantive variables such as the private sphere, gender, and appearance. A possible explanation for this can be found in the large proportion of American studies into the representation of female politicians. The media system in the USA is part of the liberal model, which, compared to the Belgian democratic corporatist model, is characterised by a greater degree of commercialization and personalization (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; D'Heer & Van Leuven, 2019). Another cause can be found in our relatively small dataset of 760 articles and the short period of one month, which means that we have to be careful in generalizing our results.

Based on the conducted research, we can conclude that substantive and above all numerical representation of female politicians is and remains present in the Flemish press landscape. This is alarming because of the negative impact unequal representation has on the electoral prospects of female politicians, their credibility, and the political interest of young girls and women.

There is still a lot of work to be done to reduce this unequal visibility and to eliminate it in the long term. This is the main responsibility of both the media and the political world. However, we as readers must be aware of the unconscious stereotypes we may encounter in the mass media as well.

REFERENCES

- Aalberg, T., & Strömbäck, J. (2011). Media-driven men and media-critical women? An empirical study of gender and MP's relationships with the media in Norway and Sweden. *International Political Science Review*, 32(2), 167-187.
- Adams, W.C. (1975). Candidate characteristics, office of elections, and voter responses. *Experimental Study of Politics*, 4, 77-88.
- Aday, S., & Devitt, J. (2001). Style over substance: newspaper coverage of Elizabeth Dole's presidential bid. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 6(2), 52-73.
- Adcock, C. (2010). The politician, the wife, the citizen, and her newspaper. *Feminist Media Studies*, 10(2), 135-159.
- Alexander, D., & Andersen, K. (1993). Gender as a factor in the attribution of leadership traits. *Political Research Quarterly*, 46(3), 527-545.
- Altheide, D.L., & Snow, R.P. (1979). *Media logic*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Atkeson, L.R. (2003). Not all cues are created equal: the conditional impact of female candidates on political engagement. *Journal of Politics*, 65(4), 1040-1061.
- Atkeson, L.R. & Krebs, T.B. (2008). Press coverage of mayoral candidates: The role of gender in news reporting and campaign issue. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 239-252.
- Babbie, E. (2001). *The practice of social research* (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Baird, J. (2004). *Media tarts: How the Australian press frames female politicians*. Melbourne: Scribe Publications.
- Banwart, M.C., Bystrom, D.G., & Robertson, T.A. (2003). From the primary to the general election: a comparative analysis of candidate media coverage in mixed-gender 2000 races for governor and U.S. Senate. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 46(5), 658-676.
- Banwart, M.C. (2010). Gender and candidate communication: Effects of stereotypes in the 2008 election. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(3), 265-283.
- Bartels, L.M. (1987). Candidate choice and the dynamics of the presidential nominating process. *American Journal of Political Science*, 31, 1-3.
- Bell, A. (1991). *The Language of News Media*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bennett, W.L., & Entman, R.M. (2001). *Mediated Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bernstein, A. (2002). Is it time for a victory lap? Changes in the media coverage of women in sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 37(4), 415-428.

Best, D.L., & Williams, J.E. (1990). *Measuring sex stereotypes: A thirty-nation study*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Blumler, J., & Kavanagh, D. (1999). The third age of political communication: Influences and features. *Political Communication*, 16(3), 209-230.

Borjesson, F. (1995). Ladies "excuse me" – gender problems in the written press. *Language and gender*, 113-122.

Braden, M. (1996). *Women, politicians, and the media*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.

Brady, H.E., & Johnston, R. (1987). What's the primary message: Horserace of issue journalism. In Orren, G.R., & Polsby, N.W., (Eds.), *Media and momentum*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Brants, K., de Vreese, C., Möller, J., & van Praag, P. (2010). The real spiral of cynicism? Symbiosis and mistrust between politicians and journalists. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 15(1), 25-40.

