

**Gender Differences in the Dutch Media.
Three mixed- gender elections investigated.**



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Master Thesis, Final Version
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Date: June 10, 2015
Word count: 10.060

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Abstract

In this study the differences in media coverage between male and female candidates in political leadership's elections in the Netherlands will be analyzed. As a crucial chain between politics and voters, a broad visibility and positive portrayal in the media, is an essential part of the voters' evaluation of politicians. A great number of studies, mainly conducted in the United States, have shown that women receive a different media treatment, which is referred to as *gender bias* or *gender frame*. Thereby scholars point at the lower visibility of women in the media, or disproportionately higher attention for a range of various factors that would violate the chances of electoral success for women. For instance, studies found disproportionately more attention for marital status and appearance of women, compared to men.

As media systems and political cultures vary from state to state, it is unclear if these differences occur in the Netherlands as well. Especially due to the relatively large share of women in politics on a global perspective, and the fact that the Netherlands is a highly feminine society, it is least likely to find a gender bias here.

In a comparison between the male and female candidates in three internal party leadership's elections in the Netherlands, there was found that media coverage is on average equal, but not free of gender related differences. On most of the factors that were studied, no differences in media coverage were found between both sexes, except for one factor; female candidates did receive more attention for their personal lives, their appearance and gender, than their male competitors. This demonstrates that even in a feminine society like the Netherlands, with relatively high gender equality in politics, women receive more attention for typical gender and personal related topics. That offers reason for further investigation on the effects that this type of media coverage has on voter's evaluation of candidates, whether this bias occurs in television news as well, and the effect on the relationship between female politicians and the media.

1. Introduction

Research in the field of politics, media and gender has resulted in a substantial number of studies that offered evidence for a gender bias in the media¹. That bias exists in a different media treatment for men and women in political offices, often to the disadvantage of women. Studies on various types of elections found several recurring factors on which coverage for both sexes occurred. There is for example found to be more attention in media messages for the marital status and the appearance of women than there is for men. Female politicians also tend to receive a more critical evaluation than their male counterparts (Miller & Peake, 2013; Miller et. al., 2010). However, there seems to be a tendency towards a more equal media treatment for both sexes, which may be caused by the growing number of women in politics (Hayes & Lawless, 2015). Awareness of stereotypes have probably altered the behavior of journalists as well (Bauer, 2013: 34)

In the Netherlands even more women have political functions than in the U.S., Germany and Belgium², but there is a lack of research on this subject. In 1993 a stereotypical image was indeed reported in a qualitative study on the differences in media messages on male and female politicians in the Netherlands (Duyvis & Vermeiden, 1993). Since that time, the number of women in the parliament has increased, from 29% to 43% in 2010 but decreased to 37% in 2015 (Tweede Kamer, 2015). The expectation is that the media and electorate are more accustomed to the presence of women in politics which also has taken away the newsworthiness of women in politics. It is therefore likely that stereotyping and disproportional attention to their gender had increased or disappeared.

The countries in which studies were conducted on the differences of media coverage for men and women, such as the United States, Canada, Germany and Belgium, differ from the Dutch media -, and political system. Furthermore, the Netherlands is described as one of the most feminine countries in the world, whereas the US belongs to one of the most masculine ones (Hofstede, 2001; 232). These values influence the way in which leadership and good politics is perceived in a country. Therefore, it can be expected to influence evaluations of politicians in the media as well. The Netherlands is in a way a critical case in

¹ Hayes & Lawless, 2015; Miller & Peake, 2013; Dan & Iorgovenanu, 2013; Miller, Peake & Boulton, 2010; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007; Heldmen, Carol & Olson, 2005; Banwart, Bystrom & Robertson, 2003; Robson, 2000; Kahn, 1994; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Kahn & Goldberg, 1991

² The Netherlands takes the 6th position worldwide on women in the government, with 46,7 % female ministers. In comparison: Belgium occupies the 10th place (41,7%), Germany is ranked 20th (33,3%) and the United States is ranked on the 23th place (31,8 %) on women in the government (UN, 2015).

which it is most unlikely to find differences in media coverage for male and female politicians.

In the same time, women in Dutch politics are structurally underrepresented, and therefore the question which hurdles exist in the way to equality at this point, is well founded. The media behavior might be one of those, and therefore this study will test if differences in media coverage occur in the Dutch case as well. The main question for this study will be: *Do male and female politicians receive different media coverage in political campaigns in The Netherlands?*

First of all, I will further elaborate on the relation between media, politics and gender and the previous findings and implications. Second, expectation for the Netherlands will be discussed, regarding the media system and cultural characteristics that differ from countries that were previously studied. Based on the previous findings, the hypothesis will be introduced before I will introduce specifics on the Dutch case.

2. Literature review

An influential product of culture is the media; through language and images, both explicit and implicit, cultural values and practices are shared with the audience and reinforced in the same time. Feminist studies point at the particular role of the media in constructing the discourse of sexual differences (Van Zoonen, 1994:40-1; Gidengil & Everitt: 2003).

As the primary source of political knowledge, television and newspaper media play a tremendously important role in shaping the image of the politician towards the audience. For the electoral success of a politician, being mediagenic and receiving positive a media portrayal is an essential factor (Van Aalst et al., 2008: 194).

It depends on the media landscape to what extent there is speech of a media logic or partisan logic. The more the media adheres to the demands of the audience, and provides sensational, entertaining news, the more there is speech of this media logic. In case of a partisan logic, the focus is more on informing the audience of political valuable information, such as issue standpoints of parties and politicians (Brants & van Praag, 2006: 31).

In the following section, previous studies are presented that found difference between the media coverage for women and men at this point of priming and framing. This means that some factors and issues were stressed significantly more for female than male politicians and vice versa. They result in the hypothesis that will be tested for the Dutch case that is central to this study.

2.1 Visibility

The most straightforward question in relation to any differences of media attention for politicians, is how much coverage there is for men and women. It appeared that female candidates for several elections in the United States, received less attention in the media, compared to their male competitors (Kahn & Goldberg, 1991; Kahn, 1994). Studies in Germany (Semetko & Boogaarden, 2007) and Belgium (Vos, 2012) reported a significantly lower visibility of female politicians in the media in general. This picture is however not unambiguous, as a higher attention for women was found (Meeks, 2012; Miller et.al. 2010; Banwart et.al. 2003), but no difference in visibility too (Hayes & Lawless; 2015, Devitt, 2002).

The most recent study on the share of female politicians in the news in the Netherlands was unfortunately far less robust. However, the conclusion to the advantage of women, as it was found that male and female MP's appeared in an equal number of newspaper articles compared to their representation in the parliament (Ruigrok & Heijningen, 2013). However, this study was relatively small, and the methods were disputable due to a system of ranking the most visible politicians, instead of comparing the actual time they occurred on television.

