Women and Canadian Politics:
A Case Study of Toronto Women Candidates
During the 2006 Federal Election in the Canadian Press

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Abstract

This thesis offers a case study of the print coverage of Belinda Stronach, Olivia Chow and Carolyn Bennett, three female candidates vying for seats in the Greater Toronto Area during the 2006 federal election. An exploratory study, this thesis used both quantitative and qualitative analysis to examine the extent and type of coverage each candidate received and the nature of the frames used to depict their personal lives, their physical appearance and the viability of their candidacies. Soft news stories were prevalent in coverage. These stories personalized candidates by emphasizing romantic, marital and familial relationships. This study supports the contention that younger, female candidates are more likely to be sexualized in coverage than older female candidates. Additionally, this study ascertained the acceptability of women who play multiple roles in the political sphere, as both candidate and political spouse, is expanding compared to findings in previous research.

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This past year, I have been fortunate enough to witness incredible women in action on Parliament Hill. Seeing beyond the headlines, I more fully appreciate their sacrifices and struggles. For Tina Keeper and all the other women of courage who willingly step into the glaring spotlight of public life, I thank you.

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“Being a woman in politics is like being Ginger Rogers. You have to do all the same dance steps as Fred Astaire, but you have to do them backwards and in high heels.”

Ann Richards, Former Governor of Texas

Introduction

She entered the fray for the Democratic Party nomination with a simple posting on her website: “I’m in” (Robert, 2008). In the initial period after Hillary Clinton declared her intention to become the first female President of the United States, her candidacy was generally welcomed by the media as a demonstration of political courage. She was lauded by journalists for her desire to break the “hardest and highest” glass ceiling” in American politics. Yet the novelty quickly wore off. Clinton’s coverage went from glowing to what many commentators suggested was glaringly sexist. Reflecting on the spectacle of the Democratic primary race, Judith Timson wrote: “There are certainly legitimate reasons not to like Ms. Clinton, but that doesn't explain the very different treatment she has received in the media. While grown media men and women have swooned over Mr. Obama, confessing that he is so charismatic he gives them goosebumps, Ms. Clinton has been mocked, trivialized and denigrated in a way that should give every woman pause.” (Timson, 2008, L1).

Hillary Clinton’s news coverage is a reminder that despite the increased participation of women in the political sphere, there are still significant barriers to full inclusion that remain. In no small part, gendered media coverage of female political participation is a hurdle to overcome. As former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell stated, Clinton, “like all the candidates, will be judged on many factors -- issues,

character, judgment, trust -- and it should be the goal of all who care about the advancement of women that she be judged fairly on the same basis as the men” (Campbell, 2008).

Campbell’s hope for achieving gender equitable media treatment of politicians should not be reserved for the American political scene alone. Indeed, in light of the reduced number of female MPs elected to the House of Commons during the 2006 federal election, it is imperative that Canadian political press coverage be probed for its treatment of women. Inequitable press coverage of women candidates is not merely detrimental for the viability of women seeking elected office, but it is also harmful for the vitality of Canadian democracy.

The significance of an election goes far beyond the determination of who won and who lost in the final vote tally. A staging-ground for the crystallization of a policy agenda, campaigns and elections are a time for wide-spread citizen participation in the democratic process (Graber et al. 1998:7). Buchanan maintains that the quality of a democracy is measured not only by evaluating campaigns and the electoral process, but also by evaluating the performance of political actors engaged in the process (2001:362). For example, negative advertising campaigns and media depictions of acrimonious campaign races often contribute to negative perceptions of the political process among citizens (Kern, 1991: p.141).

Taking into account that “national voting in all Western democracies is media-centered, in the sense that candidates depend primarily on mass communication to reach voters,” (Patterson, 2000: p.191) it is imperative that the mass media occupy a significant role in any study of larger democratic functions.

Much scholarly work has been devoted to the lack of gender parity in Western democracies. From institutional discrimination at the grassroots level of political party candidate selection (Bakopanos, 2004; Bashevkin, 1991) to the lack of personal convictions among women to seek public office (Lawless and Fox, 2005), there have been numerous theories to explain the dearth of female elected officials.

As noted above, the 2006 federal election resulted in a small reduction in the number of female Members of Parliament elected to the House of Commons, from 65 in 2004 to 64 in 2006. As media coverage of election campaigns figures prominently in campaign strategies of all major political parties, it is instructive to understand what news frames were used to cover candidates and races, and how these frames may have contributed to or detracted from the construction of a gender-inclusive political sphere.

A large portion of the research conducted to date has focused on American political races, or in the case of Canada, has been targeted specifically at leadership level positions. Limited research has been conducted in Canada which pertains directly to constituency-level campaigning. As mass media coverage of elections most prominently features leaders and national party platforms, constituency race coverage remains one of the few avenues available to local candidates to showcase their individual skills, attributes and platforms. This is of increased significance to non-traditional candidates such as women and visible minorities. Constituency race coverage also remains one of the few opportunities possessed by citizens to acquire information about candidates, beyond party-disseminated publications or releases.

The literature on women in politics and media coverage remains inconclusive on whether gender equality has been achieved. This thesis aims to move beyond quantitative

analysis of gender coverage in the news media and qualitatively ascertain the nature of frames used to depict female candidates in local races in hopes of better understanding the intersection of gender and political discourse in the Canadian press.

Using three female candidates, this thesis offers a case study of the print coverage of Belinda Stronach, Olivia Chow and Carolyn Bennett, each vying for office in the 2006 federal election.

In the first chapter, I offer a literature review that charts patterns in news media coverage of elections. Research from Canada and other Western democratic countries will be addressed where appropriate. First, the role of news values in shaping election news will be discussed; second, the construction and impact of framing will be explored; and finally, media coverage of gender and politics will be elucidated.

The second chapter on methodology outlines how I approached the content analysis and qualitative frame analysis of female candidates and articulates the research questions used to pursue the analysis.

The third chapter provides background for the case study by examining the political context surrounding the 2006 election. In addition, short biographies of the three candidates in the case study are included to give background context to the type of coverage they received by the media during the campaign.

The fourth chapter features the results of the quantitative analysis and the fifth chapter of the qualitative analysis.

In the final chapter, I will compare coverage among the candidates, highlighting the common frames, and consider the results in light of past research. In sum, I hope to

elucidate how women candidates were framed in local races and evaluate the role gender played in the characterization of candidates at the constituency level.

Chapter I: Understanding Media Coverage of Elections and Women Candidates

Elections and Journalism

In the democratic process, elections play a vital role. Election campaigns are more than mere competitions; they serve an important civic function, enlightening voters about important issues regarding partisanship, ideology and candidate performance (Holbrook, 2006: p.13). Due to advancements in communications technologies, the mass media play a pivotal role in the dissemination of messages to the marketplace of ideas (Fletcher and Everett, 2001: p. 165). As a result, electoral campaigns have become media events: “Where once the site of the contest might have been in the mind of the voter, the first line of struggle has now shifted to the contest between the journalist and the candidate’s advisers for control of the campaign agenda and the interpretation of events and statements” (Gilsdorf and Bernier, 1991: p.3).

The modern election campaign in Canada, recognizable to today’s citizens, became entrenched in 1979. According to Frizzell (1989), that year marked the advent of the one-staged-event-per-day campaign and prepackaged regularly scheduled information releases about leaders and major political parties. Scripted campaigns entrenched a form of adversarial journalism that pitted journalists against political sources (Gilsdorf and Bernier, 1991).

Before discussing how women in politics are framed, it is important to understand how their coverage fits into the larger context of political journalism and what constitutes a news frame. This section will give an overview of “mediated electoral campaigning”¹ and discuss how the news media have responded by changing the nature of their coverage. In mediated elections, the mass media are the main conduit of information to

the public. Campaigns are tailored to the realities of news collection and dissemination. The one-event-per-day news release would be a prime example of political parties adjusting to the important role of news media in the political sphere.

At the outset, it should be noted that “the environmental context of the political system, the media system, and the media culture fosters different strategies of news management” (Pfetsch, 1998: p.89), and in turn shapes how mediated politics operates. The legislature is no longer the exclusive domain for political battles to be fought. Mediated politics means that partisan competition is waged in large part by harnessing the power of the mass media. Taras (1990) refers to election campaigns as political battles fought on the media stage (p.152).

The extent of the professional political communications machinery within a country is directly related to the nature of its mediated election campaigns. For instance, Leiss et al. (1990) determined that due to the structure of the Parliamentary system, there were fewer elections in Canada than in the United States and that factor correlated directly with the limited number of dedicated political communications firms north of the border. Elections in Canada are “understated” according to MacDermid (1997) due to the relatively short duration of a campaign. Traditionally, resources and strategies have been employed quite differently in Canada and the U.S., due in no small part to differences in political culture. For example, the frequent use of negative advertising in American politics by all political parties stood in stark contrast to grassroots and interpersonal communications strategies employed by the New Democrats and the Bloc Quebecois (Nesbitt-Larking and Rose, 2004).

In the aftermath of the 2004 federal election, which witnessed Liberal attack ads that capitalized on propagating fear of Conservative opponents, Jonathan Rose (2004) lamented: “Canadians have much less reason to be smug, and every reason to fear, that attack ads of such ferocious intensity, in which all pretense of decency is abandoned, may become a permanent and negative feature of our political culture.”(Rose, 2004: p.1)

Although the nature of journalistic imperatives that shape news production share common traditions in the Canadian and American context, there are significant differences between the Parliamentary and Republican governmental systems. These differences need to be taken into consideration during any comparison of American and Canadian-based research findings on media coverage of elections.

During election campaigns, reporters often highlight gaffes and indiscretions in an effort “to unmask a candidate by exploiting the disparity between the impression the candidate has been trying to create and what the incident seems to suggest”(Patterson, 2006: p.49). A focus on gaffes and indiscretions is only one example in a larger arsenal of journalistic tools used to transform hard news political stories into soft news coverage. Other examples of such techniques would be coverage that highlights what a politician is wearing, or the status of their personal relationships. Diverting attention from larger issues occurs during the regular political calendar, but such techniques employed during election campaigns are even more detrimental to the democratic process. Instead of constructively contributing to voter knowledge about a candidate, such coverage diminishes opportunities for voters to become well-informed.

Despite possessing the unique task of acting like a window for citizens into the inner workings of a campaign, it has often been said “the news media are more likely to

cloud and submerge the issues than to illuminate them” (Patterson, 2006: p.47). This can occur in no small part due to the limited frameworks with which journalists cover election campaigns (Tuchman 1997).

News determinants and political journalism in North America

Election campaigns are special events by virtue of their limited duration and infrequent occurrence, yet the process of gathering and constructing election news is similar to the manner in which all news is produced. Therefore, despite the aforementioned complex realities of the contemporary political stage, no election coverage, like any political journalism or news in general, should be evaluated as simply a by-product of communications machineries succeeding or failing to control the media agenda. Instead, any evaluation must take into account that “patterns of news content - the selection of events, sources, interpretive frames – are influenced by relatively constant pressures or determinants – people, organizations, forces that are less observable than content as such” (Hackett and Uzelman, 2003: p.332).

For example, Merritt and McCombs (2004) point out the norms which determine what is newsworthy are not absolutes. They suggest that journalism is influenced in large part by new developments in technology, changes in the social environment, and creative and entrepreneurial impulses (p.32). There are also bureaucratic underpinnings to the organization of news that remain constant in the construction of news. Termed news values, they are organizing principles that enable journalists to extract events from the wider social world and turn them into news. News values include: conflict; relevance; timeliness; simplification; personalization; consonance; unexpectedness; continuity;

composition of the news cycle as a whole; reference to elites; cultural specificity; and negativity (Saunders, 1991: p.272).

Coupled with the above-mentioned news values that guide story selection, the economic imperatives of news organizations must be addressed. It cannot be ignored that “media industries are becoming more and more concentrated, and the dominant players in each media industry increasingly are subsidiaries of huge global media conglomerates” (McChesney, 2006: p.29). Profit margins do play a significant role in the editorial decision-making processes that ultimately decide what stories make the evening news and the morning headlines. Finding news stories that interest the public is of primacy to media organizations because a small audience or readership means small advertising profits.

Hackett and Uzelman (2003) conducted a content analysis which looked at the various roles corporate influence played in Canadian newspaper content from 1998-2001. Their exploratory research determined that corporate influence impacted: how a newspaper covered their own parent company and the newspaper industry as a whole; newspaper editorial positions on news coverage – the dominance of advertiser and/or interest group-friendly content; double standards relating to politics and social class – the interests of affluent readers trumped issues and concerns of less affluent readers (p.335-342).

Variations in coverage also reflect, as Dornan (2000) points out, that newspapers eke out their own niche market by specifically catering to certain audiences by maintaining distinct ideological orientations. For example, in their analysis of print coverage of the 2000 Canadian General Election, Dornan and Pyman (2000) elaborated

on the ideological and economic realities that differentiated the different newspapers in their Toronto-based study. They found that the *Toronto Star* was predominantly interested in social and urban issues, the *Globe and Mail* in libertarian-style conservatism, and the *Toronto Sun* content was focused on feeding the reading interests of their majority blue-collar readership.

The emergence of the compact newspaper can also be viewed as a by-product of financial concerns shaping news products. A 2005 study by the International Newspaper Marketing Association (INMA) determined that changing broadsheet newspapers to compact editions will increase advertising revenues. Compact newspapers are mobile, much like the younger demographic newspapers are trying to attract.

Technological developments in the news industry have also impacted how coverage is gathered and reported on. Waddell (2004) points to the advent of the twenty-four hour cable news channels and the expansion of reporting on the internet, as causing “a gradual but steady shift at all newspapers away from straight news reporting during campaigns . . . It has been replaced by comment and opinion primarily from each newspaper’s own reporting staff” (p.239).

More broadly, an American study by Patterson (2000) studied 5,000 news stories between 1980 and 1999 from a wide spectrum of U.S. print and broadcast outlets to determine how news reporting was changing over time. Patterson (2000) concluded that the quantity of hard news stories, those with a public policy component, had diminished significantly, and that soft news, those stories pertaining to events with a highly dramatized, emotional content, had increased. During the initial period studied, soft news

was responsible for 35 per cent of news coverage, yet by 1999, it constituted over 50 per cent of news items.

This shift from hard to soft news coverage mirrors a trend away from traditional beat structures – “such as local government, the legislature, agencies, and politics – toward ‘relevant’ topics that are intended to touch what matters in readers’ personal, family and professional lives” (Underwood, 1998: p.175).

The influence of market forces, Bennett (2005) notes has resulted in dominant news values, which he terms “media biases,” that shape the current news media decision-making process: personalization, dramatization, fragmentation and authority-disorder. These values will be discussed below with examples drawn from the Canadian and American political spheres.

i) Personalization

Referring to personalized news as a “journalistic bias that gives preference to individual actors and human-interest angles in events over larger institutional, social, and political contexts,” Bennett (2005) suggests that journalists choose to negate probing analysis. Fearing analysis may lead to decreased audience interest, journalists instead choose “the relative ease of telling a human-interest side of a story as opposed to telling the deeper causes or effects”(p.35). Bennett illustrates this reporting trend by pointing to the tendency to focus on the lives of Capitol Hill decision-makers and not on the political decisions being made on Capitol Hill. The recent media frenzy surrounding Idaho Senator Larry Craig, who was arrested on suspicion of lewd conduct at the Minneapolis airport in August 2007, is one such example (Akers, 2007).

Certain politicians will capture the media's imagination for sensational scrutiny on a regular basis, more so than others. Coining the term "the Stronach-effect," Trimble (2005) outlines a shift in Canadian political reporting pursuant to the rise of Belinda Stronach as a political figure on the national stage, whose personal profile often trumps her professional activities in the news.² The term refers specifically to how the media use superficial evaluations of female politicians with the end result of diminishing public perceptions of their political effectiveness. Canada and the U.S. have previously witnessed the rise of two politicians whose fame was derived both from their political careers and their personal escapades, Pierre Trudeau and John F. Kennedy.³ However, media attention on the sensational aspects of their personal lives did not result in the same level of public condemnation as faced by female politicians such as Stronach.

ii) Dramatization

The dramatization bias according to Bennett results in news reports which are "most easily dramatized in short capsule 'stories' . . . American journalism has settled overwhelmingly on the reporting form of stories or narratives, as contrasted [with] analytical essays, political polemics or . . . problem-evidence reports" (p.36). Such 'stories' use vivid adjectives and adverbs to embellish the narrative quality of the subject matter. Loaded language can itself determine the extent of dramatization.