Burns, N., Lehman Schlozman, K., & Verba, S. (2001). *The private roots of public action: gender, equality, and political participation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Byerly, C.M. (2013). *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bystrom, D. (2006). Advertising, web sites, and media coverage: Gender and communication along the campaign trail. In Carroll, S.J., & Fox, R.L. (Eds.), *Gender and elections: shaping the future of American politics* (pp. 169-188). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bystrom, D.G., Banwart, M.C., Kaid, L.L., & Robertson, T.A. (2004). *Gender and candidate communication: VideoStyle, WebStyle, NewsStyle*. New York: Routledge.

Campbell, A., Converse, P.E., Miller, W.E., & Stokes, D.E. (1960). *The American Voter*. New York: Wiley.

Campbell, D.E. & Wolbrecht, C. (2006). See Jane run: women politicians as role models for adolescents. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(2), 233-247.

Carlin, D.B. & Winfrey, K.L. (2009). Have you come a long way baby? Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and sexism in 2008 campaign coverage. *Communication Studies*, 60(4), 326-343.

Carroll, S.J., & Schreiber, R. (1997). Media coverage of women in the 103rd Congress. *Women, media, and politics*, 131-148.

Coleman, R., McCombs, M., Shaw, D., & Weaver, D. (2008) Agenda setting. In: Wahl-Jorgensen, K., & Hanitzsch, T. (Eds.) *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*. London: Routledge.

Cook, T. (1986). House members as newsmakers: The effects of televising Congress. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 11(2), 203-226.

Curnalia, R.M.L. & Mermer, D.L. (2014). The Ice Queen melted and it won her the primary: evidence of gender stereotypes and the double bind in news frames of Hillary Clinton's emotional moments. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, 15(1), 26-32.

Davis, J. (1982). Sexist bias in eight newspapers. *Journalism Quarterly*, 59(3), 456-460.

De Clercq, M., & Saeys, F. (2000). *Vrouwen in het nieuws: een analyse van de m/v aanwezigheid en beeldvorming in de Vlaamse media*. Gent: Vakgroep Communicatiewetenschappen.

De Morgen groeit met 12 procent en bereikt nu dagelijks 448.500 lezers. (2019, 18 September). *De Morgen*. <https://www.demorgen.be/tv-cultuur/de-morgen-groeit-met-12-procent-en-bereikt-nu-dagelijks-448-500-lezers~b3cd84af/>

De Pelsmacker, P., & Van Kenhove, P. (2014). *Marktonderzoek: methoden en toepassingen*. Amsterdam: Pearson Benelux.

Devitt, J. (1999). *Framing gender on the campaign trail: women's executive leadership and the press*. Washington, DC: The Women's Leadership Fund.

Devitt, J. (2002). Framing gender on the campaign trail: Female gubernatorial candidates and the press. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79(1), 445-463.

De Vuyst, S., Vertoont, S., & Van Bauwel, S. (2016). Gender inequality in Flemish news: a quantitative content analysis of the presence and portrayal of women and men in Flemish news stories. *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 44(3).

D'Heer, J. (2018, 4 October). Kranten benadelen zelf ook vrouwelijke verkiezingskandidaten. *Apache*. <https://www.apache.be/gastbijdragen/2018/10/04/kranten-benadelen-zelf-ook-vrouwelijke-verkiezingskandidaten/>

D'Heer, J., & Van Leuven, S. (2019). Eerst moeder van drie, of toch vooral politicus? Een kwantitatieve inhoudsanalyse naar de representatie van vrouwelijke politieke kandidaten in de Vlaamse pers. *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 47(2), 133-150.

D'Heer, J., Vergotte, J., De Vuyst, S., & Van Leuven, S. (2020). The bits and bytes of gender bias in online news: a quantitative content analysis of the representation of women in Vice.com. *Feminist Media Studies*, 20(2), 256-272.

Dimmick, J., & Coit, P. (1982). Levels of analysis in mass media decision making. *Communication Research*, 9(1), 3-32.

Duncan, M., Messner, M., & Williams, L. (1991). *Coverage of women's sports in four daily newspapers*. Los Angeles, CA: The Amateur Athletic Foundation.

Eide, E. (2000). *Narrespeil. Kjønn, sex og medier*. Kristiansand: Høgskoleforlaget.