In order to get a clearer picture on the visibility in the media, hypothesis one is as follows:

H1: "Female candidates receive less newspaper coverage than male candidates."

2.2 Tone

In a large-scale study on gubernatorial and statewide elections in the U.S., Kahn and Goldberg found a disproportionately more negative tone in the media for women than for men who ran for office (Kahn & Goldberg, 1991; Kahn, 1994). Women's leadership's abilities were more frequently questioned and doubted, than those of their male competitors. There was also more negative newspaper coverage found on their chances of success and their readiness to perform the political function they opted for (Kahn & Goldberg, 1991; Kahn, 1994).

However, after this pioneering study, similar inquiries did not come to the same conclusion, and found no significant differences for men and women at this point. (Banwart et.al. 2003; Hayes & Lawless, 2015). Scholars argue that this is probably caused by the increasing

number of women in democratic assemblies like the House of Representatives (Hayes & Lawless, 2015:108)³. Voters got more used to the image of women as representatives, together with the media.

When the focus of the media messages is on higher political offices, like the presidential elections, nevertheless did show a more negative evaluation of the female candidates. This was found in the races between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama (Miller et.al. 2010), and in the vice- presidential campaign between Joe Biden and Sarah Palin (Miller & Peake, 2013). Also in Germany, Angela Merkel was worse of compared to her competitor Gerhard Schröder, when their personal characteristics were evaluated. She was for example seen as less of a winner type and less likable (Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007:163).

In the study of Duyvis and Vermeiden, female politicians report in interviews and surveys that in cases they receive negative coverage in the press, it was also far more negative than negative coverage the men received (Duyvis & Vermeiden, 1993:140). The next hypothesis will test if there is indeed a more negative media attention for women than men.

H2: Female candidates receive more negative media coverage than male candidates.

2.3 Experience and issue coverage

Politics foremost need to get their message across in the media, and show that they have the capacity to handle the job they opt for in elections. That requires often more than a nice suit and bright smile; voters base their choice mostly on the political alignment of politicians (Kleinnijenhuis et. al. 2007:380). Furthermore, their estimation of how experienced or fit the candidate is, matters too (Meeks, 2012:179). Kahn found that even when the campaigns of female candidates focused more on the content of political issues in their campaigns than the male candidates, they still received less coverage on their political ideas than the men (Kahn; 1994:169). Other studies did comparable findings by showing less information on is issue positions of women than men (Devitt, 2002; Meeks, 2012).

In some cases, the media paid more attention to the political ideas of female than male candidates in democratic elections (Banwart et.al.2003; Miller et.al; 2010). The most recent study found no significant differences at all at this point (Hayes & Lawless, 2015:107). There is thus no congruent finding on the amount of attention for political issues. That it is an

³ The Un Reports that in 2015 24 women served as head of state or head of government; which is 13,7 % of the total. The Netherlands has never had a female prime- minister.

important contribution for politicians to get elected, is demonstrated by the cases of presidents Johnson- Sierlaf from Chile and Bachelet from Liberia. Both women focused in their campaigns especially on their professional background and their specific knowledge of pressing issues. These factors turned out to be critical to their presidential victories (Thomas & Adams, 2010).

In the same manner the opposite was true for two female Romanian candidates, who lacked any media attention for their professional qualities. Their candidacy was merely discussed in tabloids instead of broadsheets where their male competitors were discussed. The media did not report on their qualifications or experiences that would make them suitable, which they both had. Instead, the media evaluated the candidate's consequently as unprepared and unsuitable to handle the political issue (Dan & Iorgovenanu; 2013:224).

Overall, there is disagreement again on the question whether the American media pays more attention to the background and experience of male politicians and candidates. Some studies have confirmed that there is a significant difference (Miller, et.al. 2010:183; Kahn, 1993:166), whereas others found no difference between the sexes (Banwart et.al. 2003). The focus of the Dutch media on political content and professional qualities of political candidates will be tested with the following hypotheses:

H3: Female candidates receive less media coverage on their educational and professional background than male candidates.

H4: Female candidates receive less issue coverage than male candidates.

2.4 Gender framing and gender bias

Gender framing is an often heard concept which should be looked at more closely. First of all a frame refers to the metaphor to which is reference in a news story. For example sports and war are popular frames; typical terms like 'winning the game' 'going on the attack'' and so forth, are used to create an interesting and understandable whole of the news facts (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012:186; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003: 568). In gender framing, stereotype images and metaphors that are gender specific create a gender frame. For example, a tough women can be portrayed as 'one of the boys' or playing the game like a man', or 'a women who knows what she wants' (Gidengil & Everit, 2003: 574).

When the first female minister entered the Dutch government, the media was fool of gender frames, and emphasized that she was, apart from her political ideas, importantly, also a

typical women; friendly, warm and caring. Politicians after her, who were working mothers, were also discussed as such, or asked about the opinion of their husbands about their political work (Duyvis & Vermeiden, 1993: 82-9).

The same findings occur in the United States as well, for example in case of Elizabeth Dole, who ran for the primary elections for the Republicans in 2000. The media coverage focused especially on the fact that she was the first women in these types of elections and the fact that she was Bob Dole's wife (Bystrom, Robertson & Banwart, 2001). Time after time studies report that female candidates receive more attention for their personal characteristics such as age and personality and attire; in some cases even less than on their political ideas and opinions (Devitt, 2002:457). A nationwide study in the United States confirmed this pattern cross nationally (Banwart, Bystrom & Robertson, 2003: 667).

Although the frequency gender frames like motherhood and the marital status of women in politics has lowered, it was still reported in the case studies on Hillary Clinton in and Sarah Palin both in 2008 (Miller et.al. 2010: 178; Miller & Peake:2013: 49). Scholars have often found a relation between negative evaluation and gender frames; for example the press was almost nine times more likely to refer to Clinton's gender than to Obama's, which also correlated that to the question of her electability (Miller et.al, 2010:178). In the case of Sarah Palin however, the opposite happened: when the press wrote about her gender or appearance, it was more likely to be positive. But this had a negative correlation with the voters evaluation; the more positive the media were on her appearance, the less viable and suitable she was evaluated by the voters⁴ (Miller & Peake, 2013; 495). This matches with earlier findings that women who are seen as more attractive, will also be expected lower in authority (Sigelman et.al. 1987:41).

A gender frame in general, can affect the authority and credibility for women as political leaders. Since leadership stereotypes are historically more often described in masculine than feminine terms, women are according to that frame automatically less suitable (Hofstede, 1998:97; Eagly, 2007:2). Various studies have shown that even people who were positive on women in leadership roles when they were asked, implicitly they still held more negative attitudes towards female authority (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000: 1325). Also more recent studies still found that stereotypes of leaders are decidedly masculine, and sometimes

⁴ based on a survey (Miller & Peake, 2012:495)

as androgynous (both masculine and feminine) (Koenig et. al. 2011).