For example, fracas trumps consensus in political coverage and results in the political sphere seemingly forever mired in divisiveness. Internal party wrangling is more highly coveted by the media than even partisan divisions. Extensive media coverage of the internal party dissension over same-sex marriage was framed as one of the most highly polarizing internal party issues for both Liberals and Conservatives in the

2006 election (Ellis and Woolstencroft, 2006). Junior Liberal cabinet minister Joe Comuzzi became a focal point in coverage when he resigned his post to vote against Bill C-38 which legalized same-sex marriage.

iii) Fragmentation

Capella and Jamieson (1997) contend that fragmented political coverage, news items that do not place issues in a larger context but treat them as isolated events, make wider public debate on issues difficult. Indeed, in the federal election of 2006 the Conservative party capitalized on fragmented news coverage by releasing one policy announcement per day. As Waddell and Dornan (2006) suggest, the Conservatives seized control of the news agenda and limited the scope of debate about their five-point plan platform. “Compelled by their own responsibilities to document each announcement as it came, the media as a result had few openings or opportunities to raise issues that were not on the Conservatives’ playlist. The range of issues on which the party’s social conservatism had in the past made many voters uneasy simply never arose with any prominence” (p.222).

iv) Authority-Disorder

The final bias outlined by Bennett deals with the propensity by journalists to let authoritative voices, such as government officials, or sources from certain academic or private sector organizations interpret events which are confusing and pose a threat to the stability and social order of society. “There is bias in placing much news focus on the largely emotional questions of, ‘Who’s in charge’ and, Will order be restored?’ . . . (p.38). In their discussion of media coverage of affirmative action initiatives, Entman and Rojecki (2000) describes how the American media “manufactured discord” to

construct a policy issue which promoted a negative result if a change in the status quo occurred. He points out that the media coverage did not reflect popular sentiment among the general public as polling numbers demonstrated that 70 per cent of the population was in favour of affirmative action measures. Entman and Rojecki's conclusions reinforce what research by Lancendorfer and Richardson (2004) ascertained - that affirmative action coverage sometimes framed the issue as a social justice "remedial action," but more frequently framed it as an initiative promoting "preferential treatment" for certain groups with detrimental effects for America.

Bennett's four news biases are in no way an exhaustive list of how journalists routinely shape coverage into predictable formats. Indeed, a large body of literature exists surrounding news framing, its importance in facilitating story-telling and its role in shaping news content.

Framing News

According to Trimble (2005) "news framing is the necessary technique of processing and packaging information so it can be quickly conveyed by reporters and easily interpreted by the audience" (52). This process is often viewed as a result of journalistic imperatives (McCombs and Shaw, 1977), but more frequently, media scholars are also pointing to the increased importance of fiscal targets for news organizations (Entman and Bennett, 2001). Burton and Shea (2006) contend that journalists and news editors construct election news with economic realities in mind, but are not completely devoid of recognizing their role in the democratic process. They argue that coverage is firstly designed with a focus to the business side of selling news

stories; coverage is structured to entice an audience through chronicling the unfolding gamesmanship of a campaign. But placing a close second, they argue, remains the end goal of increasing citizen participation; coverage is, therefore, intended to elicit interest in the political sphere by creating excitement (p.30).

Goffman (1974) first coined the term ‘frame’ to delineate the boundaries of reference and logic of narrative which structure events. Rooted in observations of how theatrical productions were assembled into coherent narratives, his work transposed these theatrical concepts into a study of how meaning is constructed in everyday life. Media theorists subsequently built upon Goffman’s initial ‘frame’ concept and examined how frames are employed and what effects they manifest in the news media (Tuchman, 1978, 1997; Gamson and Mogdiliansi, 1989; Entman, 1990, 1993; Gitlin, 1980, 1998; Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Norris, 1997; Gandy and Li, 2005).

“Frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (Gitlin, 1980: p.6). According to Gamson (1989), a single event tells different stories, depending on what frame is used. A frame is composed of some aspects of a perceived reality selected in order to underscore the salience of a text, and in so doing, “a frame will promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993: p.52). In short, a news frame can also be said to act like a frame for a building, providing a structure around which everything else is arranged (Fountain, 2002).

As the organizational constraints of news collection and dissemination have become uniform with the standardization of “shorter newspaper reports and 30-second

television clips, framing allows reporters and editors to fit complex and even novel events into familiar categories” (Trimble and Sampert, 2000: p.52). A study by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) analyzing European political news in the Dutch print and broadcast media identified five frames that “largely account for all the frames that have been found in the news” (p.95). These include: conflict, human-interest, economic consequence, morality, and responsibility.

The work of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) shows that the most significant differences in framing occurred not between broadcast and print mediums, but “between sensationalist vs. serious types of news outlets”(p.93). The researchers determined that ‘sober and serious’ newspapers and television news programs most frequently used the responsibility and conflict frames, whereas those with a more sensationalist outlook on news coverage focused on the human-interest frame.

Headlines are often used to attract reader attention and, as van Dijk (1991) suggests, they are the pinnacle of news visibility. Moreover, headlines are often the only part of a news article that is read and recalled. Therefore, headlines play an important role in the framing of news. They define the parameters of who the principal characters are in a story, what elements of the story are salient, and how the story may be interpreted by readers.

Constructing campaigns

Analyzing the events of the 1979 Canadian federal election, Fletcher and Bell (1981) commented that election campaigns are games played by political parties for the benefit of the news media. Indeed, the ‘game frame’ has become the most widely used

journalistic method of structuring election coverage. However, it has been noted that game framing reinforces aspects of politics that the public find most repellent. (Patterson, 1993). For example, Trimble and Sampert (2004) define the game frame as encompassing evaluations of strategy including: the horse race, poll results, campaign strategies, leader and party evaluations, and candidate personalities (p.56). The expanding role of media in the election process and the influence of soft news journalism have resulted in the widening scope of game frame election coverage. Contemporary coverage frequently includes: party standings in the polls, gaffes, personality quirks and personal details about the lives of candidates; media-staged pseudo-events evaluated as measures of strategic savvy; party spin-doctors competing to control the public message; personal attacks, confrontations, and accusations (p.53).

The focus on excitement in game frame election news most often occurs to the detriment of substance, where the race itself takes precedence over the issues at stake (Serini, Powers and Johnson, 1998: p.95). Entman (1990) opines in *Democracy without Citizens*, “the dearth of informative “accountability news” perpetuates an unsophisticated audience,”(p.18) which in turn produces a public “ignorant and disconnected from politics”(p.29). One of the most highly criticized fixtures in election campaign coverage is the use of polls.

Increased resources devoted to polling have actually augmented the prominence of the horse race frame⁴ in the media’s campaign agenda. Media organizations secure pollsters to gauge the attitudes and opinions of voters and hopefully predict ballot box activity. “The results automatically become “news,” albeit news manufactured by the news outlet itself.” (Lichter and Noyes, 1995: p.78) Political parties also retain a

“pollster of record” to manage opinion data and strategically maximize support for a party leader and diminish support for other parties.

The accurate interpretation of polling data is indeed a public trust according to pollster Michael Marzolini (2006), yet he concedes that media organizations are often torn between sensationalist headlines and reporting what a poll actually says (p.253). Pollsters are hired to court more interest in election campaigns, and in so doing sell more newspapers and bump-up viewer ratings (p.253). The impact of polling has rendered it “the centerpiece of the campaign puzzle, the self-constructed prism through which campaign journalists view the candidates, the issues, the voters, and even their own role”(Lichter and Noyes 1995: p.79). As Frankovic (1998) notes, “Polls are not only part of the news today, they are news. They not only sample public opinion, they define it”(p.150). Yet as Broder (1987) noted, the public and the news media are often at odds during a campaign. Journalists are constantly seeking new information and new angles, whereas the concerns of the public are often static throughout a campaign. Polls that are said to determine public opinion are not necessarily as reflective of the public’s values or mood as news organizations contend (p.262-263).

Just as the poll has rooted itself as a mainstay in contemporary political reporting so too has the shift towards personalization of party leaders; a trend which has altered the way politics and politicians operate. (Fletcher and Everitt, 2001: p.173). This phenomenon referred to as “institutional presidentialization” (Maddens and Fiers, 2004) or “presidential parliamentarism” (Hazan, 1996), means the “operation of democratic systems is experiencing fundamental change without any concomitant change in their formal institutional structures” (McAllister, 2007:1). Leader-centric political and media

strategies have altered both how political leadership is covered by journalists and how incumbent MPs and new candidates behave on the media stage.

Federal leaders and the national agenda – wither the constituency race?

In Canada, as Clarke, Jenson, Leduc and Pammett (1996) explain election campaigns were once fought in each constituency “by individual candidates, bound together only by their party affiliation and the basic elements of the party platform. Today, they are fought largely on television by the party leaders. . . when a party succeeds in focusing the campaign on *its* agenda, it is often halfway down the road toward achieving its objectives” (p.73). According to Taras (1988) “Even powerful cabinet ministers, once able to assure their elections because of their control over local party machines, are aware that their electoral survival depends on the prime minister’s popularity, on the length of his coattails” (p.48). As studies on constituency campaigns in Canada suggest, local races are simply becoming “a surrogate or miniature replica of the national race” (Bell and Boland, 1991: p.79).

Party directives for national campaigns are influential factors which dictate overall election strategy, policy platform and how much money will be spent on local races. When the 1988 Free Trade Agreement became the focal point for media coverage during the election, local candidates were expected to highlight their party’s position, regardless of whether the issue directly mattered to their constituents. Sayers (1991) studied rural and urban ridings in British Columbia during the 1988 election and ascertained that neither the candidates, nor media, ever discussed in any depth the local implications of this national issue.

Local candidates themselves receive little major media attention, unless there is a visit from the national leader in which case the job of a candidate is “simply to keep out of the way of the television cameras so he doesn’t block the view of the leader and the band and the balloons” (Taras, 1988: p.48).⁵ As national parties increasingly target campaigns in competitive ridings, or strategically visit ridings with national significance to the party, only incumbents or candidates with strong opportunities for victory will receive direct support and the ensuing media coverage (Fletcher, 1987).

Competitive riding campaigns may receive increased funding from a party’s central coffers, yet as Bernier (1991) determined in a study of media usage in the Quebec ridings of Outremont and Frontenac, allocation of funds for media promotion is riding specific. His study suggested that mass media appeal is often not integral to a campaign interested in targeting specific groups within the community (p.115). For example, ethnic community radio stations or regional newspapers were viewed by party operatives as more effective. Differences between urban and rural areas and the heterogeneous composition of a riding are also determinants of what kinds of media are most effective at capturing the attention of voters.

The invisibility of local candidates in the mainstream media is troubling because the conduct of campaigns and the flow of information to voters are as central to the democratic process as the credibility of the ballot box process itself (Bell and Fletcher 1991: p.xix). An electorate which is poorly informed on the work accomplished and tasks neglected by their local representatives is an electorate which may dismiss the importance of selecting political representatives (Bell and Boland, 1991: p.106). Without more meaningful discussions in the media about how candidates are more than the sum of

their party platform, all citizens lose out. Personal values, life experience and varied skill sets are all important factors in selecting a political representative. Highlighting these qualities are especially important to non-traditional candidates, such as women, visible minorities or the disabled. Contributions by non-traditional candidates may enrich the political sphere in different ways from traditional candidates. A more inclusive political sphere can only be achieved when the electorate is well-informed, not only about the slate of candidates in their riding, but also about what their political representatives are actually required to accomplish. Although developments in technology, such as the use of the internet in election campaigns is changing the way female candidates can directly present themselves to the electorate (Banwart, 2003), the press remains the predominant conduit of information about candidates to the general public.

The final section of this chapter will look specifically at how gender is a factor in political journalism.

Political Women and the Press

Gaye Tuchman (1978) first coined the term “symbolic annihilation” to describe how the media efface, trivialize and marginalize the experience of women. Since then, substantial quantitative and qualitative research has been undertaken to better understand how the media portray women, including those engaged in political life.

Socially constructed values about gender change gradually over time. These values which dictate and differentiate acceptable behaviour for men and women are not static and are shaped by many historical factors. As such, gender analysis of the political sphere applied to elections, officeholders and political institutions should be undertaken

on a regular basis, as with each election cycle, a new dynamic may emerge (Duerst-Lahti, 2006).

The gendered divisions in politics and news

Evaluations based on gender are determined by contextual variables such as culture, locality and period of time. “Gender is used in virtually all societies as a way of classifying the world and determining the worth of people and of their actions”(Robinson, 2005: p.17). For example, the gender expectations related to raising children have shifted over the course of the twentieth century. Traditional scripts on acceptable gender behaviour on both sides of the Atlantic were framed around the private sphere as a female domain, and the public sphere as a male domain. As women entered the workforce, the feminine sphere expanded to include not only responsibilities of home and family, but also a public role as a wage earner. The same cannot be said for the male sphere, which continues to be predominantly situated in the public domain (p.82).

News coverage frequently differentiates politicians’ behaviour and perceived skill-set based on gender: women are often portrayed as “possessing expressive strengths – that they are emotional, understanding, gentle, warm, compassionate, while men are viewed as possessing instrumental strengths – they are independent, objective, ambitious, aggressive and knowledgeable” (Kahn, 1996: p.6). In the media, political portfolios are frequently constructed as either being ‘male’ or ‘female.’ In North America, men are frequently associated with possessing aptitude for economics, military affairs and international relations; whereas, women are more frequently portrayed as being better suited to issues such as childcare, education and health (Dolan, 2005).

The implications of these gendered divisions were discussed by Scharrer (2002) subsequent to a content analysis of newspaper coverage of Hillary Clinton's bid for the U.S. Senate. Scharrer concluded that the media did not respond favourably to Clinton when she tackled subject matter outside the parameters of traditionally 'female' issues. Clinton received negative coverage relating to topics such as military affairs and finance, and positive coverage relating to issues of social policy.

The nature of these gendered divisions is also linked to the political culture of a country. In Israel, where military service is obligatory for all 18 year olds, female politicians use motherhood to legitimate their authority on issues such as military expenditure and foreign policy. In this context, family experiences form the backbone of credibility to speak on such topics. Political positions are therefore reinforced by personal experience as being the parent of a former, current or deceased soldier (Lemish and Tidhar, 1999).

Just as the role of women in the political sphere has evolved in recent decades, so too has the nature of discrimination they face in the media. This section will look at how media coverage of female politicians evolved as more women entered the political process. Issues to be discussed include the initial invisibility of women in political coverage, the expansion of soft political news and the role of gender in hard news reporting.

Visibility/Invisibility

Several cross national studies indicate that in general, women receive less media coverage than men. The Global Media Monitoring Project, for example, selects one day

in the year to evaluate the proportion of men and women as news subjects (GMMP, 1995; GMMP, 2000; GMMP, 2005). The 1995 survey indicated that women formed only 17 per cent of total coverage, and five years later in 2000, women had only increased their coverage by one percentage point to 18 per cent. Such statistics suggest that limited coverage of women in politics is not an isolated phenomenon, and reflects larger trends in the media about the diminished value and interest placed on female activities.

Invisibility of women in the political sphere refers to the absence of coverage received by women in politics. When women first began to participate in public life, their contributions to the political sphere were minimized and negated through omission (Kahn, 1991, 1992, 1994; Kahn and Goldenberg, 1991; Norris, 1997). By negating or denying credible contributions by certain groups of political actors, the media produce a paradigm which “denies their existence, devalues their contribution to society, and trivializes their aspirations to participate, as fully-fledged members” (Niemi and Selgado, 2002).

When Kahn (1991) conducted the first content analysis of newspaper coverage of female candidates in the U.S., she focused her attention on Senate and gubernatorial races from 1982-1988. Her findings indicated an imbalance in the amount of coverage based on the sex of the candidate. Men were favoured on a daily basis with more paragraph space in comparison with female candidates, regardless of whether the female was perceived as a front-runner.

In several European studies, it was found that women were only given coverage as it related to their political party. Their male counterparts were given additional

coverage that went beyond party platform and explored personal convictions and individual political achievements (Latvia 2004; Estonia 2004; Italy 2004).

Invisibility of coverage can have several dimensions as a study by Osservatorio di Pavia (2005) reflects. In a study looking at gender and television in Italy, it was determined that women received substantially less coverage on the news than men (79 hours for women, 999 hours for men); the majority of women's coverage occurred on generalist and popular entertainment programming with higher levels of viewership.

Several researchers have studied different political variables which may help account for the lack of visibility received by women in politics. In a Dutch study, Wiestra (2003) suggested that the party affiliation of women should be taken into account when studying media coverage. For example, a high proportion of female political participation in Dutch politics occurs in parties of lesser prominence; therefore, conclusions about purposeful gender exclusion need to be tempered with the realities of plural party politics in different political contexts.

The level of authority that political women possess is seemingly also linked to the nature and extent of their coverage. As Norris (1997) concluded, female world leaders received more coverage than the majority of lower status female politicians. In addition, these women leaders almost received statistical parity with their male counterparts in terms of quantity of coverage.

Another form of invisibility that female politicians face relates to the 'filtering' of their speech compared to male politicians (Aday and Devitt, 2001; Gidengil and Everitt, 2000). Aday and Devitt (2001), for example, ascertained that of all Republican candidates for the 2000 Presidential nomination, Elizabeth Dole was more frequently

paraphrased than any other candidate in the race. With paraphrased speech coverage, women are not strongly linked to their own ideas, nor are their ideas portrayed with the same clarity or accuracy as male colleagues. Limiting supporting quotations also leads to the perception that women are forwarding ideas without credible basis (Devitt, 1999).

Identifying a female politician as the ‘wife of’ a more famous public figure is another commonly used news frame that negatively impacts women in the political sphere. Robinson and St-Jean (1991) suggest that by relegating a politician to junior-partner status in a dual-career family, the label ‘wife of’ “is used to denigrate the candidate’s considerable competence through a barrage of innuendo concerning the supposed advantages she gained from her husband’s political position” (p.150). In Canada, the first women to receive such treatment were Jeanne Sauvé (married to Maurice Sauvé) and Maureen McTeer (married to Joe Clark). According to Robinson and St-Jean, McTeer was especially hounded by the media, for using her maiden name and for not spending enough time with her daughter Catherine.