Ekstrand, L.E., & Eckert, W. (1981). The impact of candidate's sex on voter choice. *Western Political Quarterly*, 34, 78-87.

Entman, R.M. (2010). Media framing biases and political power: Explaining slant in news of campaign 2008. *Journalism*, 11(4), 389-408.

Erbring, L., Goldenberg, E.N., & Miller, A.H. (1980). Front-page news and real world cues: A new look at agenda-setting by the media. *American Journal of Political Science*, 24, 16-49.

Franks, S. (2013). *Women and Journalism*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Frissen, V., Bouwman, H., & Den Boer, D. (1994). *Methodologie en statistiek voor communicatie-onderzoek*. Houten: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum.

Fogarty, B.J. (2012). Local newspapers, house members, and source usage. *Social Science Journal*, 49(3), 275-283.

Gallagher, M. (2001). *Gender setting: new agendas for media monitoring and advocacy*. London: Zed Books.

Gallup, P. (1984). Women in politics. *Report*, 228, 2-14.

Galtung, J., & Ruge, M.H. (1965). The structure of foreign news. *Journal of Peace Research*, 2, 64-91.

Garcia-Blanco, I. & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2012). The discursive construction of women politicians in the European press. *Feminist Media Studies*, 12(3), 422-441.

George, C., Hartley, A., & Paris, J. (2001). The representation of female athletes in textual and visual media. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 6(2), 94-101.

Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of communication*, 26(2), 172-199.

Gibbons, V. (2007). Lights, camera, inaction? The media reporting of parliament. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 60(4), 700-708.

Gidengil, E., & Everitt, J. (2003). Talking tough: gender and reported speech in campaign news coverage. *Political Communication*, 20, 203-232.

GMMP (2015). *Who makes the news? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015*. London: World Association for Christian Communication.

Goldenberg, E.N., & Traugott, M.W. (1987). Mass media effects in recognizing and rating candidates in U.S. Senate elections. In Vermeer, J. (Ed.). *Campaigns in the News: Mass media and congressional elections*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Goodall, H. (2012). Media's influence on gender stereotypes. *Media Asia*, 39(3), 160-163.

Goodyear-Grant, E. (2013). *Gendered news: Media coverage and electoral politics in Canada*. UBC Press.

Grandy, K. (2010). Busy bee, tough mom, farmer's daughter: The Canadian business press portrayal of Annette Verschuren. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 35(1), 49-62.

Greenwald, M.S. (1990). Gender representation in newspaper business sections. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 11, 68-73.

Gunter, B. (1995). *Television and Gender Representation*. London: John Libbey & Company.

Hallin, D.C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: three models of media and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hansen, A. (2009). *Mass communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, C.A.: SAGE Publications.

Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2001). What is news? Galtung and Ruge revisited. *Journalism Studies*, 2(2), 261-280.

Heidar, K., & Saglie, J. (2002). *Hva skjer med partiene*. Oslo: Gyldendal.

Heldman, C., Carroll, S., & Olson, S. (2005). "She brought only a skirt:" Print media coverage of Elizabeth Dole's bid for the republican presidential nomination. *Political Communication*, 22(3), 315-335.

Hooghe, M., Jacobs, L., & Claes, E. (2015). Enduring gender bias in reporting on political elite positions: media coverage of female MPs in Belgian news broadcasts (2003-2011). *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 20(4), 395-414.

Huddy, L., & Capelos, T. (2002). Gender stereotyping and candidate evaluation. In Ottati, V.C., Tindale, R.S., Edwards, J., Bryant, F.B., Heath, L., Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Posavac, E.J. (Eds.), *The social psychology of politics* (pp. 29-53). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Huddy, L., & Terkildsen, N. (1993). Gender stereotypes and the perception of male and female candidates. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(1), 119-147.

Humprecht, E. & Esser, F. (2017). A glass ceiling in the online age? Explaining the underrepresentation of women in online political news. *European Journal of Communication*, 32(5), 439-456.