When the sex of the female candidate is stressed, is that feminine stereotypes can be triggered in the mind of the reader. Besides a politician, she becomes explicitly a *female* politician or a *woman in politics*. This emphasizes politics as being a men's world, in which a women is different (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003). In that case, stereotypical thinking is activated in the mind of the receiver. This means that certain expectations about the member of a stereotype group are raised. When women are framed as mothers or wives or any other typical female characteristic, they might face an extra challenge in being judged as viable leader, when the stereotype image of 'a leader' is a man (Bauer, 2013: 30-31). It must be stressed however that the effects of stereotypes and frames voters' behavior is a complex mechanism (Bauer, 2013).

With the final hypothesis will be tested whether this decline of gendered attention also can be found in the Netherlands, since the last study in 1993 (Duyvis & Vermeiden).

H5: Female candidates receive more attention for their appearance, gender and personal lives than male candidates.

3. The Dutch case: a closer look

For more than 100 years, women in the Netherlands are legally allowed to get elected. Equal rights for men and women in politics have however not led to equal participation. Up until now, men form the majority in all political bodies throughout the country, on local as well as on national level and as party members and as well as party leaders. Especially in leadership positions, women remain exceptions between their male colleagues (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2014).

In particular as party leaders, women are underrepresented; only one of the twelve party leaders in 2015 is female⁵. At the highest this were 5 of 11 in 2008, although one of those was Rita Verdonk who was put out of the party and kept her seat as only member of her party (Novum, 2008). In the parliament 38, 7% of the parliament seats are occupied by women and in municipal politics 29% of the representatives is a women (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2014: 68, 70). However, on a global scale the country occupies the 6th place in rank of women in ministerial positions, and the 11th on the

⁵ http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerleden/alle_fractievoorzitters, visited on May 3, 2015

number women in the parliament (United Nations, 2015). Relatively, the Netherlands has a high level of participation of women, although this is still a structural underrepresentation.

3.1 The Cultural Dimension

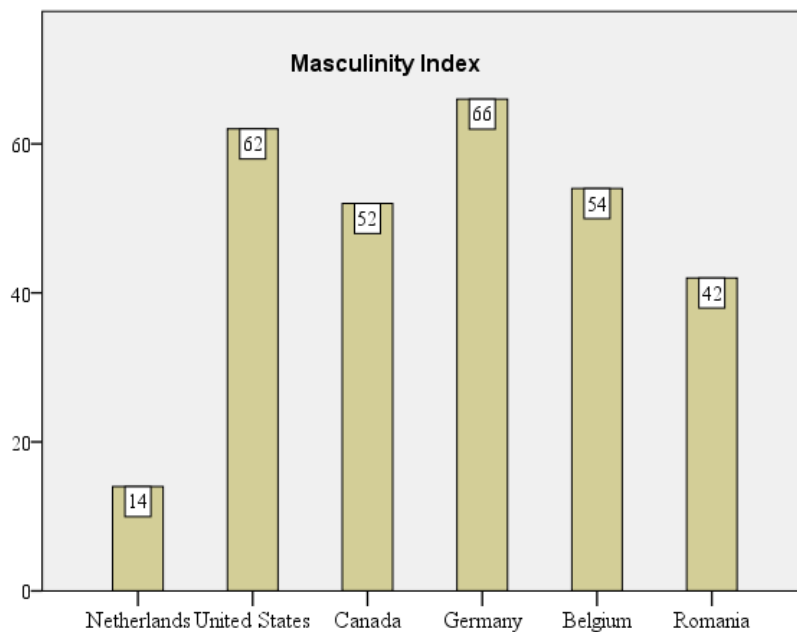
There are some interesting system related differences between previous studied countries on this issue and the Netherlands that will be highlighted here. As most of the studies on this topic derived from American studies, I will focus on the differences that can be expected to influence the outcomes on differences in media coverage for men and women.

As has been pointed out, equal coverage is likely to be connected to the representation of women in politics (Hayes & Lawless, 2015:107). Norris and Inglehart have pointed out that cultural values are the explanatory factor for the rates of women in the parliament (Inglehart & Norris, 2003: 133).

Within this cultural dimension, an important distinction can be made between masculine and feminine cultures (Hofstede, 2001). Masculinity is understood as gender role pattern of male assertiveness and emphasizing the “ego”. Femininity is explained as the female nurturance and emphasis on the “social”. When a society is more masculine, values as toughness, winning, fighting, growth and prosperity are highly valued. Regarding the political discourse in masculine cultures, this is adversarial, and women are less interested in politics and fewer are elected in governing or representative bodies (Hofstede, 2001: 323). If a country is more feminine, values like compassion, cooperation, inclusiveness, equality, and taking care for weaker in society is seen as most important. That results in a moderate political discourse in which men and women discuss politics equally frequently and where more women participate in politics as well (Hofstede, 2001:323). The Netherlands belongs to one of the most feminine countries, as opposed to all the other previously studied countries on the issue discussed in this study (See figure 1).

The index is a scale from 0 to 100 in which 0 means valuing feminine values only and 100 means valuing masculine values only. It is clear that the Netherlands has a highly feminine culture, whereas in the other countries mainly masculine values dominate. This creates a different expectation for the political culture and environment in the media. All arrows point at a more female friendly political environment than for example in the United States. Furthermore, in masculine countries leaders are expected to be more tough and aggressive, whereas in feminine countries one will find more conjunctive leadership. Connected to the expectations of differences in media portrayal, politics in the Netherlands can be seen as less of a ‘men’s world’. This can be expected to have an effect on the media

too, in the direction of less gendered coverage and equal visibility and policy descriptions for both women and men



Source: <http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>

Figure 1 Masculinity Index Values Hofstede

3.2 Three elections scrutinized

The Dutch political system is a strong proportional representation system with many parties. During elections, not the leaders, but only the representatives in the national and regional assemblies are elected (Andeweg & Irwin, 2002, 96). The winning party always has to form a coalition to form a majority in the parliament. This is also translated to the media attentions, which focuses on the governing parties; smaller parties or opposition parties receive far less media attention (De Beus, Brants & Van Praag, 2011: 402).

National elections are thus difficult to use for a comparison between male and female candidates. So how can media attention for men and women in the parliamentary system of the Netherlands being compared? A relatively new phenomenon in the Dutch politics does offer valid opportunities. Since the last wave of internal democratization within parties, some have introduced democratic elections of the party front runner. They are elected by the members by ballot or telephonic vote (Lucardie & Voerman, 2011: 189-91).