As the role of women expands in the political sphere, so too does the quantity of their coverage. Predominantly American research conducted on women and politics in the 1990s, and into the millennium, points to greater gender parity in the quantity of news coverage. For example Miller (2001) conducted a replica study of Kahn’s 1991 ground-breaking content analysis, and determined that candidates did not receive discriminatory coverage based on their gender. Research exploring barriers that impede women from advancing into leadership level positions determined that although women received quantitatively equal coverage, the type of coverage they received was different from male counterparts (Smith, 1997; Devitt, 1999). As Fountaine (2002) argues, the role of gender

in journalism needs to be re-theorized from the era of Tuchman to reflect “the 21st century, less in terms of visibility/invisibility and more in terms of the quality of media representation”(p.7).

When parity is not necessarily equality – privatizing discourses

The nature of news coverage politicians receive is, in part, the result of decisions made in the newsroom. The growing trend towards disseminating soft political news stories is making a significant impact both on journalism and the political sphere (Patterson 2000). Substantive discussions of issues and platforms are being replaced with coverage that focuses on the personalization of political figures (Bennett, 2005). The descriptor ‘tabloidization’ refers to the prevalence of subject matter better suited to a gossip magazine than the political pages of a newspaper. Topics covered in tabloid-style political journalism would include salacious stories of failed marriages or budding romances, and commentary on clothing and appearance.

Accompanying these stories are images which equally pique the interest of readers. As Hartley (1992) notes, with newspapers transforming their format and content styles, the inclusion of photos has become more important: “The popular media have pictorialized. None of them is made entirely of pictures, but even the word-based press depends on the crucial area of readership appeal of pictures . . . success and survival depend on popularity and that depends on pictures” (Hartley, 1992). These very pictures help politicians create images which are imperative if a candidate is going to create a political identity that voters feel they can trust on a personal level - one which goes beyond political accomplishments and agendas (Postelnicu, Martin, and Landreville,

2006). In the 2004 U.S. Presidential election, both George W. Bush and John Kerry used various photographic depictions of themselves to reinforce political skills such as leadership and coalition-building (Postelnicu et al., 2006).

Therefore, just as not all soft news political journalism is tabloid-style journalism, not all soft news is detrimental to political careers. In certain respects, soft news coverage of politics can be a benign method of humanizing political figures to the general public, relating personal details that make citizens relate to them on a non-professional level. A famous example of a politician demonstrating his non-political side was Bill Clinton's saxophone performance on the Arsenio Hall Show in 1992. Soft news coverage can endear a politician to citizens, but it can also erode public perceptions of professional credibility.

In American political journalism, studies indicate that soft news coverage is gendered with women more likely to receive coverage that pertains to their personal appearance, their marital status and their parental status; whereas, men are more likely to be connected to their occupation, experience or accomplishments (Devitt, 1999; Jamieson, 1995; Ashley and Olson, 1998). Elizabeth Dole, for example, received less coverage that related to her political platforms, or issues being discussed in the political arena, and more coverage pertaining to her private life, during her bid for the 2000 Republican nomination (Aday and Devitt, 2001; Heldman, Carol, Olson, 2000). Heldman, Carol and Olson (2000) also determined that political cartoons were used to sexualize Dole, in addition to underscoring her domesticity.

Depictions of female politicians' personal lives are often framed according to archetypes of idealized feminine behavior. Looking at coverage of female politicians in

the House of Commons in the 1980s, Robinson and Saint Jean (1991) outlined several dominant frames in coverage. Firstly, they identified the idealized ‘superwoman,’ defined as a “hybrid categorization that bridges traditional values of family and wife, and that of a modern career woman” (p.143). More than the representation of an actual politician, the superwoman composite is a benchmark from which women politicians are evaluated, and most often censured. Secondly, they identified the ‘champion’ frame, which was used to depict an older woman who entered political life after having fulfilled a traditional female path of marriage, children and other significant contributions to her community. A ‘champion’ has earned her place in Parliament. Such women are portrayed as matronly figures in an asexual manner.

In contrast to the frames outlined by Robinson and Saint Jean (1991), the entrance of significantly younger women into the political sphere resulted in new frames arising in media coverage. Most recently, Trimble (2005) coined the term the ‘Stronach-effect’: “an intense level of personal scrutiny and lavish attention to a candidate’s looks, sexuality and personal life” (p.18). Unlike previous male politicians whose personal notoriety was rooted in similar coverage, female politicians, such as Belinda Stronach, lose credibility as viable politicians when aesthetic evaluations become the focus of their coverage. As Ross (1995) comments “the reduction of women in the public arena to a basic sexuality is a device which is routinely and regularly employed by the media” (p.503).

Similarly, women who are also mothers frequently face increased media scrutiny surrounding their personal lives. Studies suggest that ‘political mothers’ often face criticism for neglecting their children, yet fathers whose political career keeps them away from family life are rarely condemned (Robinson and Saint Jean, 1991; Briske, 2004; van

Zoonen, 1998). In a study of candidates in United States 2000 gubernatorial and Senate races, women were more likely to be characterized by family roles throughout both primaries and general elections, yet men received negligible coverage of family-related matters during primaries and none during general elections (Banwart et al., 2003).

The ramifications for women of pervasive soft political news coverage are not universally agreed upon. Sreberny and van Zoonen (2000) suggest the trend may not be wholly negative, pointing to the growing visibility and prominence of both women and women's issues (social justice topics such as daycare, education, health care) on the political stage. Yet van Zoonen (2005) also contends that soft news coverage works against female politicians in other ways, serving "as a continuous reminder of their odd choices as women and their odd positions in politics" (p.95). Such media coverage reinforces women as 'outsiders,' who are not natural actors in the political sphere. Trimble (2005) underscores this point stating: "the press promote the established gender order and establish women's political aspirations as aberrant and unseemly"(p.19).

Norris (2007) also determined that special status in media coverage, specifically portrayals extolling a politician for possessing a better character because she is a woman, become political liabilities. High levels of expectations based on gender ultimately lead to higher levels of disappointment by the public when expectations are not met.

There is also growing evidence suggesting that soft news is changing the perceptions towards 'traditionally' female and male traits. In an analysis of newspaper coverage of male and female congressional candidates in Orange County, CA, Solomon (2004) determined that stereotypical traits were more prevalently employed in discussion of male candidates than female candidates. Indeed, compassion in male politicians has

become a highly vaunted attention-grabber and some politicians are capitalizing on the media coverage that ensues from highly public displays of emotion (Furedi, 2004).

Some media theorists like Bystrom (2006) assert that although some stereotyping does exist, the media playing field for female politicians is becoming more equal (p.173). She points to a shift in the methods that female candidates use to promote themselves, from the 1990s to the present, and suggests that far from reinforcing feminine stereotypes that are then reproduced in the media, politicians are reinforcing traits that were traditionally viewed as masculine like ‘toughness’ and ‘strength.’ As Dolan (2005) underscores, Congressional campaigns from 2000 and 2002 indicated that there were few sex differences in the issues addressed by candidates and gendered media interpretations were, as a result, limited.

As more women enter political life, they are, in limited numbers, attaining higher positions of political authority. Yet with these new roles come increased media scrutiny.

Viability for leadership

In a study of press treatment of the office of the U.S. Presidency, Duerst-Lahti (2006) determined that the U.S. political sphere continues to be framed as a gendered space where successful political figures are normalized as being men or possessing male characteristics. Specifically, she discusses the media’s attitude to finding “the right man for the job,” using masculine feats of military heroics, sporting glory and aggressive debate performances as methods of evaluation. Duerst-Lahti suggests that media-constructed qualifications for holding the Presidency are associated with stereotypical male traits, and therefore, females are delegitimized as potential contenders before ever

seeking candidacy. As only men have run for the Presidential office to date, exclusionary language has been normalized as acceptable, to the detriment of future inclusive races. Norris (1997) determined that women as political leaders are viewed as novelties, and portrayed as agents of change. Yet ultimately this type of framing underscores their outsider status in the political sphere, reducing their perceived viability for holding positions of authority (Dolan, 2006).

Fountaine (2002) determined that journalists frame the political sphere and successful political actors in masculine terms, even when there are no male participants. In New Zealand, the country's 1999 election featured two female party leaders as contenders for Prime Minister. Referring to Jenny Shipley and Helen Clark as "two Xena princesses," (in reference to a popular television drama filmed in New Zealand about Amazonian warriors), news coverage demonstrated that the media were goading the candidates to produce a 'cat-fight.' Rugby metaphors were frequently used to define the unfolding race, and the different physical size of the candidates was also employed to denote strength and weakness between the party leaders.

Gidengil and Everitt (2002) analyzed Canadian television broadcast coverage of the 1993 federal leaders' debates. Their conclusions on the nature of exclusionary language are similar to those of Duerst-Lahti, but can be more widely extrapolated as both men and women participated in the 1993 debates. They found that conventional political frames are superficially sex-neutral, yet "these frames are in truth profoundly gendered" (2002: p.234). Specifically, they referred to the predominant use of war, sports and violence related imagery to describe the debates on the evening news. Evaluating transcripts from the 1993 leader's debate, it was determined that 34 percent of the

metaphors used involved battle rhetoric (“a battle royal”), 20 percent concentrated on sporting metaphors, predominantly boxing, (“‘The contestants squared off,’ ‘bobbing and weaving,’ looking for the ‘knock-out punch’”) and 13 percent were devoted to general violent metaphors (“a good old-fashioned free-for-all”) (2002: p.224).

Adjectives employed to denote levels of performance are delineated according to a gendered spectrum: strong/masculine vs. weak/feminine. Verbs with a negative connotation like accuse, attack, or blast were more prevalently associated with female discussion, and neutral terms like say, told, talked about, were more prevalently associated with male speech. Then Prime Minister Kim Campbell was more frequently associated with warfare rhetoric than any other leader in the debate and Audrey McLaughlin was associated with the least amount of warfare and sporting rhetoric. McLaughlin also received the least amount of coverage of any leader. Transcripts demonstrate that Campbell was not in fact the most aggressive leader in the debate (quantitatively evaluated by finger-pointing, fist clenching or interrupting other speakers). Yet she received more coverage suggesting she was more aggressive than her male counterparts, which was framed as a negative attribute (p.232).

Gidengil and Everitt use the term ‘gendered mediation’ to explain the double-standard in coverage faced by women in political media coverage. The term suggests that “women will be marginalized in news coverage if they fail to conform to the dominant confrontational norms of political behaviour” (Gidengil and Everitt 2002: p.232), as was the case with Audrey McLaughlin, who received minimal coverage. On the other end of the spectrum, Kim Campbell received heavy, yet mostly negative coverage, for participating in a style of confrontational politics.

A more recent study of Canadian political journalism by Trimble (2005) analyzed coverage pertaining to the 2004 Conservative leadership race which featured two male candidates, and one female, Belinda Stronach. Trimble concluded that Stronach received a large quantity of coverage, but in new items “she was sexualized, her business experience trivialized, her ambitions disparaged” (Trimble 2005: p.18). The established gender order was promoted and women’s political aspirations were portrayed as abhorrent and unseemly (p.18).

The changing face of politics and news coverage?

This literature review has covered a number of different areas, which when taken together lay the foundation and context for my research. A broad range of Canadian and international studies suggest the depiction of women politicians in the media remains in a constant state of transformation. Women in politics were initially marginalized in press coverage because their role and contributions were negated in the news. As the news landscape changed through technological developments and increased corporatization of news organizations, the evolution of news content followed suit. The increase in soft news political coverage produced content which frequently highlighted the private lives of politicians, rather than their professional accomplishments. Among media scholars, there remains no consensus about whether gender inclusiveness has been achieved in the political press. Therefore, I will examine the nature of news frames in the press coverage of three female candidates from the GTA during the 2006 federal election. The women included in my content analysis reflect the diversity of female candidates on the Canadian political scene. Hailing from different professional backgrounds, family situations and

political stripes, the common framing patterns of these candidates will hopefully shed light on framing trends in the Canadian political press.

Chapter II: Research Questions and Methodology

In order to examine the themes of the previous chapter, I conducted a press coverage case study for the duration of the 2006 federal election. The case study used newspapers from the Greater Toronto Area. The three female candidates included in the case study were Carolyn Bennett, Olivia Chow and Belinda Stronach. Case studies are an ideal research tool for gathering large amounts of information but they cannot be generalized beyond the specific cases (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). Despite this limitation, my research offers the basis for future studies into the news framing of women at the constituency level during election campaigns in Canada. To fully explore the news items contained in this case study, the research involved both a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative framing analysis.

To better understand both quantitatively and qualitatively how women candidates were framed in GTA election coverage, I explored framing patterns which were highlighted in previous research studies as problematic and inimical to gender equality in coverage.

Research shows that female politicians have often faced invisibility in the press, resulting in their roles and contributions being negated in coverage. Using quantitative analysis, I assembled the following research questions to determine the nature of candidate visibility in press coverage:

- 1) What kind of visibility did the three most prominent female candidates in the GTA receive?
- 2) How much coverage did they receive?
- 3) In what kinds of news items were they featured?

4) Were they visually depicted in photographs or political cartoons?

5) Were they featured in the headlines of stories?

6) Were they the dominant figure in the story?

Previous research also suggests that female politicians often receive sexist stereotyping or high levels of scrutiny regarding their personal lives. Quantitatively, I wanted to determine how framing of personal issues impacted coverage of female candidates vying for election in the GTA. Therefore, I posed the following research questions based on framing of the personal issues:

1) How often did candidates receive coverage pertaining to their marital status or romantic lives?

2) What degree of scrutiny was given to their other family roles?

3) How often were the physical looks, dress or aesthetic qualities mentioned in coverage?

The game frame remains a constant in election coverage, with the viability of each candidate constantly dissected by journalists. Each of these female candidates was a high profile political figure on the GTA stage before the 2006 election campaign. Therefore, I posed a series of research questions to quantitatively determine how candidate viability was presented in coverage based on evaluation variables used in previous studies.

1) How often were candidates connected to their professional accomplishments?

2) How often were campaign finances discussed in coverage?

3) How often were prominent campaign supporters reported upon?

Quantitative research questions alone cannot determine how women are framed in election news. Therefore, qualitative research questions were added to determine how the meanings of words and imagery and certain frames used to present news stories impacted the nature of candidate coverage.

- 1) How did the use of game frame coverage impact the framing of a candidate?
- 2) How did coverage of the private sphere impact the overall election coverage of a candidate?

In researching these questions, I took into account the similarities and differences between each of the candidates, as well as took note of the variations in style of coverage based on the type of news item.

Content Analysis

Robertson (2000) refers to content analysis as “a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner, for the purpose of measuring variables” (p.115).

I began by determining the news items to be included in the sample of analysis. I chose to use newspaper coverage exclusively because as Underwood suggests: “daily newspapers are at the base of the information pyramid in the modern media age, and much of the serious news and information that is used by broadcasters, rewritten by the wire services, and repackaged by new media providers originates in newspaper reporting” (Underwood 1998: p.175).

As Canada's largest city, Toronto offers a multiplicity of ridings with a high proportion of female candidates, vis-à-vis other Canadian regions⁶. Taking into account the length and scope of this thesis, the study evaluated newspaper coverage pertaining to the selected candidates and culled from the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star* and *Toronto Sun*⁷. Each newspaper possesses a different set of journalistic and financial resources, as well as operational imperatives, and therefore provided an opportunity to ascertain framing trends across the print medium. In their analysis of print coverage in Toronto during the 2000 election, Dornan and Pyman 2000 elaborate on the ideological and economic realities that differentiate the different newspapers. They state that the *Star* was interested in social and urban issues, the *Globe* in a libertarian-style conservatism, and the *Sun* in feeding the reading interests of their majority blue-collar readership. In addition, unlike community newspapers which serve a specific geographic and demographic group, the newspapers selected for analysis offer coverage of the entire GTA.

There were 45 ridings within the GTA during the 2006 election. Initially, all print coverage which included at least one female candidate from a major political party that was featured in the *Toronto Star* or the *Globe and Mail* was coded⁸. Of the 45 races, not all featured female candidates and of those which did, not all races produced sufficient, if any substantial news coverage,⁹ which would enable a viable examination of coverage to be accomplished. Therefore, I decided to limit the study by selecting the three female candidates who accrued the most coverage over the election period; as a result, my case study was limited to coverage of Carolyn Bennett, Olivia Chow and Belinda Stronach. At this time, I also decided to include coverage from the *Toronto Sun* to augment the size of the sample and to add a tabloid-format newspaper to the analysis.

The time period for this study was from 1 December 2005, two days after the writ was dropped, until 25 January 2006, two days after the election. Any item, located anywhere in the newspaper that mentioned one of the three candidates, including news articles, features, columns, editorials or opinions and accompanying photographic or editorial cartoon imagery was included in the sample. There were 79 news items in the *Toronto Star*, 48 in the *Globe and Mail* and 52 in the *Toronto Sun*.¹⁰ Election news items were found on the front page of the newspapers and in the designated sections on election campaigns. Editorials and cartoons pertaining to the election were located at the end of the main section of the newspapers.

Following the selection of the three newspapers and three candidates, I determined which news elements would be coded for the content analysis. Wimmer and Dominick (2000) note the importance of concise definitions in the construction of content analyses, therefore ensuring that all items in the sample are systematically and thoroughly analyzed. Building upon the work of Trimble (2005) who analyzed framing of the 2004 Conservative party leadership race, I coded for the sample of news items pertaining to visibility, privatizing discourses, and viability.