Jamieson, K.H. (1995). *Beyond the double bind: women and leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jenssen, A.T., & Aalberg, T. (2007). *Den Medializerte Politikken*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Kahn, K.F., & Goldenberg, E.N. (1991) Women candidates in the news: an examination of gender differences in U.S. Senate campaign coverage. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 55(2), 180-199.

Kahn, K.F. (1992). Does being male help? An investigation of the effects of candidate gender and campaign coverage on evaluations of U.S. Senate candidates. *The Journal of Politics*, 54(2), 497-517.

Kahn, K.F. (1994a). The distorted mirror: press coverage of women candidates for statewide office. *The Journal of Politics*, 56(1), 154-173.

Kahn, K.F. (1994b). Does gender make a difference? An experimental examination of sex stereotypes and press patterns in statewide campaigns. *American Journal of Political Science*, 162-195.

Kalitowski, S. (2009). Parliament for the people? Knowledge, interest, and perceptions of the Westminster parliament. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62(2), 350-363.

Kedrowski, K.M. (1996). *Media entrepreneurs and the media enterprise in the U.S. Congress*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Kittilson, M., & Fridkin, K. (2008). Gender, candidate portrayals and election campaigns: A comparative perspective. *Politics & Gender*, 4(3), 371-392.

Kondracki, N.L., Wellman, N.S., & Amundson, D.R. (2002). Content analysis: Review of methods and their applications in nutrition education. *Journal of nutrition education and behavior*, 34(4), 224-230.

Krijnen, T., & Van Bauwel, S. (2015). *Gender and Media*. London: Routledge.

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.

Krook, M.L., & O'Brien, D.Z. (2012). All the president's men? The appointment of female cabinet ministers worldwide. *The Journal of Politics*, 74(3), 840-855.

Kropf, M., & Boiney, J. (2001). The electoral glass ceiling? Gender, viability, and the news in U.S. Senate campaigns. *Women & Politics*, 23(1-2), 79-103.

La Ferle, C., Edwards, S.M., & Lee, W. (2000). Teens' use of traditional media and the internet. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 40(3), 55-65.

Larson, S.G. (2001). American women and politics in the media: A review essay. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 34(2), 227-230.

Lavie, A., & Lehman-Wilzig, S. (2003). Whose news? Does gender determine the editorial product?. *European Journal of Communication*, 18(1), 5-29.

Leeper, M.S. (1991). The impact of prejudice on female candidates: An experimental look at voter inference. *American Politics Quarterly*, 19, 248-261.

Lesaffer, P. (2018, 27 September). "Je hoeft niet per se als een macho een hele nacht door te kunnen vergaderen." Politieke concurrenten, feministische bondgenoten. *Het Nieuwsblad*, 9.

Lühiste, M., & Banducci, S. (2016). Invisible women? Comparing candidates' news coverage in Europe. *Politics & Gender*, 12(2), 223-253.

Markus, G.B. (1982). Political attitudes during an election year: A report on the 1980 NES Panel Study. *American Political Science Review*, 76, 538-560.

Markus, G.B., & Converse, P. (1979). A dynamic simultaneous equation model of electoral choice. *American Political Science Review*, 73, 1055-1070.

Mazzoleni, G., & Schulz, W. (1999). Mediatization of politics: A challenge for democracy. *Political Communication*, 16(3), 247-261.

McKee, J.P., & Sheriffs, A.C. (1957). The differential evaluation of males and females. *Journal of Personality*, 25, 356-71.

McQuail, D. (1992). *Media performance: Mass communication and the public interest*. London: Sage.

Meeks, L. (2012). Is she man enough? Women candidates, executive political offices and news coverage. *Journal of Communication*, 62(1), 175-193.

Mend, M.R., Bell, T., & Bath, L. (1976). Dynamics of attitude formation regarding women in politics. *Experimental Study of Politics*, 5, 25-39.

Mendes, K., & Carter, C. (2008). Feminist and gender media studies: A critical overview. *Sociology Compass*, 2(6), 1701-1718.

Meyer, T., & Hinchman, L. (2002). *Media democracy: How the media colonize politics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Midtbø, T. (2011). Explaining Media Attention for Norwegian MPs: A New Modelling Approach. *Scandinavian political studies*, 34(3), 226-249.