The reason that the front runner in elections is chosen, instead of the party leader, is that the function of party leader formally does not exist in the Dutch party system. Parties are in the rule organized as voluntary associations, led by the chairmen (Andeweg & Irwin, 2002:83-5). However, the front runner in the elections regularly becomes leader in the parliamentary group, or in case the party serves in the government, he or she becomes prime-, or vice- minister (Andeweg & Irwin, 2002:83-5). However, for the rest of the article the term party leader will be used, as this is more universal.

Before 2006, internal front runner elections did not attract much media attention, since the elections only took place on the party congress. With the introduction of the voting by ballot system it became more interesting for the press as the candidates could now actually campaign for their candidacy for members throughout the country. The three cases that are chosen for this study were such elections. These three were especially suitable as they were duels between a male and a female candidate.

The first election that will be studied is the competition between Rita Verdonk (1955) and Mark Rutte (1976) of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). At that time, both were members of the government; the female candidate Verdonk was Minister for Integration and Immigration at that time, and the male candidate Rutte was State Secretary for Education. It was the first time in the Netherlands that the election of the party leader gains so much attention; the campaign was often compared to an American primary and included television debates, poll's, a campaign leader and campaigning material (Koole, 2006: 257; Lucardie & Voerman, 2011: 196). Politically there was much unrest and controversy around Verdonk in the affair about the naturalization of MP Hirsi Ali (Lucardie et.al. 2008:20). The election itself had a turnout of 74% of which 51% was won by Rutte, and 46% of the votes went to Verdonk. In the parliamentary election⁶ that same year, Verdonk gained however more preference votes than the chosen leader Mark Rutte⁷.

A month later, the party 'Democrats 66' (D66) held a referendum, in which Alexander Pechtold (1965) and Lousewies van der Laan (1966) were the main candidates (Lucardie et.al. 2006). Pechtold was member of the government as Minister for Government Reform and Kingdom Relations; Van der Laan was MP and group leader of the party in the parliament.

⁶ Which was caused by a fall of the government due to that same affair around MP Hirsi Ali and minister Verdonk.

⁷ Later on, she was expelled from the party. Rutte leads the party up until today.

Both were seen as relative newcomers in the party. Officially there were eight candidates, but the others were from the beginning chanceless, and the media barely report on them. From all the D66 members, 47% casted their vote; Pechtold won with 52, 6 % of the votes, Van der Laan received 45, 8 %. In the national elections that followed, she did not return on the electoral list, while Pechtold is to date still the party leader (parlement.com).

The last selected election in this study, took place in 2012, and was held by the green left-wing party, GroenLinks. MP Tofik Dibi (1980) challenged the incumbent female party leader Jolande Sap (1963), who had led the party at that time for two years. The start of the campaign was so to speak abnormal, because in advance, Tofik Dibi was not found to be suitable as party leader according to the selection committee. Commotion in the media followed, and other party members demanded a referendum between Sap and Dibi, which was finally allowed (Van Ree, 2014, Posthumus, 2012). In the meanwhile, the party had lost half of its seats in the polls due to the fight within the party. Ultimately 56% of the party members voted, of which 84% was for Sap, and 12% for Dibi. Her reelection was of short duration; the party lost 6 of the 12 seats in the following parliamentary elections and Sap withdrew. Dibi had required to be put on the 10th place of the call list, of which he knew that it was an unelectable place. He withdrew from politics after the elections (parlement.com).

3.3 Data collection

The analysis will focus on newspaper articles about the candidates which are collected from the newspaper date base LexisNexis. The study focusses on newspapers for several reasons. First of all, the newspaper readership in the Netherlands is relatively high; in 2006 the reach of newspapers was 67% of the people above the age of 16, and 60% in 2012 (Bakker & Scholten, 2009: 25; mediamonitor, 2012). Second, newspapers contain more political information than television. The television channels in the Netherlands that spent most time on politics, are public broadcasting channels, who are obliged to present more neutral messaging (De Beus, Brants & Van Praag, and 2011:389). Finally, a more practical reason is that television has more components to be aware of for analysis. As it is bound to time (when internet view is disregarded) and as the message is influenced by the image and sound, it is for this purpose too more complex.

The articles are selected from two quality newspapers; de Volkskrant and NRC Handelsblad and two popular newspapers: Algemeen Dagblad and Telegraaf. For the case of D66 the quality newspaper Trouw was included as well, to extend the quantity of articles. All newspapers included are daily national newspapers.

The articles will be collected for the campaign period of each case, counted from the moment that the last of the two candidates had announced his or her participation, up to the closing date of the elections. For the VVD, this period was from April 4 to May 31 in 2006; for D66 the articles will be collected from May 24 to June 24 of 2006 and the campaign of GroenLinks took place from May 7, to June 6, 2012.

The search terms that are used, are the first and last name of the candidate in combination with the word ‘verkiezing’ (election). In this way the search is focused on articles on the specific leadership’s election. The criterion is that the subject in the article is the candidate and the election, because for this subject I assume that both candidates will be equally represented. When the article discussed the candidate in the role of their political function only, it was not included, because that would violate the assumption of equal visibility.

From the collected articles, first some basic statistical tests are done that will test hypothesis 1, on the visibility of the candidates in the media. Therefore two things will be measured: firstly, the percentage of headlines in which the name of the candidate is mentioned. Second, the words of each sentence in which the candidate is mentioned or referred to in the entire article. The percentage of articles in which the candidate was named in general, is measured. The same is done for the mean percentage of words per article that was written about the candidate. Together the differences between attention for female and male candidates will be compared, both separated by case as cumulated.

For the second hypothesis “*Female candidates were more negatively evaluated than male candidates*” again, the headline and the article will be analyzed separately. The headline is classified into negative (-1), neutral (0) and positive (1) to create a positivity/negativity scale. The rest of the article is also divided into positive and negative coverage. Therefore all the words will be counted from each sentences, or subordinate clauses, that can be marked as positive or negative. Negative coverage is defined as any negative or sarcastic tone, doubts about the leadership abilities, and doubt about trustworthiness of the candidate, or focus on negative characteristics or negative evaluations of the candidate. Positive media coverage is defined as positive evaluation, by either the writer or others, positive characteristics or when successes and popularity is mentioned. In general, the main question that was asked in deciding whether information was positive or negative, is: would the candidate or the campaign team appreciate what was said here and is this positive or negative information about a politician in general? The final analysis for the overall article is put in a scale in which

the article is classified between -2 for very negative to 2 for very positive.

As positive and negative are quite interpretative, for this factor an intercoder - reliability test was performed by three other observers who analyzed a sample of roughly 10 percent of the total amount of articles. They all received an exhaustive instruction with sample articles in which was shown how negative and positive headlines and sentences should be analyzed. The reliability of this measurement was tested with an intercoder -reliability test; the Krippendorff's Alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; De Swert, 2012).