For the purpose of this study, visibility is defined as media attention given to a candidate through various news items (columns, editorials, cartoons etc.); the privatizing discourse is defined as news items which discuss the marital or romantic status, the family life and the personal aesthetics related to a candidate; viability is defined as evaluations of a candidate's ability to win the election in their constituency based on political capital (candidate qualifications, human and financial resources of the campaign).

I measured visibility five different ways by determining 1) the quantity of coverage the candidate received; 2) what type of news item they were featured in (news, feature, column, editorial/opinion, visual image (photo or cartoon); 3) whether a candidate was named in a headline; and 4) whether a candidate was named three or more times in the story.

I measured a candidate's private sphere coverage by coding news items in three categories: items relating to 1) the marital or romantic status of a candidate; 2) other familial roles; and 3) physical appearance, wardrobe, or personal characteristics.

Taking into account that each candidate was engaged in a constituency race depicted by the media using game frames, I chose to measure viability in the race by coding news items relating to political capital: 1) the professional qualifications of a candidate; and 2) the campaign resources (human and financial).

According to van Zoonen (1994), quantitative analysis restricts researchers from fully exploring what lies beyond the manifest meanings of communication texts; thus limiting a multidimensional understanding of what is being communicated through a text. Therefore, by employing a mixed methodology, my research reflects both the strengths and reliability of numeric analysis and the subtle nuances of qualitative study.

Qualitative Frame Analysis:

The role and significance of frames in the news media has been discussed in the literature review. The goal of a framing analysis is to elucidate which frames are used in news discourse and explore the unnoticed ways in which they construct cultural meanings (Miller and Ross, 2004). The qualitative analysis provides an opportunity to better understand framing trends relating to visibility, the private sphere and viability.

According to Andersen and Meyer (1988) qualitative analysis can be “distinguished from quantitative methods as that they do not rest their evidence on the logic of mathematics, the principle of numbers, or the methods of statistical analysis” (p.247). As such, Lindlof (1995) argues, that qualitative research can be defined by four key components: “1) that the research has a theoretical interest in human interpretational activities, 2) that it is concerned with the study of socially situated human actions, 3) that human investigators are the primary tool of investigation, and 4) it relies on narrative forms for coding data and writing results” (Robertson, 2000: p.94).

My qualitative research was conducted by analyzing news items as narratives. Election coverage frequently structures races as theatrical events, replete with performers and critics (Capella and Jamieson 1997).¹¹ Therefore, the words, phrases, and imagery used by journalists to depict the performances by candidates and evaluate the candidates themselves form the basis for the qualitative analysis. More specifically, two main framing themes were probed. As previously elaborated upon in the literature review, the game frame is a core organizing principle of election framing in news. Therefore, language related to competition, war or combat was evaluated, as was language which

related to winning and losing. Words and imagery which produced gendered evaluations of the aforementioned framing elements was analyzed.

Also discussed in the literature review was the increase of soft news coverage which brought a focus on the private sphere to the forefront of political reporting. In so doing, gendered evaluations were increased, often to the detriment of female candidates. Therefore, the language, phrases and imagery related to a candidate's professional and personal life depictions were analyzed to ascertain the extent of gendered coverage.

By using a mixed methodology which combines a quantitative analysis and a qualitative frame analysis, I was able to provide a more thorough exploration of how the press covered Carolyn Bennett, Olivia Chow and Belinda Stronach. I addressed my research questions by investigating first, the quantity and type of newspaper coverage of the three female candidates, and second how the three were framed.

The following chapter sets the campaign coverage to be analyzed in the quantitative analysis and frame analysis in context. Firstly, it situates the political stage upon which the individual campaigns unfolded. Secondly, it gives context to the candidates selected for the analysis, as it provides much needed background into their public personas that were constructed long before the writ for campaign 2006 dropped.

Chapter III: Prelude to a winter campaign

When Paul Martin's government fell after losing a vote of non-confidence on 28 November 2005 in the House of Commons, it marked the end of 17 months of embattled governance by a minority Liberal administration. Block voting by all opposition parties resulted in a 177 to 133 vote tally.

In late November 2005, the prevailing feeling was that "the 2006 election was to be fought between the same parties, with the same leaders and many of the same candidates, on similar issues to those of 2004" (Pammett and Dornan, 2006: p.9). Yet, as Pammett and Dornan (2006) note, since the 2004 election, opposition parties had learned from their previous failures and had skillfully repositioned themselves as credible alternatives to the Liberals. Polls suggested that the coming plebiscite was the Liberals to lose, but it remained evident that despite 13 years in government, the Liberal Party was not as robust as it had been in the lead up to the previous election.¹²

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a contextual overview of the national political dynamics that shaped the 2006 election. As the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is the focus of the accompanying analysis, only the three main parties vying for seats in the GTA will be discussed: the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, and New Democratic Party.

In addition, each of the female candidates studied in the frame analysis will be profiled to briefly explain her political background and the extent of her media and public profile prior to the election.

The incumbent Liberals

As Clarkson suggests: “whatever their technical sophistication may be, the eerie truth about Canadian political parties is that their fate rests in the hands of their leaders, whether for better or for worse” (Clarkson, 2006: p.26). Branded as “Mr. Dithers” by the *Economist* magazine in February 2005, the term reflected Paul Martin’s horizontal management style, which resulted in endless caucus debate and reversible decision-making.¹³ Enacting eighty-two legislative measures, notably Bill C-38 which made Canada only the third country in the world to legalize same sex marriage, legislative achievements for the most part went publicly unheralded.

In addition to Bill C-38, measures to protect children from sexual predators and to combat human trafficking were enacted, Aboriginal nations received increased powers to enhance self-government, and low-income Canadians were given rebates to cope with sky high energy prices. Martin also appointed Michaëlle Jean, a Quebec journalist and Haitian émigré as governor general. Yet a plethora of breakthrough initiatives did not translate into political capital in the public realm. “Paul Martin proved unable to explain to the public how his government’s individual achievements fit into a larger picture” (Clarkson, 2006: p. 28).

Similarly, the February 2005 budget, a panoply of spending totaling \$41.8 billion over six years, was derided for its attempts to please everyone, all at once. In the *Globe and Mail*, an editorial entitled, “The Prime Minister opens the floodgates,” described the spending spree as: “Mr. Martin put aside his tightwad days and sprayed money around the country like a broken garden hose” (*Globe* Editorial, 2005, A24).

In Ontario, the federal government was continually lambasted by Premier Dalton McGuinty for a \$23-billion fiscal imbalance. In an attempt to appease provincial critics and court positive public opinion, Martin signed a deal worth \$6 billion with the province, yet the political returns were limited.

The most significant tactical decision of the Martin government occurred in May 2005 with the very high-profile defection of Belinda Stronach. The MP for Aurora-Newmarket, who had only recently emerged on the political stage as a candidate in the Tory leadership race, was a contributing factor that enabled the minority government to maintain power during a decisive budget vote. The vote of independent MP Chuck Cadman to maintain the Liberal government was just as crucial.

It was the legacy of the sponsorship scandal, however, that eventually brought an end to the Martin government. Despite a promise to call an election 30 days after the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities was issued the Liberals had lost the “moral authority” to govern according to opposition parties. Liberal arrogance and accountability became catchphrases of criticism in the lead up to the winter election.(CBC News Online, 2006).

Conservatives

For Conservatives heading into the winter election, it was the public image of Stephen Harper which was of most concern. “Humourless in public, shy and apparently uninterested in being personally appealing to the public or the media, Harper preferred to be evaluated on the basis of his messages rather than his image” (Pammett and Dornan, 2006: p.18). It was his very detachment from the public in the previous election upon

which the Liberals had capitalized, casting aspersions as to the ‘real agenda’ that Harper intended to implement should he ever become prime minister (Greenaway, 2005).

The loyal devotion of the Western Canadian conservative fold was not translating into support in other vote-rich regions, and in mid-June 2005, “the Conservative party kicked off a major charm offensive . . . launching summer plans to recast leader Stephen Harper as a kinder, gentler soul, and the Tory caucus as youthful and ambitious rather than old, staid and angry.” (Woods. 2004, A6.)

By all accounts, the fall session in the House was rocky for the Conservatives. Speculation was rife that Deputy Leader Peter MacKay would leave Ottawa for a run at the Nova Scotia premiership, after continued behind the scenes tensions with Harper (Blanchfield, 2005). As the fall session of Parliament grew more acrimonious, peaking with the release of the Gomery Report, the term ‘culture of entitlement’ entered the Canadian vernacular as a popular catchphrase to describe the incumbent Liberals (CBC News Online, 2006). Despite their flagging numbers in the polls, the Conservatives used this negative sentiment to kick-start their campaign momentum.

In Ontario, two-thirds of the Tory candidates had previous electoral history with the Progressive Conservative Party and underscored the credibility of presenting the new Conservative Party to Canadian voters as “a competent, moderate and a national alternative to the Liberals” (Ellis and Woolstencroft, 2006: p.69).

The New Democrats

When Jack Layton came to the helm of the flagging NDP in 2003, he brought increased public profile and a significant bump in opinion polls, party membership and party finances (Whitehorn, 2006). With a prominent NDP member, David Miller, claiming victory as Toronto mayor, NDP hopes for increasing seat numbers in Toronto in the winter election were high.

As 2004 party financing amendments came into effect, curtailing party financing by trade unions and corporate entities, the traditional close ties between the trade union movement and the NDP party began to loosen.

Despite the NDP's close cooperation with the Liberals, which produced what Layton would later term the 2005 'NDP budget,' the parties parted ways in late October over the issue of health care (Iverson, 2005, A9). The Supreme Court decision in the *Zeliotis-Chaoulli* case which permitted private health care insurance and opened the door to discussion about a two-tier healthcare system in Canada, became a point of contention. As neither Prime Minister Paul Martin, nor Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh would give sufficient assurances to the satisfaction of the NDP that "public medicare would be protected, the election clock countdown commenced" (Whitehorn, 2006: p.94).

Entering the election, strategic voting was a major concern for the NDP. In 2004, Liberal fear-mongering about Stephen Harper and the Conservatives led many left-leaning voters to vote strategically for the Liberals (Decima Research, 2006). The poor showing in the Greater Toronto Area was a case in point, where leader Jack Layton was alone in representing his party. Therefore, the target became that of convincing soft

Liberals that given the solid track record of 19 NDP MPs in the House, even more New Democrats would produce increased social justice oriented legislation (Whitehorn: p.96).

Also of significance in the lead up to the election was the NDP's commitment to producing an 'affirmative action' slate of candidates. By election time, the NDP offered the highest percentage of women candidates standing for election (35 %). Overall, 51% of the slate was designated as filled by diversity candidates: women, openly gay or lesbian, aboriginal, and/or disabled individuals.

The Candidates

The following three brief descriptions explain the public profile, professional and personal backgrounds of the candidates who appear in the accompanying quantitative and qualitative analyses. This section is intended to help situate the coverage received by candidates in the election.

Carolyn Bennett

Elected to Parliament in 1997 in the riding of St. Paul's, Dr. Carolyn Bennett first came to the public stage as a physician and hospital administrator fighting the proposed closure of Women's College Hospital in 1989.¹⁴ She was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto and a Board member of the Ontario Medical Association. She made an unsuccessful bid for a seat in the provincial legislature in 1995. In 2002, Bennett wrote a book entitled: *Kill or Cure? How Canadians Can Remake Their Health Care System*. As a parliamentarian,

Bennett's most important portfolio was as Minister of State for Public Health in the government of Paul Martin.

Bennett is married and the mother of two adult sons.

Olivia Chow

When Chow decided to run as the NDP candidate in Trinity-Spadina, she was prepping for a third showdown with incumbent Liberal Tony Ianno. Defeated previously by Ianno by slim margins (805 votes in the 2004 election), the political rivalry was well-known.

A high-profile veteran on the Toronto political scene, Chow was first elected to public office as a school board trustee in 1985. In 1991, she became the first Asian woman elected to Toronto Metro Council and after the city amalgamated, she was returned three more times to City Hall. On her personal website, she cites her role as Toronto's first Children and Youth Advocate, a role which enabled her to introduce nutrition programs into schools across the city, which now serve over 70,000 children, as her greatest achievement as a politician.¹⁵

Emmigrating to Canada from Hong Kong as a young teenager, Chow remained heavily involved in immigrant services and issues throughout her municipal political career. She served with the Chinese Canadian National Council, as well as the Chinese Information and Community Services.

Married to New Democrat leader Jack Layton since 1988, Chow is known on the national stage as a part of one of Canada's most high-profile political couples.

Belinda Stronach

One of the most high-profile female candidates running in the 2006 election, Belinda Stronach arrived on the political scene in 2004 when she ran for the leadership of the Conservative Party against Stephen Harper. She eventually placed second in a three candidate race, garnering 35 per cent of the vote. Elected by a narrow margin as a Conservative in the riding of Aurora-Newmarket in 2004, she crossed the floor to join the Liberals and save the government from falling during a motion of non-confidence. Stronach maintains her decision was made “to better safeguard the principles and values for which she was elected,”¹⁶ yet critics maintained she abandoned her party and constituents for personal gain. After joining the Liberals, Prime Minister Paul Martin bestowed three senior cabinet portfolios on Stronach: Minister for Human Resources and Skills Development, Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal and Minister responsible for Service Canada (Blatchford, 2005).

As the daughter of auto parts magnate Frank Stronach, and a businesswoman in her own right, Belinda Stronach had a media profile that most candidates could only dream about. Among her many international accolades: she was ranked second by Fortune Magazine in 2002 in its list of the world's most powerful women in business and named one of Canada's "Top 40 under 40"; she was ranked as one of the world's 100 most influential people in 2004 by TIME magazine; and she was named by the World Economic Forum in 2005 as a member of its network of global young leaders.

At home in Canada, Stronach's professional achievements are often overshadowed by a preoccupation with her personal life. Stronach's love life was the talk of the Canadian media when her relationship with Conservative Member of Parliament

Peter MacKay dissolved in the wake of her defection from the party (Doyle, 2005).

Stronach is twice-divorced with two children from her first marriage.

Chapter IV: Content Analysis

The findings of my quantitative and qualitative analysis will be presented in two separate chapters. First, I provide a quantitative analysis of the news sample, including all items culled from the duration of the 2006 federal election campaign. In the first section, I focus on the amount of coverage, the type of news item, the dominance of each candidate in the news item, the focus of the article on the constituency race and whether or not the candidate was featured in a headline. In the second section, I focus on the prominence of the personal issues in the candidate's coverage by assessing the prevalence of marital/romantic status, family, and aesthetic depictions. In the third section, I focus on the frequency of depictions of viability, specifically the reporting of professional qualifications, campaign supporters and campaign finances.

The news coverage

The content analysis includes all news items printed from the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and the *Toronto Sun* from 1 December 2005 to and including 25 January 2006, the duration of the 2006 federal election campaign. Each item was then coded according to visibility, privatizing discourse, and viability, each of which was elaborated upon in the previous section on methodology. Before embarking on a discussion of the content of the news items, I will describe the overall coverage the three candidates received, including the types of news items in which they appeared, whether they received three or more mentions in the article, and whether or not the news item pertained to their role in a constituency race. Items were also coded to indicate whether the candidate was mentioned in the title and whether or not there was a photograph or

cartoon image of the candidate. The type of news items used to cover a candidate are significant for the overall framing of a candidate. For example, visual depictions, whether a cartoon or a photograph, provide little understanding of a candidate's policy platform. Photos are used to entice readers to consume more news stories and images are more likely selected for attention-grabbing purposes and not for substantive reasons. Similarly, news articles provide opportunities for candidates to explain their positions through their own words and actions. News articles provide information to readers based on a journalist's sense of objectivity. An opinion piece or column is by its nature rooted in subjective analysis of the editorial board or columnist. Therefore, the dominance of one type of news item employed over others, will indeed impact the framing of a candidate.

Visibility

This discussion compares and contrasts the coverage between the three newspapers of Carolyn Bennett, Olivia Chow and Belinda Stronach. Each news item was coded as a news article, a feature, a column, an editorial or opinion piece, cartoon, photograph, headline, three or more times mentioned, or constituency race related.

During the 55 day campaign, the *Star* provided the most election news coverage of these candidates, with 79 news items, the *Globe* produced 48 news items, and the *Sun* printed 52. Overall, Olivia Chow was the candidate who received the most media attention, as she was mentioned in 96 news items, compared to 61 for Belinda Stronach and 23 for Carolyn Bennett (see Appendix B).

Chow received the most coverage in the *Star*, where there were 45 news items published, compared to 29 in the *Globe* and 22 in The *Sun*. In comparison, the *Sun*

published more news items mentioning Belinda Stronach, with 25, more than any of the other candidates. Carolyn Bennett was mentioned in only five news items published in *The Sun*. She received the least coverage of the three candidates, accruing 13 news items in *The Star* and four in the *Globe*. Stronach received 15 news item mentions in the *Globe*.

As could be expected, hard news articles were the most common type of news item in the sample. There were 88 items in total, representing just under half of all news items in the sample: *The Star* featured 49, the *Sun* featured 17 and the *Globe* had 22. Chow received the most hard news coverage with 53 news items, compared to Stronach with 21 and Bennett with 14. The extent of hard news mentioning Chow should be contextualized by four contributing factors: she was a well-known city councillor whose tenure at City Hall overlapped with the early weeks of the campaign; she was the wife of a national party leader; she was participating in a constituency campaign in a riding where she had been defeated by the incumbent Liberal twice before; and the use of her name and likeness in a Liberal operative's blog developed into the first national controversy of the election.