Milestone, K., & Meyer, A. (2012). *Gender and Popular Culture*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Minister van Volksgezondheid met obesitas is iet geloofwaardig. (2014, 11 October). *De Standaard*. https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20141011_01315880

Mueller, C. (1986). Nurturance and Mastery: Competing Qualifications for Women's Access to High Public Office. In Moore, G., & Spitze, G., (Eds.), *Politics and Society*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Muir, K. (2005). Political cares: gendered reporting of work and family issues in relation to Australian politicians. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 20(46), 77-90.

Nilsen, A.P. (1977). Sexism as shown through the English vocabulary. In Nilsen, A.P., Bosmagian, H., Gershuny, H.L., & Stanley, J.P. (Eds.), *Sexism and language* (pp. 27-42). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Nimmo, D., & Combs, J.E. (1983). *Mediated Political Realities*. New York: Longman.

Niven, D. (2005). Gender bias? Media coverage of women and men in Congress. In Tolleson-Rinehart, S., & Josephson, J. (Eds.). *Gender and American politics. Women, men, and the political process* (pp. 264-283). New York: Sharpe.

Potter, W.J. (1985). Gender representation in elite newspapers. *Journalism Quarterly*, 62, 636-640.

Poutanen, S., Kovalainen, A., & Jännäri, J. (2016). Construction of the female global top manager in The Economist. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, 12(2), 193-212.

Rodgers, S., & Thorson, E. (2003). A socialization perspective on male and female reporting. *Journal of Communication*, 53(4), 658-675.

Rosenkratz, P.S., Vogel, S.R., Bee, H., Broverman, I.K., & Broverman, D.M. (1968). Sex-role stereotypes and self-concepts in college students. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 32, 287-295.

Rosenwasser, S.M., & Dean, D.G. (1989). Gender role and political office: Effects of perceived masculinity/femininity of candidate and political office. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 13, 77-85.

Rosenwasser, S.M., & Seale, J. (1988). Attitudes toward a hypothetical male or female presidential candidate: A research note. *Political Psychology*, 9, 591-598.

Ross, K., & Sreberny, A. (2000). Women in the house: Media representation of British politicians. In Sreberny, A., & van Zoonen, L. (Eds.). *Gender, politics, and communication*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Ross, K., & Carter, C. (2011). Women and news: A long and winding road. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33(8), 1148-1165.

Ross, K., & Comrie, M. (2012). The rules of the (leadership) game: Gender, politics, and news. *Journalism*, 13(8), 969-984.

Sapiro, V. (1982). If U.S. Senator Baker were a woman: An experimental study of candidate images. *Political Psychology*, 3, 61-83.

Schneider, M.C. & Bos, A.L. (2013). Measuring stereotypes of female politicians. *Political Psychology*, 35(2), 245-266.

Schoenbach, K., De Ridder, J., & Lauf, E. (2001). Politicians on TV news: Getting attention in Dutch and German election campaigns. *European Journal of Political Research*, 39, 519-531.

Semetko, H., & Boomgaarden, H. (2007). Reporting Germany's 2005 Bundestag election campaign: was gender an issue? *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 12(4), 154-171.

Shor, E., van de Rijt, A., Ward, C., Blank-Gomel, A., & Skiena, S. (2014). Time trends in printed news coverage of female subjects, 1880-2008. *Journalism Studies*, 15(6), 759-773.

Sigelman, L., & Sigelman, C.K. (1984). Sexism, racism, and ageism in voting behavior: An experimental analysis. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 45, 263-69.