After the first results of the intercoder reliability test, it became clear that some redefinition of positive and negative coverage was required. In many cases it was clear that criticism on a candidate was negative, and support and positive evaluation by others was positive for the candidate.

Doubts rose for example, in case the candidates said positive things about themselves, like *'Dibi vindt zichzelf geschikter dan Sap'* (Dibi find himself more fit than Sap). The reason might be that these quotes can be understood as a token of arrogance as well. Also; *"Verdonk in de Aanval"* (Verdonk on the attack) was disputable; some marked it as positive, because it shows strength of the candidate. Others defined it as negative, because it was seen as offensive behavior. Negativity and positivity were defined stricter; only direct critique to the candidate in the article was marked as negative. For positive there should be an expression of support of the candidate. However; there remained too much disagreement among the observers. The Krippendorff's alpha was found to be above .8 for the measurement of the headline only (Kalpha .9278, see table 1). The positive and negative coverage, just as the overall rating of the article, were not reliable enough to use for the study. As a consequence, the second hypothesis has to be reduced to the tone of the headline.

	Headline positive/negative	Word count positive	Word count negative	Article over all
Krippendorff's Alpha	,9278	,6107	,6807	,6094

Table 1 Krippendorff's Alpha values

For the third hypothesis, I will look at the percentage of words that were written on the political content of the candidates' political program and opinions on issues. For this factor all the coverage on political opinions, plans and ideas of the candidate are included. These can either be quotes of the candidates self, or information given by the journalist. The words are counted in the same way as for hypothesis one, two, four and five; all the words of the sentence or the clause about the specific subject were summed and divided by the total number of words that were written for each candidate.

Next, all coverage about the candidate's past jobs, occupations and political experience is included for the fourth hypothesis. Information on the candidates' education is also included. Again, whole and sub- sentences are included and the words in that selection are counted. They will be measured as relative number of the total word count on the candidate.

The final hypothesis was formulated as follows; "*Newspapers pay more attention to the appearance, gender and personal life of women than men in political campaigns*". Therefore, all the words of the sentences about the appearance of the candidate, for example clothing or hair and any other reference to the visible, physical characteristic of the candidate, will be counted. Furthermore, words are accounted that mention the sex of the candidate in any way are included as well. It can be a familial term, like mother or brother, but also a forms of address, like 'sir' or 'lady' and sentences like 'he is a man of deeds'. And self-evidently, personal life refers to descriptions of family life and details that are non-political or professional, but purely human interest. Of these descriptions, again the words of the sentences are counted for this factor.

4. Results

Over 300 articles were analyzed in total, of which 177 were dedicated to the VVD, 71 to D66 and 62 to GroenLinks. The first case was clearly more interesting for the press than the others, as the candidates themselves sought the press attention, and were both part of the parliament. The outcomes for the 5 factors are presented below.

4.1 Visibility

In the campaign period between the announcements of the last candidate, up to the election itself, I expected to find both candidates in an equal number of cases, with an equal quantity of attention in the headline and the articles. The media coverage was measured in number of words of sentences, and subordinate clauses that directly referred to the person. The second measure was the number of times that the candidates' name was found in the headline.

In the case of the VVD, Rita Verdonk received more media attention than Mark Rutte; on average, articles spent 51% of word count on her, whereas on Mark Rutte this was 32, 6%. The T- test was not significant $t(0,351) = 3,104$, $p = .351$ (see table 2). Therefore the hypothesis is supported that

there is no difference between media coverage for the candidates. Rita Verdonk was more often named in headline than Mark Rutte; in 51,4 % of the headlines, her name appeared, whereas Rutte was mentioned in the 26,5 % of the headlines. There was a significant association between sex and appearance in the headline $\chi^2(1) = 22,992, p < .001$ (see figure 2).

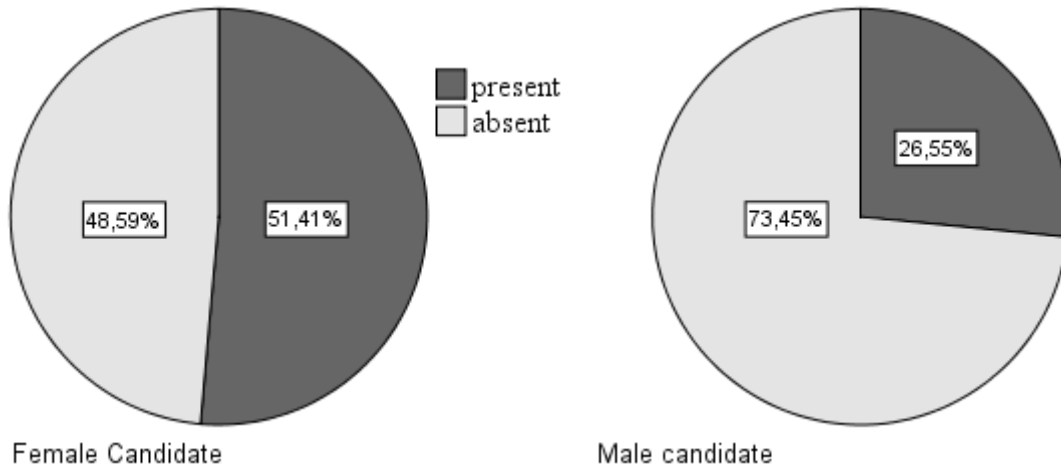


Figure 2 Headline presence VVD candidates, n=177

The candidates in the race for party leadership of the democrats (D66) did not show such a large difference in media coverage. The male candidate, Alexander Pechtold, appeared in the headline most of the times; 30,9% of the cases, against 21,3% for his female competitor (see figure 3). There was no significant relation found for that difference $\chi^2(1) = 1,791, p > .05$. The average amount of words in the articles dedicated to the candidates was relatively equal; 37,5% to Van der Laan and 40,0% to Pechtold. Again, there was no significant difference of the means $t(0,895) = -525, p > .05$ (see table 2).