With 22 photographs and two political cartoon news items, 40 per cent of Stronach's overall coverage comprised visual depictions (see Appendix C). Stronach received more visual coverage than any other single category of news item coverage. The *Sun* was responsible for half of the photos, running 11 over the course of the campaign. Eight photos were printed in the *Star*, including two cover shots. Three photos appeared in the *Globe*, one of which was a cover photo. Stronach is featured alone in 14 of the 22 photos (67 per cent), and is accompanied in 33 per cent by a high profile male supporter or her former boss, Stephen Harper.

The extent of Stronach's photographic coverage in *The Sun* can be partially attributed to two dominant factors. Firstly, she was a public figure who received a lot of media scrutiny relating to her looks and private life, prior to the start of the 2006 campaign. Secondly, by virtue of its existence as a 'compact newspaper' and not a 'broadsheet' like the *Globe* and the *Star*, the *Sun* contains a higher image-to-print ratio than the other two newspapers.¹⁷

Chow also received considerable photographic coverage (see Appendix C). There were 21 photos of Chow with one cartoon depiction. The majority of photos which included Chow, 55 per cent, were printed in the *Star*. The *Star* was also ran the most news items which included mention of Chow. Just over 40 per cent of those photos included her husband Jack Layton. Only one was a group photo, the others were exclusively of the couple.

Three photos of Bennett were published and she received no cartoon depictions. The only photos of Bennett appeared with articles that included thumbnail-sized photos of all the candidates discussed in the article.

The extent of photographic coverage also correlated with the age of the candidate. As the youngest of the three, Stronach received the most, whereas Bennett, who was the eldest, received the least photographic coverage.¹⁸

Columns were the next most frequently coded news item in the sample. There were 33 column news items, with the *Globe* and the *Sun* each containing 15. The *Star* published three columns, all pertaining to Chow. Stronach received seven news item mentions in the *Sun*, Chow received five and Bennett three. The large quantity of column

coverage in the *Sun* is also related to its ‘compact’ newspaper format, which heavily relies on commentary and opinion.

There was only one editorial news item coded from the *Globe* and it mentioned Chow. This is not surprising because editorial pages of these newspapers are reserved for commentary relating to the national political scene and rarely delve into constituency level politics, unless there is a larger national angle.

Just as Stronach’s image was the most prominent of the three women, so was the appearance of her name in headlines. Candidates’ names appeared in 26 headlines and Stronach received 58 per cent of those headlines. The *Globe* published four, the *Sun* five and the *Star* six headlines relating to the candidacy of Belinda Stronach. The *Star* was also the only newspaper to print a series profiling a single candidate entitled “The Belinda Saga.” Chow’s family name was mentioned in 11 headlines, with the *Star* publishing eight, the *Globe* two and The *Sun* one. Bennett was never mentioned by name in any headline (see Appendix D).

In terms of frequency of mentions in an article, with coding enumerating articles which featured a candidate’s name at least three times, Chow featured prominently in only 53 per cent of her print news coverage. In comparison, Stronach was the prominent figure in 67 per cent of her print news coverage. Bennett was the prominent figure in 63 per cent of her coverage (see Appendix E). Chow’s less prominent presence in news coverage relates to her secondary status in news items which focused on husband Jack Layton.

Privatizing Discourses

As suggested by Trimble (2005) “privatizing discourses act as de-qualification by situating the woman politician firmly in the domestic realm and suggesting she does not belong in the public, political world” (p.13). This section will outline the extent that privatizing discourses, such as references to marital and romantic ties, family life and aesthetic descriptors, were used to depict the three woman candidates (see Appendix F).

As the wife of a national party leader, Olivia Chow’s marital status was discussed more than that of any other candidate. Chow’s marital status was noted in 43 news items, equivalent to 58 per cent of all news items about her. Eighteen of 43 mentions occurred in the *Globe*, with 19 occurring in the *The Star* and 6 in *The Sun*. Yet references to her marriage were predominantly incidental to the news items themselves. Two-thirds of the 43 news items which mentioned Chow’s marital status were incidental references. Instances where news items elaborated upon the relationship itself were less frequent and were often rooted in the personalization of Jack Layton as a husband. For example, one article delved into the holiday traditions of party leaders and Chow’s Chinese ancestry featured in the culturally blended celebrations in the Chow-Layton household (Delacourt, 2005a, A6). In another, Chow’s battle with thyroid cancer at a public medical facility was used to underscore the couple’s support for public medicare and deflect away from Layton’s use of a semi-private facility for a hernia problem (Perreux, 2006, News 8).

Stronach received the next highest marital status media scrutiny with four news items in both the *Globe* and the *Star* and three in the *Sun* (see Appendix F). Of those 11 news items, three referred to the fact that she was twice-divorced and enumerated her previous husbands’ names and brief synopses of the failed marriages. In the *Star*, Rosie

DiManno wrote in her column that Stronach enjoyed the company of “celebrity athletes, if only occasionally marrying them.” (DiManno, 2005, A2). Three news items also contained references to rumours of an alleged romance with former U.S. President Bill Clinton. Words such as ‘boyfriend,’ and ‘lover’ were used to describe her previous relationship with Conservative MP Peter McKay.

Carolyn Bennett did not receive any references to her marital status.

Neither Chow nor Bennett received any media coverage relating to their family roles. In contrast, 89 per cent of news items referencing Stronach’s family life, referred to her specifically as a daughter, or referred to her father. The *Star* used terms such as “boss’s daughter” (Diebel, 2005c, A6), whereas the *Sun* used terms such as “Daddy” in reference to Stronach’s father Frank (Blizzard, 2006, News 22). All references relating to Stronach as a daughter included mention of the Stronach family company Magna International Autoparts, headquartered in Aurora. Three news items identified Stronach as a mother of two children. Only the *Star* gave any details regarding the age of the children or who was the father. (Diebel, 2005c, A6).

All three candidates received some form of aesthetic evaluation in coverage. Aesthetic evaluations ranged from descriptions of a candidate’s physique, appearance, style of dress or haircut. Stronach received seven, Chow received three, and Bennett received two news item mentions based on appearance. Only the *Star* printed physical descriptions of Chow and each was linked to her role as Layton’s partner in politics and life. For example, one article referred to Chow and Layton as “an attractive power couple.” (Goddard. 11/01/06. *Toronto Star*, E1.).

In contrast, Stronach's aesthetic depictions were much more varying in scope and length. The first article in Linda Diebel's "Belinda Saga" series for the *Star* was written as a tongue-in-cheek parody of the superficial coverage Stronach frequently receives (Diebel, 2005, B2).

In all four of the *Sun* news items, coverage extended beyond descriptions of outfits and contained reference to her age, evaluation of physique and clothing. The following sentence from *Sun* columnist Mike Strobel illustrates the type of coverage printed in the *Sun*: "There is Belinda Stronach, 39, brainy, gorgeous in that Sgt. Pepper jacket, buttons and epaulettes. It is Liberal red" (Strobel, 2006a, News 6).

The only news item referring to Bennett using aesthetic references was printed in the *Star*. The article refers to Bennett as possessing "an earth-mother vibe [which] emanates from beneath the pinstriped power suit" (Evans, 2005, A6). The same article also makes reference to her speaking style "a Demi Moore rasp combined with Sean Connery's way of turning an "s" into a "sh" (Evans, 2005, A6).

Viability

As Trimble and Sampert (2004) noted, game frame election coverage encompasses evaluations of strategy including: the horse race, poll results, campaign strategies, leader and party evaluations, and candidate personalities (p.56). The prevalence of game frame journalism in GTA election news resulted in each of the three candidates receiving coverage evaluating their viability as candidates. As the slate of

candidates and political dynamics in each constituency were different, evaluation techniques employed by the media differed depending on the race.

In terms of quantity, Carolyn Bennett received the largest number of news references to her professional qualifications with 12 (see Appendix G). Two-thirds of those news items were published in the *Star*. The race for St. Paul's was largely framed by differentiating candidates not only along partisan lines, but also along occupational lines. Bennett was primarily identified to as "a popular Toronto doctor" (Evans, 2005a, A6.) and "a former family physician" (Lorinc, 2005, M3). She was less connected to her role as Minister of Public Health with only three news items making reference to it.

There were 10 news items relating to Chow's professional qualifications, half of which were printed in the *Globe*, three in the *Star* and two in the *Sun* (see Appendix G). All of the news items discussed her years as a Toronto city councilor. Only one article in the *Star* stated that her formal educational background was in fine arts (Gonda, 2006, B2).

Belinda Stronach also received 10 news items relating to her professional qualifications. Half were published in the *Sun*, with three appearing in the *Globe* and two in the *Star*. Two-thirds of those news items mentioned her position as Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, with the remainder discussing her years as a Magna International executive (see Appendix G).

Framing of the race for St. Paul's was rooted in the depiction of a competition between three prominent personalities. Bennett did not receive any news coverage relating to the strength of her campaign team or campaign resources. In comparison, Chow received 13 news items, six of which were printed in the *Star* and five in the

Globe. All of the news items related to support from various groups and notable figures. Stronach received 11 news items related to the strength of her campaign team and political backers. Six such items appeared in the *Globe*, four were published in the *Sun*, and one in the *Star* (see Appendix H).

Stronach was alone in receiving coverage which pertained to the financial situation of her candidacy or campaign. There were 17 such references, six which appeared in the *Globe*, three in the *Star* and eight in the *Sun* (see Appendix I). Such news items related her extensive personal wealth as “an heiress” (Diebel. 2005c, A6) which enabled her to “quit her \$9 million-a-year job (*Sun* staff. 19/01/06. *Toronto Sun*, News 16) on the board of “Daddy’s company – Magna International” (Blizzard, 2006, News 22) and buy herself a career in politics. Similarly, there were eight news items which referred to Stronach’s ‘star power’ candidacy, and only one each for Chow and Bennett (see Appendix J).

As was intended, the quantitative analysis determined the frequency of candidate visibility based on: the appearance of a candidate in different types of news items; the appearance of a candidate’s name in headlines; the frequency of a candidate as a prominent figure in a news story; and the extent that a candidate’s image was used in a photo or political cartoon. The *Star* published the largest quantity of news items relating to the three candidates, followed by the *Globe* and then the *Sun*. Olivia Chow was the candidate who received the most overall media attention, followed by Belinda Stronach and Carolyn Bennett. However, Stronach received the most photographic coverage of all the candidates. Indeed, 40 per cent of her total coverage comprised visual depictions.

In terms of privatizing discourses, the quantitative analysis demonstrated the frequency that the personal lives of candidates, such as references to marital status, family life and physical appearance, were referred to in election coverage. As the wife of a national party leader, it was not surprising that Olivia Chow received the most coverage relating to her personal life. Over half of the new items in which she was mentioned discussed her marriage to Jack Layton. In contrast, Carolyn Bennett did not receive media attention relating to her personal life. Stronach received the most extensive a high scrutiny relating to her personal life. Coverage related to both her divorces and dating life and included references to her relationship with her father. She also received substantial coverage which made references to her clothes, hair and physical appearance.

In regards to viability, the quantitative analysis determined the frequency that references to a candidate's professional qualifications appeared in coverage, as well as the number of references related to the strength of a campaign based on its political backers and financial resources. Carolyn Bennett was strongly connected to her role as a former physician and to a limited degree her role as a junior minister. The strength of her candidacy was not described in reference to her supporters or campaign wealth. In contrast, Stronach's campaign was frequently described in association to elite individuals of considerable political influence and financial clout and she was frequently referred to as a 'star candidate.' Olivia Chow's campaign coverage also differed from that of the other candidates because its perceived strength was linked to support by grassroots volunteers and the New Democratic Party machinery.

The results of the quantitative analysis only shed light on the frequency that news items relating to visibility, privatizing discourses and viability appeared in election

campaign news coverage. To fully understand how these variables impacted the framing of the three candidates involved, it is necessary to complement the quantitative findings with a qualitative analysis of the election coverage.

Chapter V: Candidate Coverage During the Campaign

The work of Capella and Jamieson (1997) underscores how game frame coverage is dominant in contemporary political journalism. The game frame themes that will be used to probe the coverage of Carolyn Bennett, Olivia Chow, and Belinda Stronach are the following: competition, winning and losing; and performance, style and perception. Additionally, the personalization of candidates through coverage of their personal lives will be probed and its impact on candidate framing analyzed.

Carolyn Bennett

An amicable competition for St. Paul's

Despite being an incumbent and junior cabinet minister, and having won by a landslide in the previous election, press coverage did not suggest Carolyn Bennett had any sort of advantage over her opponents. “All eyes are on the race in St. Paul’s and its trio of high-profile candidates” (Evans, 2006, B3) wrote a journalist in the *Star*, emphasizing a three-way race in the midtown riding.

St. Paul’s was of interest to the media because it boasted “Canada’s highest concentration of university-educated voters, and constituents who know which way the political winds are blowing.” As a traditional bell-weather riding, the victor had belonged to the governing party since 1984. Therefore, coverage dramatized the campaign as “a titanic local struggle with Canada-wide implications” (Travers, 2006,A6).

Coverage often suggested that the race for St. Paul’s was unlike an average election campaign. One journalist even referred to the campaign as a “zany political comedy” (Evans. 04/12/05. *Toronto Star*, A6). “Setting up the campaign – The leftie

economist is up against this really polished television anchor, who shocks everybody by announcing he's going to run as a Conservative. Then, he goes around town saying the liberal media have a bias against his party. Smack dab in the political middle is this doctor . . . she's famous because before she was in politics she delivered, like, half the babies in Toronto." (Evans, 2005, A6). The headline which accompanied the article referred to each candidate by their professional designation: "The Capitalist, the Anchor, the M.D." (Evans, 2005. *Toronto Star*, A6).

As leaders in their respective professional fields before entering the political fray, the content of candidate exchanges was given added emphasis in coverage. In the *Sun*, Bennett even noted the different campaign dynamic from previous years: "the 55 year old doctor said that competing against a veteran newsman and a well-known economist means she has had even more chances to express her opinion" (*Sun* staff, 2006c, News 6).

One high-profile all-candidates meeting, for example, was held on the topic of peace in the Middle East, with each candidate defending their partisan positions with personal anecdotes. Foreign affairs are rarely the substance of constituency races, yet the subject underscored both the specialized interests of area residents and the diverse professional expertise of candidates. At the meeting, Bennett discussed her work as chair of the Canada-Israel Friendship Group while her opponent, Conservative candidate Peter Kent, recounted his experience of being embedded with Israeli forces commanded by Ariel Sharon at the Golan Heights. Another all-candidates debate, which was referred to as 'an accessibility debate' because it featured sign language and other specialized translation for people with disabilities, also reinforced that the St. Paul's campaign was

not like other election races. Surprisingly, language used to describe exchanges between candidates was not rooted in combative rhetoric.

The Maternal Physician

Bennett's role as Minister of Public Health was suggested to be "tailor made to her professional credentials as a family physician" (Lorinc, 2005, M3), yet it did not garner much discussion in coverage. It was advised in the *Star* that "To win again, Bennett must shuck the burdensome Martin image" (Travers, 2006, A6) and focus on her own accomplishments. The media downplayed her role in the Liberal Cabinet and instead highlighted her previous public health work.

As noted by one journalist "Bennett's doctor-on-call identity has been part and parcel of her entire political career" (Evans, 2005, A6). Not only was she connected with healthcare, but also her connection to the maternal, non-scientific aspects of the profession was underscored. Bennett explained that a rotation in Barbados early in her career reshaped her view of medicine. "I think that's when I became a very non-medical model person. I became very obsessed about (how) Mother Nature had a certain way of doing things, and we as doctors shouldn't get in the way" (Evans, 2005, A6).

The same journalist suggests Bennett's style of dress is misleading because it does not properly reflect the extent of her maternal character. She wears "power-politics pinstripe suits but has this total earth-mother side," wrote Evans. "She doesn't burn incense in the constituency office or canvass in Birkenstocks. The vibe comes from all the years Bennett immersed herself in the mysteries of childbirth"(Evans, 2005, A6). This one passage reinforces that maternal qualities in politics are irregular and unnatural;

underscoring the contention of van Zoonen (2005) that news coverage is often inimical to the political ambitions of women by suggesting that they do not fit in the political sphere.

Bennett also received press critiques related to her oration. In the *Globe*, it was suggested Bennett could be “dogged by her rambling speaking style” (Lorinc, 2005, M3). In the *Star*, her pronunciation technique was described as resembling that of cross between the rasp of Demi Moore and Scottish actor Sean Connery (Evans, 2005, A6). The journalist made a connection between the tone of her voice and her ability to ‘coax’ babies out of the womb, once again reinforcing Bennett’s maternal side. In this context, the maternal character to her voice is not framed as a political attribute. In contrast, an article in the *Sun* which referred to Bennett’s speaking style described her as a “normally fast-talker” (Fuller, 2006, News 20).

Overall, coverage of Bennett’s years as an obstetrician-gynecologist can be perceived as generally positive. As Sreberny and van Zoonen suggested, soft news coverage of female politicians often focuses attention on women’s issues like childbirth and women’s health, shedding light on topics which might otherwise not be discussed on the political agenda (2000).