- Skjeie, H. (1994). Women in Norwegian politics. *Backlash iNorge*, 121-131.
- Smith, K.B. (1997). When all's fair: Signs of parity in media coverage of female candidates. *Political Communication*, 14(1), 71-82.
- Spee, S., & De Swert, K. (2005). De mannelijke norm bevestigd? Vrouwelijke politici in het televisienieuws van TV1 en VTM. In Hooghe, M., De Swert, K., & Walgrave, S. (Eds.), *Nieuws op televisie. Televisiejournals als venster op de wereld* (pp. 39-55). Leuven: Acco.
- Spence, J.T., Helmreich, R., & Stapp, J. (1974). The personal attributes questionnaire: A measure of sex role stereotypes and masculinity-femininity. *Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology*, 4, 43-44.
- Spohn, C., & Gillespie, D. (1987). Adolescents' willingness to vote for a woman for president: The effect of gender and race. *Woman and Politics*, 7, 31-49.
- Storey, J. (2015). *Cultural theory and popular culture: an introduction* (7th ed.). London & New York: Routledge.
- Sutton, L.A. (1995). Bitches and skanky hobags. In Hall, K., & Buholtz, M. (Eds.), *Gender articulated: Language and the socially constructed self* (pp. 279-296). New York: Routledge.
- Tapscott, D. (2008). *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill.
- Traugott, M.W., & Goldenberg, E.N. (1984). *Campaigning for congress*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.
- Tresch, A. (2009). Politicians in the media: Determinants of legislators' presence and prominence in Swiss Newspapers. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 14(1), 67-90.
- Tuchman, G. (1979). Women's depiction by the mass media. *Signs*, 4(3), 528-542.
- Van Aelst, P., Maddens, B., Noppe, J., & Fiers, S. (2008). Politicians in the news: media or party logic? Media attention and electoral success in the Belgian election campaign of 2003. *European Journal of Communication*, 23(2), 193-210.
- Van Aelst, P., Sehata, A., & Van Dalen, A. (2010). Members of parliament: Equal competitors for media attention? An analysis of personal contacts between MPs and political journalists in five European countries. *Political Communication*, 27, 310-325.
- Vandenbergh, H., d'Haenens, L., & Van Gorp, B. (2015). Demografische diversiteit in het Vlaamse perslandschap. *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap* 43(2): 169-185.
- Van Thiel, S. (2015). *Bestuurskundig onderzoek: een methodologische inleiding*. Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho.
- Van Zoonen, L. (1998). Finally, I have my mother back: Politicians and their families in popular culture. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 3(1), 48-64.
- Van Zoonen, L. (2002). Gendering the internet: Claims, controversies, and cultures. *European Journal of Communication*, 17(1), 5-23.

Voets, J. (2020). *OMBPM: Sessie 18/03/2020* (Slides). Retrieved June 25, 2020 from <https://ufora.ugent.be/d2l/le/content/59189/viewContent/301912/View>

Vos, D. (2012). Is gender bias een mythe? Op zoek naar verklaringen voor de beperkte aanwezigheid van vrouwelijke politici in het Vlaamse televisienieuws. *Res Publica*, 54(2), 193-217.

Vos, D. (2013). The vertical glass ceiling: Explaining female politician's underrepresentation in television news. *Communications*, 38(4), 389-410.

Vos, D. (2014). Which politicians pass the new gates and why? Explaining inconsistencies in research on news coverage of individual politicians. *International Journal of Communication*, 8, 2438-2461.

Wahl-Jorgensen, K., & Ye, W. (2015). Gender and politics. In Barnhurst, K. (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of political communication*. London/New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Walsh, C. (2001). *Gender and discourse: language and power in politics, the church and organisations*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Wauters, B., Weekers, K., & Maddens, B. (2010). Explaining the number of preferential votes for women in an open list-PR system. *Acta Politica*, 45(4), 468-490.

Weaver, D.H., Wilhoit, G.C. (1996). *The American journalist in the 1990's: US news people at the end of an era*. New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Wolfsfeld, G., Sheaffer, T. (2006). Competing actors and the construction of political news: The contest over waves in Israel. *Political Communication*, 23, 333-354.

Wood, J.T. (2011). *Gendered lives communication, gender, and culture*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Zoch, L.M. & Turk, J.V. (1998). Women making news: gender as a variable in source selection and use. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(4), 762-775.

ATTACHMENTS

APPENDIX 1: REGISTRATION FORM

1. NUMBER OF ARTICLE:

.....

2. TITLE OF ARTICLE:

.....

.....