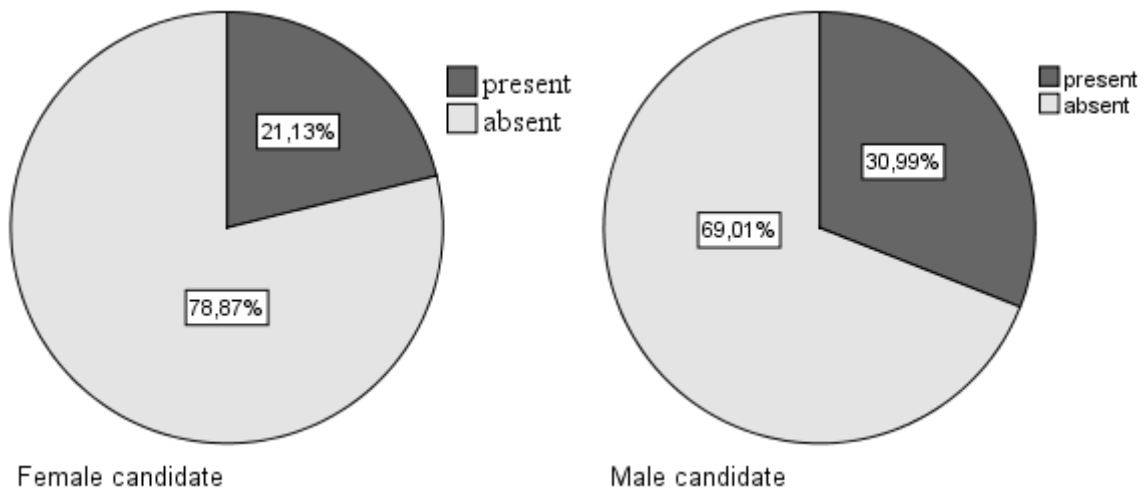


Figure 3 Headline presence D66 candidates, n=71

As expected regarding the circumstances, Tofik Dibi received far more attention in the media than the incumbent GroenLinks party leader Jolande Sap; In 54, 8% of the headlines Dibi was mentioned, and in 30, 7 % Sap's name occurred. The Chi- square for the difference was found to be significant $\chi^2(1) = 7,414, p < .01$ (see figure 4). Furthermore, the word count of the articles over all differed in the same direction, as could be expected regarding the headline. 24, 89% of the text was about Jolande Sap; Tofik Dibi was the subject in 45, 38% of the sentences of the articles. This difference was found to be highly significant $t(0,003) = -5,211, p < .01$ (see table 2).

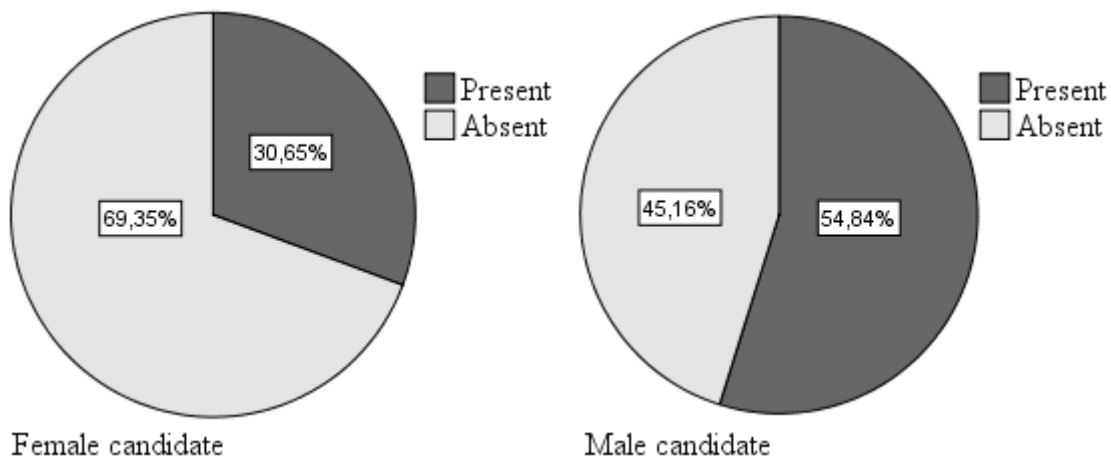


Figure 4 Headline presence GroenLinks candidates, n=62

In one of the three cases, there was a significant difference in visibility. There is no congruence in the direction of which sex received more attention; in 2 cases the male candidates did, in one case the female candidate received more newspaper coverage. The cases together neither

resulted in a significant difference; on average the women appeared in the headlines in 54% of the cases and the male candidates in 45, 2% of the headlines in which a name was mentioned $\chi^2(1) = 3,358, p > .05$. The women received also more attention in the full articles, (42, 8) than the men did (36, 86%). Again the differences were statistical insignificant $t(0,284) = -1,586, p > .05$ (see table 2). Therefore there is no support found for the first hypothesis.

Table 2 Average % of words per article

	Female	Male	<i>p</i> Value	<i>n</i>
VVD	51,1	32,6	< 0.00**	177
D66	37,5	40,0	> 0.1	71
GroenLinks	24,9	45,4	< 0.00**	62
All Cases	42,8	36,9	> 0.1	310

Note: *p* values are based on a two- tailed T- test for equality of means

4.2 Headline Tone

For the second hypothesis, only the headline scale appeared to be an appropriate measure for the tone about the candidates. The results for the difference of tone for the candidates of the VVD, illustrate the controversy around the person of the female candidate, who both evoked most negative and most positive reactions (see figure 5 a). The male candidate in D66 received more attention in the headline than his competitor; positive as well as negative (see figure 5 b). In GroenLinks the negative headlines for Dibi were in the majority, whereas Sap was barely the subject in headlines (see figure 5 c). The bars in the figure show the absolute number of headlines in which the candidate occurred. The percentages are the percentages of the total amount of headlines in which the name of a candidate occurred.

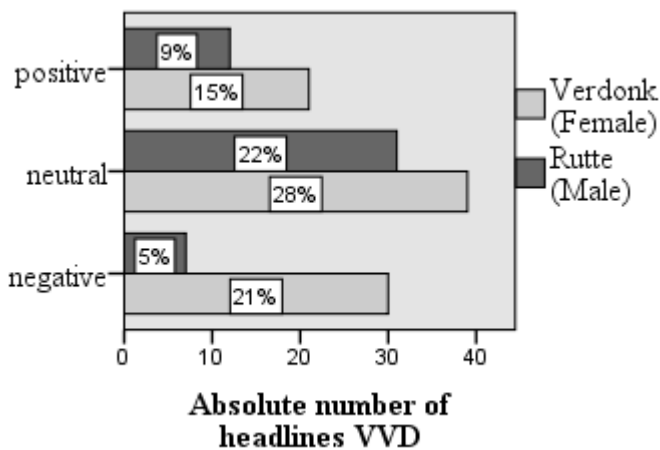


Figure 5a

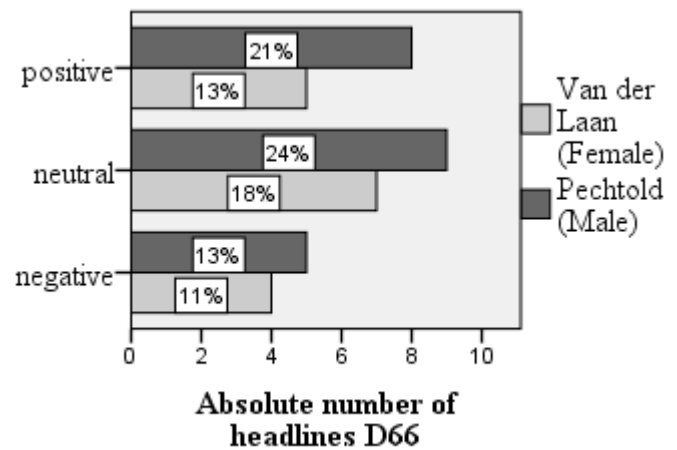


Figure 5b

The tone of the headline was found to be not significantly more positive or negative for men or women. Therefore a point- biserial correlation was executed, with a Spearman's rho ($\rho = 0.48$) which demonstrates no correlation with the negativity or positivity of the headline. As the data is not normal distributed, a Mann- Witney test was done as well which showed no significant association either ($U(6410) = 0.469$). We can assume that none of both sexes receive more negative media coverage than the other, at least not in the newspaper headlines.