Similarly, Bennett did receive coverage that did not relate specifically to the race for St. Paul’s but focused on so-called women’s issues: children, health and education (Dolan, 2006). As the Liberal Minister for Public Health, she participated in a variety of forums throughout the campaign on different issues. At Havergal college, her high-school alma mater, Bennett was a member of a roundtable discussion with young girls on the role of women in Canadian politics. Bennett was also featured in an educational CBC

television experiment in ‘innovative electioneering,’ applying the speed-dating model to partisan politics.

In many respects, Bennett’s coverage is in keeping with the ‘champion’ frame outlined by Robinson and Saint Jean (1991). Bennett is depicted as a long-serving community leader who is benevolently engaged in the political process. Her foray into federal politics is framed as a sacrifice on behalf of the community: “Bennett is a popular Toronto doctor who gave up her practice when she won a seat in the House of Commons” (Evans, 2005a, A6). Yet long before she entered her first federal race, she had already given up the practice of medicine and come to prominence in Toronto as the “hospital administrator who saved Women’s College Hospital” (Goddard, 2006, A4).

A private affair

Frequent descriptors such as ‘earth-mother’ create a maternal persona associated with Bennett, which reinforces the criticisms of Kahn (1996). Her work suggested that female politicians are framed as emotional, gentle and compassionate, whereas men are framed as independent, aggressive and objective. Although Bennett is framed as maternal, her private life role as a mother is never mentioned. Information relating to her maternal side is kept strictly professional. She is never identified in coverage as a mother or a wife. Interestingly, both her opponents are described in relation to their family roles as husbands and fathers (Evans, 2005, A6).

In light of previous research, it is significant that the male candidates are personalized through their familial obligations and those of Bennett are omitted in coverage. Bystrom (2006) contends that the media playing field is becoming more equal,

as women candidates face less criticisms regarding the balance of their personal and public roles and men receive more coverage related to their private lives. Although limited to coverage of the race for St. Paul's, the lack of personal life details regarding Bennett and their inclusion for her opponents is perhaps a sign that a new equilibrium in gender coverage is indeed developing.

Olivia Chow

A grudge match for Trinity-Spadina

Even in the early days of the election campaign, Chow was fueling media interest, as she resigned her position at Toronto City Hall for a third attempt at unseating Liberal incumbent Tony Ianno. Her resignation in November 2006 rehashed criticisms from the previous election when "She was criticized in the 2004 election for running federally after just being re-elected to council (Daly, 2005, B2)

When the federal campaign trail had yet to produce any controversy, Chow's departure from City Hall provided a controversy that journalists capitalized upon. Before formally resigning her seat, Chow was at the centre of another City Hall media scrum. A fellow councillor declared it was inappropriate for the council to fast-track Chow's agenda items so she could pursue her federal ambitions (Grey, 2005, A18). The same article also suggested that by resolving noise by-law violations for local residents, she could benefit by garnering more potential supporters in a federal race that she lost by only 800 votes in 2004.

Throughout the campaign, Trinity-Spadina was a focal point for horse-race coverage. This occurred for several reasons. First, the race for Trinity-Spadina was

emblematic of the Liberal versus New Democrat struggle for urban ridings, and specifically for dominance over vote-rich Toronto. As Jane Taber in the *Globe* explained: “Electing her would deny the Liberals the riding – thereby bringing the Conservatives one seat closer to government” (Taber, 2006, A5). Second, the Green party had made significant inroads in the 2004 election. Political watchers were keen to see if a Chow victory might be thwarted once again by disillusioned NDP voters casting their ballot for a different left-wing party (Lorinc, 2005, M3).

But beyond the partisan wrangling, media coverage predominantly reinforced the personal rift between the two candidates. In a *Globe* column that purported to explain the psychology behind the political spat, John Barber wrote of Ianno: “he openly resents the “media darling” image of his inveterate opponent, plus the fact that every time he bests her in a hard-fought federal campaign – twice so far – she gets more attention in defeat than he gets in victory.” (Barber, 2006a, A14). Indeed, the three times lucky adage was employed in coverage: “Some people say third time lucky, but I’m not leaving it to luck” Chow told the crowd at her nomination meeting (Daly, 2005, B2).

Public forums were frequently the backdrop for candidate clashes and the same hot button issues repeatedly emerged. Foremost of these issues was the Toronto Island airport, which was referred to in the *Sun* as “another nail in Grit coffin” (Fuller, 2006, News 20.) Chow supported closing the airport, which she claimed was a money losing facility, whereas Ianno defended the Liberal government position of constructing a new ferry system to connect the airport to the downtown transit system.

Two other dominant issues produced conflict between the candidates. The extensive media coverage surrounding the Boxing Day shooting death of a Toronto

teenager brought the issue of gun control to the forefront. Toronto Mayor David Miller publicly supported the Liberal anti-handgun platform, which led columnists such as Jane Taber to wonder whether Chow would lose support to Ianno as a result (Taber, 2005, A9).

The other major issue of the campaign related to differing positions on how to address the issue of Chinese head tax reparations. The Liberals believed in financial investment in historical and commemorative activities compared with the New Democrats who supported individual financial payments for survivors and spouses. The extent of coverage surrounding Chinese head tax reparations may not have been as extensive as it was, had it not been for a political gaffe by a Liberal party operative in late December 2005.

Mike Klander, executive vice-president of the federal Liberals' Ontario wing, wrote a blog entry entitled "top ten things that make me sick." In the number ten spot was a picture of Olivia Chow beside the picture of a chow chow dog. Under the picture was a caption that stated "separated at birth." Although the other items on the top ten list including references to "sexy Rona Ambrose" and "ethnic Rahim Jaffer," were criticized in the media, it was the tenth item on the list which incited a flurry of media commentary.

Jane Taber used the blog incident to discuss the impact of blogs in the political sphere (Taber, 2005d, A4). Also in the *Globe*, Roy McGregor opined in his column that after almost a month of drab electioneering, a blogging Liberal, not even running for office, may have in fact "launched the 2006 campaign all by himself" (McGregor, 2005, A2). Sheila Copps in the *Sun* suggested that "Klander's references – rightly seen, in my view, as racist and sexist . . .[gave the public] a glimpse of what current high-level

Liberal Party officials actually think of them.” (Copps, 2005, News 28). She went on in her column to suggest that “in today’s party machine, non-white voters are viewed as commodities, to be traded for seats which will guarantee a majority. The only difference in the Klander blog is that the public actually found out.” (Copps, 2005, News 28).

Issues of race and ethnicity not only appeared in coverage of the blog controversy, but also were used as fodder for constituency race coverage. For example, conflict among voting cleavages in Trinity-Spadina was framed along racial and ethnic lines. “Ianno, who has been MP since 1993, has a large following in the Italian and Portuguese communities (Daly, 2006b, B4.). Referring to the composition of the riding, it was reported in the *Globe* “Almost one in five of its 106,000 residents are Chinese . . . observers speculated that Mr. Ianno’s chances would be hurt by his party’s failure to back an official apology and direct compensation for the head tax on Chinese immigrants” (Mahoney, 2006, A7).

Horse race coverage, exemplified by articles which focused on block voting by ethnic groups, underscores the limitations of game frame journalism which is rooted in predictions of winning and losing. Such a narrow focus does not reflect the larger scope of mitigating factors. For example, only the *Star* mentioned that the Chinese community “has been divided in the past when it comes to politics” (Daly, 2005a, B2). The article outlined that many in the Chinese business community did not support Chow due to her denouncements of the Chinese government over human rights violations and for criticism that “she doesn’t crackdown on public health and tell them to lay off” (Daly, 2005, B2) restaurant owners over kitchen violations. It was the only article which vaguely touched upon the reality that different waves of immigration brought different communities of

ethnic Chinese to Canada and that a voting block based on race was actually not a foregone conclusion.

A battle of words

The intensity of the horse race in Trinity-Spadina was underscored by the use of competitive language throughout the many weeks of coverage. The circumstances surrounding the competition, a third-time match-up, are framed as forging “one of the fiercest battles in the city” (Daly, 2005, B2).

Both directly and indirectly, the riding campaign is associated with violence through the language which described her campaign activities. Summarizing an all-candidates debate, it was reported that “Candidates sparred over gun crime, child care and cash for cities” (Daly, 2006b, B4). A headline referring to the same event used boxing terminology to proclaim “Ianno Chow spar again” (Daly, 2006, B4). Other reports of their public encounters suggested they “faced off” (Fuller, 2006, News 20). Reporting directly on Chow’s speech, aggressive language was used to describe her exchanges with others. Terminology like “she charged” (Daly, 2006a, B2) typifies her coverage.

Nonetheless, Chow was not exclusively framed as an aggressor. As the following headline suggests, at times she was also portrayed in a victim role: “Chow assailed at city council” (Gray, 2005, A18)

The conflict framing in the coverage extended beyond the tepid personal relationship between the two candidates in Trinity-Spadina. Throughout the campaign, coverage chronicled unfolding campaign warfare. “In recent weeks the battle between Ianno and Chow has been marred by allegations of sign sabotage and sign-stealing.

Chow organizers say hundreds of signs have disappeared from entire streets, while Ianno's campaign claims numerous signs have been stolen from front lawns"(Daly, 2006b, B4.).

Aggressive language and imagery used to describe both Chow and her political rivalry with Tony Ianno very much impacted how her political performances and style were evaluated and framed in coverage.

"Her approach is somewhat disarming"

The repercussions of horse race style coverage resulted in higher visibility for Trinity-Spadina and intense scrutiny of its candidates. As one *Sun* columnist alluded to early in the election campaign, the candidates themselves may not have especially merited such an intensity of coverage. "Chow has already lost twice to Liberal incumbent Tony Ianno, who used to have a horrendous parliamentary attendance record – until he became Minister of State for Families and Caregivers, that is. How many times does one have to lose an election before losing the privilege of "star" candidacy? (Taube, 2005, Comment 23).

Horse race coverage also reinforced a politically aggressive image for Chow, resulting in a degree of negative coverage. In the following passage, John Barber's disdain for Chow is palpable. "Olivia Chow is brash as she marches her little squad of canvassers up Manning Avenue, pushing along the laggards and dispatching others across the street to intercept pedestrians, laughing and shaking eagerly proffered hands, acting for all the world as if she had already won the election (Barber, 2006a, A14). His commentary is in stark contrast to a similar description of her campaigning reported in

the *Star* “Bearing no efforts, she rallied 1,000 volunteers to knock on doors and get out the votes yesterday” (Boyle, 2006, B5).

Barber’s comments can be construed as extremely gendered in that they suggest Chow’s campaigning demeanour to be unseemly because it breaks with traditional feminine modes of behaviour. Gidengil and Everitt (2002) argued that media attacks on women who break with gender conventions are not uncommon. His evaluations of her political style could also, however, be viewed as a reflection of his partisan personal values being asserted.

Criticisms of Chow’s political style were rare in coverage. Her campaign supporters were not only mentioned, but given the opportunity to voice their positive support on several occasions. The perception created by such coverage suggested Chow was competent, well-liked, and ran a strong campaign. At one of the last meetings Chow attended as a councillor, Mayor David Miller was characterized in dramatic terms when he summarized the career of Chow in municipal politics: “choking with emotion, the mayor praised Ms. Chow as “incredibly tenacious” for knowing how to get things done at city hall”(Stuffco, 2005, A24). A news item in the *Star* summarizing her City Hall career called Chow “a master of municipal politics” (*Toronto Star* Staff, 2006d, B4). A friend of Chow’s, former Toronto deputy mayor Case Ootes, even complimented her personal political style: “Obviously, she’s a very determined person. Her approach is somewhat disarming” (Porter, 2006, B1).

News items referred to a wide variety of supporters from waterfront residents who opposed the expansion of the Toronto Island airport (*Toronto Sun* staff, 2006b, News 8), to a young woman inspired to get involved in the political process after meeting Chow

(Teotonio, 2006, E4) to a traditional arch-enemy of the NDP, the Canadian Taxpayer's Association, pledging support for Chow to defeat the incumbent Liberal (Taber, 2006, A5). In addition, there are several references in all three newspapers to the support of the Chinese Canadian National Council, and several speculative references to the support she could receive from the 18 per cent Chinese speaking residents of the riding (Lewington, 2006a, A17). In the aftermath of the Klander Blog affair, the focus on the support of the Chinese community intensified. Indeed, it was suggested in one report that the Klander blog "sideswiped" the campaign of Liberal incumbent Tony Ianno, helping Chow gain momentum (Whittington, 2005, A4).

Only the *Sun* officially endorsed Chow as one of their preferred GTA candidates. Candidates were selected "because of their strong work in the past, their excellent resumes or because they will be a far better fit in the riding than the current incumbents" (*Toronto Sun* staff, 2006d, Comment 2). Such an endorsement conflicts with certain frames used to depict Chow as a candidate in previous news items, yet it complements the anti-Liberal sentiment of the *Sun* editorial board that decried Paul Martin and the Liberals "Bogeyman politics" (Blizzard, 2006, News 22) throughout the campaign. Just as the Canadian Taxpayer's Association endorsed Chow to defeat a sitting Liberal, so too did the *Sun*.

Married to a national party leader, Chow's political style and performances can not be separated from her role as wife of Jack Layton. Indeed, her marital responsibilities in the public sphere, and perceptions of her role in private, contributed to her overall framing.

“the wife of Jack Layton”

Robinson and St-Jean (1991) asserted that for a female politician, being the wife of another politician marginalized her individual political aspirations and activities in the media. Although their research was rooted in analysis of late 1980s politics, more than fifteen years later, some of their findings still have merit. Olivia Chow’s marriage to NDP leader Jack Layton did impact the nature of her news coverage. Yet the nature of her coverage demonstrates that much has changed in both Canadian society and the journalism field since Canada’s first generation of women politicians was the focus of media scrutiny.

A variety of frames were employed in coverage to describe Chow’s role as a spouse. Chow was depicted as the behind-the-scenes powerbroker in the marriage; she was depicted as an equal partner in a modern commuter marriage; and she was depicted as a junior partner to her husband. Each of these characterizations produced both positive and negative coverage.

It should be noted that coverage of a political spouse is not unusual. All national party leaders are personalized in media coverage and as the wife of a party leader, Chow would have been featured in several articles regardless of her professional status. As a fellow candidate, she did receive more scrutiny from the media by virtue of her public role at campaign events, which involved speaking to the media and not simply attending as a spouse. For example, in an article about the difficulties faced by the NDP to “crack the city nut” (Blatchford, 2005a, A5) during elections, a few GTA candidates were discussed, one of whom was Chow. With a slate of high-profile NDP candidates possessing significant professional accomplishments, like former provincial cabinet

minister Marilyn Churley, Chow's coverage was not simply a virtue of her city hall celebrity, but of her status as Layton's wife. Another article in the *Star* also alluded to this trend, as a slate of NDP candidates was presented with jackets by the Canadian Employment and Immigration Union. Chow was singled out as one of the candidates in attendance and identified as Layton's wife (Josy, 2006, B2). These examples suggest a higher frequency in coverage contributing to better name recognition, and a generally positive impact for Chow's political visibility.

Other coverage, which personalized Layton, resulted in increased scrutiny of Chow. Such coverage led the power dynamic in their relationship to become a central focus. When Layton was asked to participate in a charity moustache shaving competition, he publicly deferred the decision to his wife, stating that all "personal decisions" in the family were Chow's domain (Rubec, 2005, News 18). When Layton was criticized for not living in the riding of Danforth where he was seeking re-election, it was reported that the couple had picked Chow's riding in which to reside, once again reinforcing that Chow was responsible for family decisions (Cotter, 2006, A6). A feature on the couple in the *Star* framed them as engaged in a symbiotic political relationship, with Chow the less publicly visible but privately powerful force in the marriage. "Layton is the front man, Chow the background organizer. He's visionary; she's the number cruncher and lobbyist. But, ask any city councilor, and they will quickly tell you she ain't no wallflower. . . . Olivia has a soft side to her – at least on the surface" (Porter, 2006, B1.). By making reference to traditional modes of feminine behaviour, the journalist reinforces how Chow's personal and professional life do not follow the norm. These comments

underscore what Kahn (1996) determined, that journalists frequently portray women's participation in the political realm as unnatural.

Another example in the *Sun* reinforces this point. In a column evaluating the national party leaders, it was written: "No guitar pickers or loud wives . . . We need John Wayne"(Strobel, 2006, News 6). Such a comment suggests that the perceived non-traditional power dynamic in the Chow-Layton household impacted evaluations of Layton's leadership capacity. As no other political wives were mentioned in the piece, it also infers that Chow's public role is not appropriate for a political spouse. In contrast, only *Globe* columnist John Barber, a strong critic of Chow's candidacy in several columns, made a distinction between Chow as a candidate and Chow as a spouse. "One cannot fail to notice that Olivia Chow has once again joined her husband on the national stage during the last days of the campaign, like him abandoning the local contest. Considering how fast her vote collapsed the last time she left town to become Mrs. Layton, she must be feeling confident" (Barber, 2006, A12). Referring to Chow as "Mrs. Layton" in this context is both sarcastic and can be construed as derogatory, yet it underscores the multiple and competing roles Chow was expected to play during the campaign.