3. NEWSPAPER:

- De Morgen
- De Standaard
- De Tijd
- Het Laatste Nieuws
- Het Nieuwsblad

4. DATE OF PUBLICATION:

.....

5. NUMBER OF WORDS:

- 0 - 199
- 200 - 399
- 400 – 599
- 600 – 799
- 800 – 999
- ≥ 1000

6. POLITICIAN:

- Jan Jambon
- Hilde Crevits
- Bart Somers
- Ben Weyts
- Zuhair Demir
- Wouter Beke
- Matthias Diependaele
- Lydia Peeters
- Benjamin Dalle

7. NAME IS MENTIONED IN TITLE:

- Yes
- No

8. GENDER OF POLITICIAN:

- Male
- Female

9. GENDER OF AUTHOR:

- Male
- Female
- No known identity

10. ARTICLE REFERS TO MARITAL STATUS:

- Yes
- No

.....
.....

11. ARTICLE REFERS TO THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER OR FATHER:

Yes

No

.....
.....

12. ARTICLE STRESSES THE GENDER:

Yes

No

.....
.....

13. ARTICLE REFERS TO APPEARANCE:

Yes

No

.....
.....

14. ARTICLE REFERS TO AGE:

Yes

No

.....
.....

15. ARTICLE REFERS TO ... PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Male
- Female
- Neutral
- Not applicable

.....
.....

16. ARTICLE REFERS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION:

- Yes
- No

.....
.....

17. ARTICLE REFERS TO POLITICAL INFORMATION:

- Yes
- No

.....
.....

APPENDIX 2: CODEBOOK

1. NUMBER OF ARTICLE

We will number each item so we can identify them more easily. For example, '543.'

2. TITLE OF ARTICLE

We note the main title of the article for identification. This can simply be copied and pasted.

3. NEWSPAPER

We note which newspaper the article comes from. We have 5 options: *De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *De Tijd*, *Het Laatste Nieuws* or *Het Nieuwsblad*.

4. DATE OF PUBLICATION

We note the date on which the article was published. For example, '30/09/2019.'

5. NUMBER OF WORDS

We note how many words the article consists of. This includes titles, subtitles, and quotes.

6. POLITICIAN

We note which politician is mentioned in the article. If more than one is mentioned, we indicate several options. There are nine possibilities.

7. NAME IS MENTIONED IN TITLE

We note whether the name of the politician is mentioned in the article.

8. GENDER OF POLITICIAN

We will note the gender of the politician, male or female.

9. GENDER OF AUTHOR

We will note the gender of the author, male or female. If the author is unknown, we indicate 'no known identity.'

10. ARTICLE REFERS TO MARITAL STATUS

We note any reference to the marital status of the politician. This includes, but is not limited to, 'single,' 'married,' 'divorced,' or 'widow.'

11. ARTICLE REFERS TO THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER OR FATHER

We note any reference to the role of the politician as a mother or a father. This includes the mention of kids as well.

12. ARTICLE STRESSES THE GENDER

The explicit mention of gender includes terms such as 'man,' 'woman,' 'gentleman' and other similar words. A combination of two or more words and references in a foreign language are included.

13. ARTICLE REFERS TO APPEARANCE

We note any reference to appearance. This includes, but is not limited to, the nationality, presence, haircut, and costume.

14. ARTICLE REFERS TO AGE

We note any reference to the age of the politicians. This includes, but is not limited to, stating the exact age or references such as 'young' and 'old.'

15. ARTICLE REFERS TO ... PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

We note whether a reference is made to typical female characteristics (warmth, care, kindness) or typical male characteristics (assertiveness, perseverance). If mention is made of personality traits that are traditionally not linked to a specific gender, we choose the option 'neutral.'

16. ARTICLE REFERS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION

We note whether a reference is made to personal information about the politician. Personal information can be about their studies, a non-political job, work status, or hobbies.

17. ARTICLE REFERS TO POLITICAL INFORMATION

We note whether a reference is made to political information about the politician. Political information includes references to political offices, politically-related jobs, participation in previous elections, and other politically-related activities.