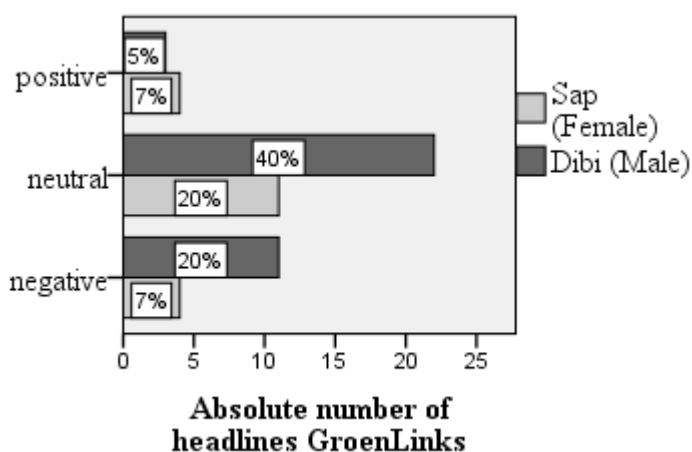


Figure 5 c

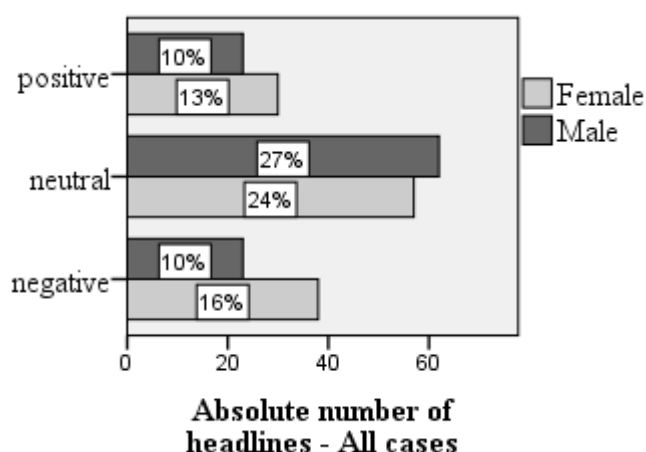


Figure 5 d

4.3 Experience

In the VVD campaign the media spent very little attentions to his professional past ($\bar{x} = .906$, $SD = 4.05$), although it was more than for Verdonk ($\bar{x} = .385$, $SD = .64$). There was no significant difference found $t(343) = 2181$, $p = 0.115$ (see table 3). Also the female candidate in the D66 race, Van der Laan, received less attention for her professional past ($\bar{x} = 1.29$, $SD = 3.5$) than Pechtold did ($\bar{x} = 1.78$, $SD = 5.17$), but this difference was not statistical significance $t(-0.683)$, $p = .525$. Finally, in the case of GroenLinks most attention for the factor experience was given to Tofik Dibi ($\bar{x} = 2.34$, $SD = 7.95$). Jolande Sap did not receive more than 1, 5% of her media attention for her education or political experience ($\bar{x} = 1.41$, $SD = 4.54$). Again, the difference was not scientifically significant $t(117) = -0.789$, $p = 0.432$. All together the 0-hypothesis of no difference between media attention between male and female candidates should not be rejected; based on these three cases $t(598) = -1.749$, $p = 0.081$ (See table 3).

Table 3 Experience in % of total words on candidate

	Female	Male	<i>p</i> - Value	<i>n</i>
VVD	0,39%	0,91%	>0.1	177
D66	1,29%	1,77%	>0.1	71
GroenLinks	2,34%	1,41%	>0.1	62
<i>All cases</i>	0.78%	1,4%	>0.05	310

Note: *p* values are based on a two- tailed T- test for equality of means

4.4 Issue- frame

There was no significant difference found in the number of words devoted to the issues espoused by the VVD candidates Verdonk (\bar{x} =9.79, SD=17.16) and Rutte (\bar{x} =9.11, SD=20.69) $t(324.9) = -0.331$, $p=0.741$. The means of attention for the political opinions and ideas of the D66 candidates did not differ much either, although the female candidate received slightly more attention on this factor than her male colleague. The difference between both candidates was not significant $t(0.316)$, $p=0.752$. The GroenLinks candidates received also almost equal attention within the issue frame; (\bar{x} =7, 31, SD=15.19) for Jolande Sap and (\bar{x} =7.91, SD=12, 62) for Dibi. The 0-hypothesis of no difference therefore should be maintained; the cases taken together showed no significant difference $t(591, 4) = 0.331$, $p=0.741$. For the hypothesis as it was formulated, no evidence was found.

Table 3 Relative Issue coverage

	Female	Male	<i>p</i> -Value	<i>n</i>
VVD	9,79%	9,11%	>0.1	177
D66	19,08%	17,71%	>0.1	71
GroenLinks	7,31%	7,91%	>0.1	62
<i>All cases</i>	11,38	10,84	>0.1	310

Note: *p* values are based on a two- tailed T- test for equality of means

4.5 Appearance, Gender and Personal Life

Newspapers did not spend much attention on the candidate's appearance or personal life explicitly, and now and then the gender was mentioned. In case of the VVD media coverage, they did so almost three times more often for Rita Verdonk ($\bar{x}=2$, $SD=6.67$) than for Mark Rutte ($\bar{x}=0.69$, $SD=4.02$). This was partly because mentioned her family and her daughter as a reason think critically about her candidacy (Du Pré & Remarque, 2006), and in some articles her new styling was explicitly mentioned (Van de Sande & Wiggers, 2006). A remarkable detail was that she was referred to as "mevrouw" ("Mrs.") Verdonk 34 times and 'bewindsvrouw' (a female minister) 12 times, whereas in not one case, Rutte was called "de heer", or "meneer" (mister) Rutte or referred to as "bewindsman" (a male minister). The difference that was found for all these descriptions together, accounting for this factor, was significant $t(342) = -2.180$, $p=0.03$.