Another evaluation of the couple was made by a Toronto city councilor during the last days of Chow's tenure at city hall and reported in the *Globe*. The councilor quoted was critical of Chow's promise to her municipal constituents to represent their interests at City Hall only to resign her seat and run for Parliament a few months after the municipal vote was held. "Does it cast a bad light on her husband? I think it does. I mean I think, what the heck, how can Jack get out there and make all these statements and who's going

to believe him if they can't believe her? Husband and wife, I think birds of a feather flock together" (Grey, 2005, A18).

Coverage of the Chow-Layton relationship in connection with the Klander blog scandal can be viewed as mirroring the findings of Aday and Devitt (2001) about the 'filtering' of women candidates' statements during elections. When Layton made public admonishments of the blog content and its writer, he was perceived by the *Globe* editorial board as attempting to "defend the honour of his wife" (*Globe* Editorial, 2005, A14). The discussion of racism was completely negated by analogies about Layton on his horse, acting as a stereotypical white knight trying to save a damsel. Moreover, by framing the issue as a personal one, and not as a party leader defending a fellow candidate, such coverage diminished Chow as a candidate and relegated her to the primary role of spouse. Her own denunciation of the Klander blog was given minimal coverage compared to Layton's critical statements, even though he was paraphrasing her concerns (Campion-Smith, 2005, A6).

Beyond the power dynamic, the viability of the Chow-Layton marriage was a topic of interest for soft news coverage. The marriage was a novelty for journalists, as there were no other candidate couples running, but it was also framed as a novelty because of its non-traditional structure. Referred to as a "non-couply couple," (Porter, 2006, B1.) Chow was forced to defend the strength of her relationship: "We're very independent, but we love one another. When we're together we have a great time" (Porter, 2006, B1). Although many MPs have professional spouses with time-consuming occupations, and often spend many weeks away from home every year, commentary on the strain associated with the Chow-Layton relationship was deemed newsworthy. The

day after the election, Rosie DiManno opined in her *Star* column that she was thankful Chow had won because she and Layton could finally “share a marital bed in Ottawa . . . long distance commuter love is never good on relationships” (DiManno, 2006, A2).

Scrutiny of Chow’s marriage also led to some evaluations of her physique; however, such descriptions were always written in tandem with similar reporting describing Layton. Chow and Layton were collectively referred to as “the cutest couple in Canadian politics” (DiManno, 2006, A2), and they were referred to as “fit, good-looking, relatively young, well-spoken” (Porter, 2006, B1). In the *Globe*, Chow was described as “the brainiac-but-bubbly wife of a national leader” (Barber, 2006, A14).

The framing of their “power couple”(Porter, 2006, B1) status was reinforced by their appearance in photos and political cartoons. Chow was photographed all across Toronto with Layton: they appeared as a commuter couple on a Toronto bus; they visited seniors’ residences; they attended NDP rallies hand-in-hand. Photos reinforced an equal dynamic between husband and wife. A political cartoon which appeared in the *Sun*, suggested otherwise. Chow was portrayed as a junior partner to Layton, physically standing behind him during his call with Prime Minister Martin, and giving a thumbs up sign of approval (Donato, 2006, News 19). The cartoon demonstrates the difference between framing Chow as a political spouse and Chow as a political partner in her marriage.

As the wife of a national party leader, Chow’s role in coverage was to personalize the candidacy of her husband. Her dominant role in the household was framed as a novelty at times and a demonstration that Layton was not a traditionally dominant male figure in their household. The Klander blog controversy did, however, produce coverage

which reinforced traditional marriage representations. As a candidate, Chow did not receive extensive scrutiny related to her marriage and was therefore depicted as an independent political thinker. The variety of depictions regarding Chow's marital status and the nature of her relationship with Layton underscore that unlike coverage in the 1980s, the acceptability of diverse roles for political spouses is expanding. Although undercurrents of traditional marriage roles do remain in certain contexts, and non-traditional power dynamics are portrayed as novelties, the Chow-Layton marriage was not subjected to intense negative coverage, nor was Chow predominantly vilified or marginalized in coverage.

Belinda Stronach

"the most riveting soap opera"

Press coverage of Newmarket-Aurora was extensive throughout the election campaign. Common framing elements occurred such as horse race journalism. News values such as dramatization and personalization shaped coverage. As succinctly reported in the *Globe* in the early days of the campaign, interest in the race for Newmarket-Aurora could be whittled down to a few key elements: "The populace 905 riding was the scene of this minority government's most riveting soap opera when novice Conservative MP and auto-parts heiress Ms. Stronach crossed the floor, thwarting both a non-confidence vote and her caucus beau Peter McKay. Will she be punished by conservatives for her defection?" (Lorinc, 2005, M3).

Underscoring the unconventional election framing which occurred in Newmarket-Aurora, there was little use of combative language to suggest competition between

candidates. Instead, dramatization and personalization were the most common devices used by journalists to explain the race. As such, Stronach became equivalent to a central character in a narrative of an unfolding political drama. She was the only candidate in any of the GTA races to have a regular series devoted to the trials and tribulations of being a candidate seeking re-election. The series, written by *Star* journalist Linda Diebel was entitled “the Belinda Saga” and promoted a conception that the candidate’s life and her candidacy were exciting and turbulent. These soft news features provided Stronach with a high degree of visibility on a regular basis as Diebel followed Stronach on the campaign trail covering election events and occurrences in her daily life. Yet the articles attempted to debunk commonly held public perceptions about the candidate as an individual, and did not reflect the changing political climate of the constituency or national races, nor did they delve with any depth into her individual campaign platform.

Diebel claimed in the first of the ‘Belinda Saga’ articles that for Stronach “the public’s fascination [with her life] is a springboard to getting ideas across” (Diebel, 2005, B2), yet even in Diebel’s own coverage, there is little to suggest such a statement is true.

But Diebel is not alone in producing extensive superficial election coverage in connection to Newmarket-Aurora. Similarly, Mike Strobel used his PageSix column in the *Sun* to follow the race by focusing on the highly dramatic elements. The following excerpt is representative of the type of writing style and commentary regularly employed by Strobel; “Let’s see if I have this right. The PC candidate who looks like Elvis backs the Liberal who used to be a Tory against the Conservative, who used to be that other PC, who worries confused voters will be SOL. Sounds like a Banana Republic. Indeed, that’s where Belinda got the jeans she wears to the seniors lounge” (Strobel, 2006a, News 6).

Regular coverage by both Diebel and Strobel undoubtedly reinforced Stronach's name recognition, yet visibility in such a fashion did not strengthen the public's understanding of her positions on issues, nor that of her opponents.

In addition to her prominent coverage in columns and features, Stronach also received hard news coverage which focused on her participation in controversy. An article in the *Globe* reported on critics alleging Stronach defied campaign financing regulations in 2004 by overspending on an election victory party. Asked to comment on the allegations, Conservative leader Stephen Harper responded: "that she may have trouble adhering to other rules and laws would not surprise me" (Curry, 2005, A6). By focusing on Harper's comments and not on the substance of what campaign financing rules actually stipulated, the article focused attention on her controversial departure from the Conservative party and did not make any attempt to inform the readership on the issue.

As Stronach was the candidate of primary interest in Newmarket-Aurora, evaluations of the race cannot be separated from perceptions about her political style and performance. It could be suggested that the race was framed as a referendum on Belinda Stronach, as evaluations of her candidacy were rarely related to the Liberal platform.

A princess with friends in high places

More than any other female running in the GTA, Stronach was often referred to as a 'star candidate'. Yet the roots of her 'star' status were linked not to her professional qualifications, but rather to her wealth and connections to people in important positions of influence and prestige.

A description of Stronach in the *Globe* as a “novice Conservative MP and auto-parts heiress” (Stuffco, 2005, A24) reflects the nature of skeptical coverage of her professional credentials. Seventy per cent of coverage relating to her professional qualifications mention her role as Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, yet none of the articles elaborate on anything she accomplished within the portfolio. Instead, an article in the *Star* suggests that ‘boring’ is not a term applicable to the Liberal candidate: “It’s the last adjective one would apply to Stronach, 39, Minister of Human Resources” (Diebel, 2005c, A6). Such a comment does not bolster her professional credibility in any fashion. Similarly, the *Sun* editorial board openly mocks Stronach’s political career, referring to her as the “(ex-Conservative leadership candidate) in charge of Human Resources and yes – ethics reform”(Williamson, 2006, A1).

The critical coverage of her ministerial portfolio occurred in no small part due to the floor-crossing deal in May 2005 which enabled Stronach to leave Conservative opposition benches and receive a Liberal cabinet appointment. But the negativity surrounding her accomplishments pre-dated the floor-crossing as research by Trimble demonstrated (2005). Even as a candidate for Tory leadership, Stronach was perceived as a puppet for the political ambitions of her father, and senior backroom Conservatives like Brian Mulroney and Bill Davis (Diebel, 2005c, A6).

Framing of the floor-crossing fit into the larger narrative of her life as an “heiress” implying her accomplishments were not merit-based. Her entry into politics is denoted by a commentary that she “quit” her lucrative job to try public life. Coupled with labels like “party-jumping star”(Toronto Sun Staff, 2006c, News 16), Stronach’s professional career is awash with perceived inconsistency. Rarely is her work experience expanded upon,

detailing the 18 years she spent at Magna, three as CEO, and the accolades given to Stronach including being named to Time magazine's list of the 100 most influential people (Howlett, 2006a, A1).

Framed primarily as a candidate with little experience, the viability of her candidacy is framed as "a showdown between star power and Stronach's formidable financial resources versus a local candidate whose [sic] been getting strong support on the ground" (Strobel, 2006b, News 6). Stronach's campaign headquarters is described as a "Home and Garden brick house near the quaint heart of Aurora" (Strobel, 2006b, News 6). This stands in stark contrast to the depiction of her Conservative opponent whose "headquarters is a decrepit ex-video shop, Super Dave's. There is an umbrella in the john because the roof leaks" (Strobel, 2006b, News 6). Just as Stronach's clothing and lifestyle set her apart from the other candidates, the depictions of her campaign capital reinforce that she is not a candidate with whom the electorate can easily identify. Indeed as it is reported in the *Globe*, Stronach is not surrounded by run of the mill campaign helpers. NHL hockey player, "Mr. Domi is not one who usually spends his time on the campaign trail. But Ms. Stronach, who counts former U.S. President Bill Clinton among her friends, is no ordinary candidate" (Howlett, 2006, A1).

Tapping into well-known personal networks is usually an indicator of a strong campaign, but Jane Taber in the *Globe* frames Stronach's dependence on high-profile connections as a demonstration of weakness. She opines in her column that the presence of Frank Stronach, former MP Dennis Mills, Buzz Hargrove, MP Maurizio Bevilacqua and Buzz Hargrove on the campaign trail is "a sign perhaps, that she is in some trouble . . . Who's next? Bill Clinton?" (Taber, 2006a, A10). By implying that a show of high-

profile supporters was an act of political desperation, Taber reinforces the framing of Stronach as an adult child, someone who relies on assistance primarily from her father and his friends of influence.

The Belinda Watch

The soap opera characteristics of the race for Newmarket-Aurora increased the media scrutiny of the riding. Yet in no small part, interest in the race was augmented by the frequent use of the Liberal candidate's image in photographs and political cartoons. The visual elements of her coverage strongly reinforced evaluations of the candidate written by journalists. As Postelnicu et al. (2006) suggest, photographs help solidify candidate identities for the public. In the case of Stronach, her photographic coverage underscored that she was a glamorous candidate, constantly surrounded by powerful and famous men.

The use of Stronach's name and image, in headlines, photos and political cartoons, was linked to the news values which shaped her written coverage. Her name, much like her image, was frequently used in coverage to attract reader interest. Referring to Stronach strictly as 'Belinda' occurred in all three newspapers. The *Sun*'s editorial staff, for example, referred to the Conservative party after Stronach's floor-crossing as the "post-Belinda" era (Williamson. 2006, News 1.).

Although the use of Stronach's given name exclusively did not appear in connection with any hard news stories, it did appear in the Op-Ed section of the *Globe* accompanying an item entitled "Belinda: Come clean on gag law" (Nicholls, 2005, A27). Interestingly, the article, accompanied by a cartoon of Stronach zippering shut a pair of

large, sexualized lips, had very little to do with Stronach at all. The item pertained to the Liberal position on campaign financing rules not permitting third-party groups from advertising in the election. Stronach's name and image were used strictly to enhance interest in the article.

Similarly, Stronach appeared in photographs accompanying articles in which she had little to no coverage. For example, the *Sun* printed a large photo of Stronach alongside Prime Minister Paul Martin following an announcement he made on the campaign trail. Commenting on the same event, Taber wrote: "Martin got his photo-op, and part of that was courtesy of his Human Resources Minister Belinda Stronach" (Taber, 2005c, A8). Her remarks also underscore that political parties are extremely cognizant of which candidates receive heavy news coverage and what type of medium will be used to capture an event for the news.

Just as the political cartoon in the *Globe* suggested a sexualized persona of Stronach, photographs of her in all three newspapers, reinforce that she is an attractive and fashion conscious woman. Instead of small, mugshot style photographs of all other candidates in the Newmarket-Aurora race, photos accompanying articles depicted Stronach as the main focus of each event. If small headshots did accompany an article, Stronach was the only candidate featured. For the majority of images, large headshots or full-length images of the candidate were used, so that her clothes were clearly visible. In the few photos where she is accompanied, she is standing beside well known figures including: Toronto Maple Leaf player Tie Domi, Buzz Hargrove and Prime Minister Paul Martin. The only exception to this trend is a photograph depicting fellow Aurora-Newmarket candidate and Elvis impersonator, Dorian Baxter, in full costume.

In the *Sun*, Stronach's image is also used to represent the Liberal party and the *Sun* editorial board's condemnation of the Martin government. In a special section entitled "Decision 2006: Do the Right Thing - 218 Reasons NOT to vote for the Liberals" (Williamson, 2006, News 1), two different photos of Stronach are used. The first one headlined "BETRAYAL," features Stronach in an embrace with Stephen Harper, and is captioned "Stronach delivers the Judas Kiss to Harper" (Williamson, 2006, News 1). The second photo, a tight profile shot, accompanies several entries on the 218 item list which outline how she was "wooded into Liberal caucus" (Williamson, 2006, News 1).

Extensive coverage of Stronach through photos and political cartoons can be viewed as a form of 'filtering' (Dolan, 2005). Stronach is given frequent coverage, but is not provided with opportunities to discuss her platform.

Belinda: a daughter and a lover

The "Stronach effect" which Trimble (2005) described after studying coverage of Belinda Stronach's run for the Conservative leadership is evident in her coverage during the 2006 federal election period. Throughout her coverage articles highlighted her romantic life, her family roles, her physique and clothes.

Coverage of Stronach exemplifies Ross' argument that women in the public sphere are frequently reduced to a basic sexuality in media coverage (1995). Stronach's floor-crossing in May 2005 coincided with the demise of her relationship with Peter MacKay. Descriptions of that relationship referred to Stronach and MacKay as "lovers" (Strobel, 2006a, News 6) and "an item between the Tory sheets" (DiManno, 2006, A2). Stronach was referred to as the "anonymous, leggy blonde" once spotted in a New York

restaurant with Bill Clinton (Diebel, 2005c, A6). Just as Heldman, Carol and Olson (2000) determined that Elizabeth Dole was sexualized in cartoon depictions, so was Stronach in the *Globe* (Nicholls, 2005, A27).

Although general sexualized depictions trivialized Stronach and framed her as more suitable for gossip column fodder than serious political analysis, it was the intersection of sexualized coverage and her relationships with men which was even more problematic for her candidacy. Indeed, just as soft news coverage of the political floor-crossing hinged on the dramatic soap opera elements of the break up, MacKay was portrayed as the wronged party. In the *Globe*, Stronach is accused of breaking “the heart of her then-boyfriend Conservative Peter MacKay, when she left the Tories.” (Howlett, 2006, A1). Similarly, in the *Sun*, she is critiqued for opportunism: “she launched her bid for the Tory leadership. It failed but she found love in Peter MacKay and a Conservative seat before dumping both for the Liberals.” (Strobel, 2006b, News 6).

Stronach’s vilification, implied by coverage which portrays her as a cold-hearted woman who chose career advancement over love, conflates a professional decision and a personal outcome as a single action validating a single character evaluation. Likeability is an important criteria for candidates seeking election, yet negative coverage pertaining to her personal life did not enhance her likeability.

It should be noted that MacKay did contribute to this negative framing of Stronach by holding a post break-up press conference in his father’s potato patch. During the campaign he wrote a gushing web testimonial about Stronach’s Conservative opponent, Lois Brown, thereby reigniting the personal aspect to the political floor-crossing incident, which was naturally a major issue in the riding (Diebel, 2006, E1).

Building upon her media-constructed reputation for leaving men, Rosie DiManno ruminated in her column “Stronach has a charming way with celebrity athletes, if only occasionally marrying them” (DiManno, 2006, A2). This veiled reference was to Stronach’s previous relationships with several NHL hockey players and her second marriage to Norwegian Olympian Johann Olav Koss. Human interest stories were dominant in Stronach’s overall coverage, with a heavy interest in her personal relationships highlighting this trend. For example, her first marriage to Magna executive Donald Walker is given little coverage as Diebel makes footnote mention: “She remains friends with her first husband Walker, and together they are raising Frank 14, and Nikki, 12” (Diebel, 2005c, A6). The same article does however mention that Stronach was the party responsible for ending her marriages: “She divorced both men” (Diebel, 2005c, A6).