Between Lousewies van der Laan and Alexander Pechtold there were also remarkable differences, although not significant $t(134) = 1.69$, $p=0.094$. The differences of the means show a very small portion of attention for Pechtold's appearance, gender or personal life ($\bar{x}=0.634$, $SD=1.71$), whereas van der Laan received over four times more coverage on these subjects ($\bar{x}=3.08$, $SD=11.85$).

For GroenLinks this was the only factor in which they showed the same tendency as the other two cases; The press paid 4,5 times as much attentions on the gender, personal life and appearance of the female candidate Sap ($\bar{x}=3,57$, $SD=13,56$) than it did on Dibi's ($\bar{x}=1,3$, $SD=4,76$). However, the difference was not significant $t(117) = 1,220$, $p=0.225$.

When the cases are combined, the item appeared to be highly significant $t(597) = 2,9$, $p=0.004$. On average, the female candidates received three times more attention for their appearance, gender and personal lives ($\bar{x}=2.55$, $SD=9.63$) than the male candidates ($\bar{x}=0.8$, $SD=3.8$). The individual case of the VVD was even significant. Furthermore, in all cases the attention for appearance, gender and personal life was highest for the women.

Therefore the 0-hypothesis of no association should be rejected. The appearance, gender and personal lives of female candidates in the party leadership elections were significantly more often discussed in the press, than those of their male competitors. This outcome supports the final hypothesis.

Table 4 Appearance, Gender, and Personal Life

	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>N</i>
VVD	2%	0,69%	<0.05*	177
D66	3,08%	0,63%	>0.05	71
GroenLinks	3,57%	1,3%	>0.1	61
<i>Cases together</i>	2,55%	0,8%	<0.001**	310

Note: *p* values are based on a two- tailed T- test for equality of the means

5. Discussion

In this study was tried to find an answer to the question whether there are differences in media coverage for female and male politicians. The statistical newspaper analysis based on five factors did only show a statistical significant difference on one factor: appearance, gender and personal life. This indicates that the Dutch media treats female and male politicians mostly equal, but it is not entirely free of a gendered bias.

On the point of visibility, there was no significant difference found for men and women in this study, which connects to the findings by Ruigrok and Van Heijningen (2013) on the Dutch television coverage. In comparison with the neighboring countries Belgium and Germany, the Dutch media seems more female friendly, for in these countries female politicians were significantly less visible in the media than male politicians (Vos, 2012; Semetko & Boomgaarden:2007:167). Equality in the American media was not found at his point either; instead women received sometimes less (Kahn, 1994: 160), but often more media coverage than men (Miller & Peake, 2013). However, these outcomes went in all cases hand in hand with either less issue coverage or more negative evaluations and higher attention for appearance and personal lives (Meeks, 2012; Miller et.al, 2010; Miller & Peake, 2013; Banwart, Bystrom & Robertson, 2003).

Although the negativity in tone could not be investigated as thoroughly as described in the research design, the outcomes so far did not imply that the media was more negative for women. That would be an improvement to the previous study, which signaled a more critical media treatment for women (Duyvis & Vermeiden, 1993). However, analyzing the full articles would clearly have given more information.

Experience was not really an issue at all, regarding the low rates of attention for this factor, but it was not differing for male and female candidates either. For further investigations this does not seem a useful factor in the Netherlands. In general, the attention in the media for personal background information was minor compared to issue coverage.

The political message of both candidates was presented without any significant differences. Based on the reports by the female politicians in the study of Vermeiden and Duyvis (1993), it might be an improvement. Although statistical data were not provided before, the interviewed politicians in the study of Duyvis and Vermeiden (1993) reported less attention for political ideas than they felt that their male colleagues received (75-81).

Concerning the last hypothesis, there was indeed more attention for the appearance, gender and personal life of the female candidates. This was also one of the most found differences in most studies outside the Netherlands (Heldman, Carroll & Olson, 2005; Miller & Peake, 2013; Banwart, Bystrom & Robertson; 2003; Devitt, 2002). It might be concluded that there are still some 'left-overs' of the detected gendered media coverage that Duyvis and Vermeiden reported, two decades ago (Duyvis & Vermeiden, 1993). Although the most recent large- N study in the U.S. showed no difference at this point, that study is more recent than the cases investigated here (Hayes and Lawless, 2015). Furthermore, the factor gender in that study was exclusively focused on the specific gender framing of the article, not on attention for personal life and appearance (Hayes and Lawless, 2015:100).

The attention for, what seems to be, typical gender- related coverage for women, has thus not disappeared since the last study in 1993. The focus on issues like personal lives and appearance are stubbornly: as I argued in the beginning of the study, the Netherlands has a far more feminine culture than the US, Germany, and Belgium for example. The number of women in the parliament is also the highest of all those countries, which has been held responsible for the decrease or disappearance of a gendered lens (Hayes & Lawless, 2015; 107). Still, the Dutch media seems to have a slightly gendered lens as well, and moreover, the difference is highly significant, pointing clearly at the role that gender difference plays.

Although at this point, questions may be raised whether this is a press effect exclusively, or an effect that women helped creating as well. In a couple of cases for instance, the female candidates both brought up their private lives themselves. In one of the analysis in the newspapers, a journalist notes that in a television show, Pechtold presents himself as 'the politician', whereas van der Laan presents herself as 'the human being in politics', showing how she raised her child for example (Boevink, 2006).

Rita Verdonk had the strategy in campaigning to talk about her personal life as a strategy to become more likable and a people's person. Her family was even the 'reason' to wait with her candidacy announcement (Telegraaf, 2006: April 5; De Koning, 2006). Also Sap called a weekend with her love as a reason for not being aware of the situation in the party (Herderscheê, 2012). As previous studies have pointed out, this strategy has a positive effect on the likability of a candidate as a woman, but a negative effect on the credibility as a politician (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000).

Besides the personal choice for media attention for the personal lives, the media also still described the haircut or color of dress for women. The question is if the attention for trivial cases as personal issues, and focus appearance would violate the credibility and authority of women in the Dutch politics. Is there still an effect on the voter when the amount of attention for these issues is small? And does it distract from the political content?

To conclude this study, we can say that it is remarkable that there is a gender bias in the Dutch media, although it is not at alarming proportions. Especially because women and men received almost equal attention on their political agenda, both male and female were equally visible.

What the effect is on voters in the Netherlands should be further investigated. The purpose of this study was to attain some more insight about any differences for men and women in the political press. As this was one of the view studies that were conducted on this issue in the Netherlands, it is still unclear to what extent these findings apply on other media outlets such as television. However, it is very likely that this bias is not restricted to the written press only. Finally, the study shows that a feminine culture with relative high representation of women in politics is no guarantee for the absence of a gender bias in the media.

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