Stronach’s sexualized persona correlates with the limited coverage of her role as a mother. For instance, Stronach is described as “raising” two children with her ex-husband, instead of being the mother of two children (Diebel, 2005c, A6). Overall, her role as a mother is only mentioned three times in coverage. Instead, her predominant familial role is that of being a daughter to Magna founder, Frank Stronach. One could argue that infantilizing Stronach through references related to her relationship with her father called into question her independence, her skills and her accomplishments.

In itself, her role as the daughter of a famous and powerful businessman is not a specific impediment, as many politicians, such as former Prime Minister Paul Martin, are children of other famous figures. It was the manner of how this relationship was framed which was problematic. Terms like “Little rich girl, daddy’s girl” (Diebel, 2005c, A6)

were used to describe Stronach. Using a term like “daddy” suggested a young child-parent power dynamic between Belinda and Frank Stronach, not a mature adult to adult relationship between two different generations. The “daddy” terminology also reinforced other labels given to Stronach in connection to her relationship with her father, such as “auto-parts heiress” (Lorinc, 2005, M3) and “royal princess” (Strobel, 2006, News 6). Belinda Stronach’s personal wealth, accrued during her executive days at Magna where she drew a “her \$9 million-a-year” (*Toronto Sun* staff, 2006c, News 16) salary, was denigrated to infer she was only successful because of her father and his money. Even an article entitled “More than the boss’ daughter” (Diebel, 2005, A6) rehashed common frames which could be argued to infantilize Stronach.

Even if pejorative terminology was not used to describe the father-daughter relationship, commentary suggested that Frank Stronach was a prominent, if not puppet-master type figure, responsible for managing his daughter’s political aspirations. Giving an overview of the race, Strobel noted that Frank Stronach “hovered close behind his daughter” (Strobel, 2006, *Toronto Sun*, News 6). This type of coverage is similar to what Trimble (2005) describes in her examination of Stronach’s campaign for the Conservative leadership race. She is summed up as a “jet-setting multi-millionaire with friends in high places”(Trimble, 2005: p.1), Stronach is given little credit for her own professional successes, which are chalked up to family connections.

Although more coverage is given to Stronach’s romantic and family life than to her aesthetic qualities, she nonetheless did receive such coverage. Her physical depictions were more significant than mere descriptions of clothes or hair; they were a method of personalization and evaluation. For example, coverage of an all-candidates meeting held

at a seniors residence singled out Stronach as the only candidate wearing jeans. “Oops. And never mind how good those jeans look or how they probably cost more than the NDP guy’s suit. Seniors fought wars, reared a nation and revere decorum. They are not fans of casual Fridays” (Strobel, 2006, News 3). This passage was reinforced by a ‘streeter’ with one of the seniors in attendance. “I wasn’t going to vote for her anyway . . . but the jeans just put me off. Very poor taste”. Her choice of outfit for the meeting reinforces that she is much wealthier than her opponents, but also suggests she is out of touch with ordinary residents of Newmarket-Aurora.

Poking fun at the type of coverage Stronach often received, Linda Diebel chronicled campaign trail activities in a tongue-in-cheek style: “I’ve often been asked what clothes am I wearing, what shoes am I wearing, where do I get my hair cut,” said Stronach, resplendent in a brown velvet jacket and teal flounced blouse paired with a little grey tweed skirt. She wore modest heels and her ash-blond hair was angled and lightly layered” (Diebel, 2005c, B2). The remainder of the article critiqued the other candidates’ outfits, from New Democrat Ed Chudak’s worn footwear, to Conservative Lois Brown’s favourite navy suit. Although it is Stronach who is at the centre of sartorial interest, the other candidates are implicated in commentaries on appearance and style.

Therefore, when Strobel describes Stronach as “sporting a Liberal red sweater with matching wool scarf and jacket”, he also refers to the “Tory blue eyes” of her opponent, Lois Brown (Harris, 2005, News 5). Similarly, at the conclusion of the race he wrote: “Only one blonde stands after the final day of battle in this rolling realm. . . [Lois] Brown was the other blonde warrior who rose to the challenge.” (Strobel, 2006, News 6).

Media interest in Stronach's looks and clothing impacted other Newmarket-Aurora candidates, as soft news coverage was the dominant method of reporting the campaign.

Belinda Stronach received intensive media scrutiny regarding all aspects of her personal life. Her campaign activities were captured in photos and critiqued in print coverage by columnists. She was framed as an adult child, who relied on her father and his friends to attain success. However, the most pejorative campaign framing used was the trend towards sexualizing Stronach's persona.

Conclusion

The intent of this thesis was not to present overarching generalizations about the depiction of women candidates in Canadian election coverage. Rather, it addresses the patterns and trends that emerged in 2006 election coverage of Olivia Chow, Carolyn Bennett and Belinda Stronach. In addition, to summarize these trends in the following discussion, I will elaborate upon the limitations of the study and suggest possible future research avenues to be explored.

Differences between the framing of races in each riding illustrate why it is important to use quantitative research with qualitative analysis. Trinity-Spadina was framed as a dynamic race and aggressive language was extensively used to characterize the competition between Chow and her Liberal opponent. Chow's political persona was also framed in aggressive terms, as was evidenced by her depiction during all-candidate debates. In stark contrast, the race for St. Paul's was referred to as a "zany political comedy." Emphasis was placed upon the diverse professional backgrounds and personalities of the candidates. Without hinging upon combative rhetoric, exchanges between candidates were framed amicably and the content of their platforms was discussed in greater detail. Coverage of Newmarket-Aurora was heavily weighted towards personalizing Belinda Stronach through narrative descriptions of her life and relationships.

Gidengil and Everitt assert that violent and sporting language shape the political sphere as an inherently masculine arena and women, as a result, have a greater challenge of competing on an equal footing with men (2002). In terms of race framing, only one of the three constituencies was framed using combative rhetoric. Olivia Chow was

frequently reported to have engaged in aggressive behaviour, but was rarely criticized for her actions as a candidate. Negativity related to her aggressive political persona was relegated to commentary regarding her role as a wife. Her coverage suggests that although it may now be more socially acceptable for women candidates to act in a politically aggressive fashion, traditional views about the role of spouse remain.

Framing of Newmarket-Aurora underscores the increased role that soft news reporting plays in election campaigns. The dynamics of Stronach's personal life, which pre-dated the start of the campaign, were exploited by newspapers as fodder for soft features, critical columns and alluring photos featuring her famous friends. As Newmarket-Aurora was portrayed as a "soap opera," Stronach and her fellow candidates received coverage which constructed them primarily as colourful characters, and not as serious political rivals.

St. Paul's did not receive the pop politics treatment like the race for Newmarket-Aurora, nor was it constructed as a violent competition. Instead, coverage shed light on the candidates beyond their political affiliation, but did not delve too far beyond their professional accomplishments. The balance of substantive platform discussion and minimally intrusive personalization resulted in the depiction of a race which benefited all the candidates. Such a frame demonstrated that diversity in election coverage methods, beyond combat framing, are possible.

Understanding the organizational imperatives of a newspaper is key to determining how and why news coverage is constructed. Semetko and Valkenburg determined that among newspapers, 'serious' news organizations tended to focus on frames relating to conflict; and in comparison, 'sensationalist' news organizations had a

tendency to focus on human interest stories (2002). Interestingly, the conflict frame which dominated coverage of Trinity-Spadina was used by all three newspapers. As the wife of a national party leader engaged in a race for a strategic seat in downtown Toronto, all newspapers were interested in the outcome. In contrast, the *Star* bestowed numerous long features on the race for St. Paul's and the *Sun* gave it scant coverage. This is quite possibly the result of the high socio-economic level of St. Paul's residents not falling within the target readership of the *Sun*. As a compact newspaper with a blue collar focus, the *Sun* was more interested in featuring short comment pieces about Newmarket-Aurora, chronicling the activities of Belinda Stronach and frequently featuring her in photos.

As was suggested by van Dijk, headlines provide newspapers with the opportunity to capture reader interest (1991). They are frequently the only part of a story that is consumed by readers, which means the content of headlines impacts candidates during election. For Stronach, who was frequently featured in headlines, titles such as "the Belinda saga" reinforced framing that she was engaged in a soap-opera election campaign. A first name reference to Stronach in headlines occurred in all three newspapers. Widespread use of 'Belinda' in headlines suggests that soft news journalism is pervasive throughout both 'serious' and 'sensationalist' publications.

Newspapers aim to maintain a reader's interest beyond the headlines. As the quantitative analysis demonstrated, each newspaper employed their news resources quite differently. Of the three candidates Olivia Chow received the most coverage, followed by Stronach and then Bennett. Chow may have quantitatively received the most coverage, but she was only a dominant figure in 53 per cent of news items. As the wife of a national party leader, Olivia Chow was featured in coverage which probed the personal life of her

husband, Jack Layton. As the only married couple campaigning in the GTA, they were a novelty item for media coverage. The depiction of Chow and Layton as a political unit was reinforced through visual representations in photos and political cartoons.

When a Liberal staffer's controversial blog entry included Chow's name beside the photo of a dog, Chow was pulled into the media spotlight. The resulting coverage glossed over issues of racism and sexism in Canadian politics and instead focused on conflict. The incident also indicated that women candidates can face more than gender discrimination in the political sphere.

In isolation, Chow's role as the wife of a national party leader in overall election coverage reflects the concerns of Robinson and St. Jean (1991), that women candidates are marginalized beside the accomplishments of their husbands. However, many of the references to Chow as a wife were related to personalizing her husband. Personal information about Chow was rarely discussed in her coverage relating to the race in Trinity-Spadina. There was substantial reporting on her individual political career, both at City Hall and along the campaign trail, which constructed her as a qualified, independent professional.

Stronach's visibility in coverage was rather different from that of Chow. She was the primary focus in two-thirds of articles in which she was featured, and half were related to her constituency race. The visual component of her coverage was extensive, comprising just under 40 per cent of all her news items. Her name was featured in the headline of 42 per cent of news items in which she was mentioned. Yet the increased scrutiny of her candidacy, as reinforced by photos, well illustrates the contention of Ross that women in the political sphere are sexualized by the media (1995). Her image was

used to accompany articles in which she had little or no actual coverage and was employed to garner reader interest. Visual representations without opportunities to verbalize her opinions are a form of invisibility (Devitt, 1999). Without being directly connected to her own ideas, Stronach was framed as window-dressing at press events. In the *Sun*, Stronach's image was also used to represent the Liberal party and the *Sun* editorial board's disdain for the practices of the Martin government. Much of Stronach's coverage reflects the concerns of Patterson (2006). He suggested that by attempting to find excitement in a campaign race, either by focusing on salacious events or attempting to 'unmask' a candidate, "the news media are more likely to cloud and submerge the issues than to illuminate them" (p.47).

Bennett received the least amount of coverage of the three candidates. The coverage of her candidacy was also the least dramatic. Eighty-four per cent of her coverage related to constituency race issues. As the oldest candidate of the case study, she received the least amount of visual depictions and she did not receive any mention in headlines.

Opinion columns represented a quarter of all news articles and frequently featured commentary about the personal lives of candidates. As Waddell notes, election news has shifted away from straight news reporting and now encompasses greater opinion writing from the newspaper's own staff (2004). Columns were a venue to articulate both partisan rhetoric and to question the viability of candidates through personalizing discourses and other evaluations of their campaign performance and organization. John Barber and Jane Taber of the *Globe and Mail*, and Mike Strobel of the *Toronto Sun* were the most notable for personalizing the coverage of the candidates. Commentary reinforced Chow as the

wife of Jack Layton and Belinda Stronach as an heiress. Bennett received minimal columnist scrutiny and instead was frequent fodder for soft news features in the *Toronto Star*. These features underscored her maternal qualities as exhibited during her medical career.

Chow was identified as the 'wife of' Jack Layton in 58 per cent of her news coverage, yet there were several frames which underlay the label. Unlike the junior partner frame which was dominant in the research of Robinson and St. Jean (1991), Chow was framed as both an equal partner in a marriage between professionals, and also as a dominant, behind the scenes power broker in the marriage. It was the power broker frame which resulted in the most negative coverage. By not exhibiting stereotypical qualities of femininity, Chow was labeled as 'brash' by Barber in his column. This language reinforces the contention of Gidengil and Everitt (2002) that women are negatively depicted if they do not conform to accepted gender roles in the political sphere. However, the presence of the equal partnership frame demonstrates that framing of political wives is not static and has moved forward since the late 1980s when Robinson and St. Jean first conducted their research.

In contrast to some of the more socially progressive frames used in coverage of Chow, Carolyn Bennett's framing typifies traditional feminine gender roles. Constructed in a positive fashion, her career in obstetrics, her interest in health issues and her maternal character are underscored as positive attributes. She represents the 'champion' frame forwarded by Robinson and St. Jean (1991). As an older woman who has fulfilled her duties to family and community, she is not subjected to privatizing discourses regarding

her personal life, nor is she sexualized. The limited personal descriptions of Bennett, such as ‘earth-mother’ reinforce her maternal depiction.

Due to the intensive interest in Stronach’s personal life, the frames used to depict her in coverage are much more complex than those used in coverage of the other two candidates. Her romantic life was dissected, with failed relationships and marriages enumerated. She is also sexualized with references to her former boyfriend Peter MacKay as a lover. Her parental role is given footnote status in coverage, and as a result, she is not framed as possessing any maternal qualities. Instead, a key frame used when reporting on her is that of a daughter.

As part of a “power couple” frame, Chow was a candidate who was closely connected with the New Democrats through her marriage to Layton. Although she was labeled “NOT” on Jane Taber’s “Hot or Not list” (Taber, 2005a, A9), her presence demonstrated that she was not an ordinary candidate and instead a member of the political elite. This name recognition would not be possible without her public status as Layton’s wife. As her constituency coverage was separate from her general election coverage as Layton’s political partner and fellow candidate, framing of her professional skills was less often subject to overlapping role frames between wife and candidate.

For Bennett, it was her maternal character which underscored her viability as a compassionate politician. However, the framing of her gentle nature was tied to the professional realm. As a family physician that specialized in obstetrics and family medicine, descriptions of her work lauded her “labours with labouring” (Evans, 2005, A6). The only negative comments made in conjunction with Bennett’s viability related to her speaking style, yet these were not gender-based evaluations.

Finally, for Stronach, her viability was undercut by discussion about her private life. Several perceived inconsistencies in her personal life negatively impacted framing of her character. First, she was characterized as the responsible party for two failed marriages, and for leaving Peter MacKay. Second, her framing as an “heiress” delegitimated her work experience, as it was not deemed merit-based in coverage and instead the result of her family connections. She was also depicted as “quitting” her job at Magna to vie for public office. Her intentions were framed as self-serving and not community-minded. Third, she was framed in an unequal power dynamic with her father who was labeled ‘Daddy’ in certain news items, terminology which did not foster perceived confidence in the autonomy of Belinda Stronach. Each of these frames when coupled with the political fallout of her floor-crossing and the negative coverage surrounding her Conservative leadership questioned her fitness for holding office.

The media framing of each of these women suggests that many of the gender frames critiqued by earlier researchers are still currently used in election coverage. Both traditional news values and evaluations based on personal values and partisan beliefs shaped the frames used to depict these women. Pejorative gender frames were evident in coverage, and specifically in the case of Belinda Stronach both trivialized her candidacy and by extension the entire constituency race in Newmarket-Aurora.

At this juncture, it is important to address the role partisanship played in coverage. The *Sun* had the most notable partisan content. It did not disguise its disdain for the governing party, as it featured a pre-election day extended section entitled “218 reasons not to vote for the Liberals.” As a result, Belinda Stronach was continually lambasted throughout the election campaign. She was criticized as a Liberal candidate and for

choices in her personal life. Her image was sexualized and repeatedly used in coverage associated with perceived Liberal party hypocrisy and corruption.

Olivia Chow in turn received significant criticisms from John Barber in his *Globe* column. In these instances it is difficult to distinguish between partisan rhetoric and gendered criticisms. In certain respects, it is possible that outright sexism was masked by partisan remarks. This is especially true in regards to coverage of Belinda Stronach. Outside the political arena, similar critical remarks relating to her character would more likely be viewed as politically incorrect. It should be noted that denigrating comments about female candidates were made by both male and female columnists.

The *Star* did not publicly endorse a political party. Instead, emphasis was placed on covering well-known local figures of different political stripes. The use of soft news features about Bennett, Chow and the series focused on Belinda Stronach illustrates this point. The tone of features was light as it focused on the human interest elements of the campaign. This was in contrast to the *Sun* which highlighted acrimonious aspects of the campaign. Such reporting often contributes to negative perceptions of the political process among citizens (Kern, 1991: p.141). The *Globe* did not endorse specific candidates, but let its columnists display their partisan stripes through biting commentary.

Many of the findings in my research reinforce the work of previous studies. Yet it also highlighted areas where differences occurred. Although horse race coverage is frequently reported using combative language, only coverage of Trinity-Spadina followed the trend. Framing of the races for St. Paul's and Newmarket-Aurora suggests that the influence of soft news journalism is now even more pervasive in election news. As coverage for St. Paul's suggested, there are other methods of race framing which can

provide pertinent information to voters and produce coverage which is lively and entertaining.

Previous research determined that aggressive political performances by women in the political sphere are negatively covered by the press (Gidengil and Everitt, 1999). Yet Olivia Chow did not receive overly negative coverage based on her actions which were frequently described in combative language. Chow was frequently lauded for her professional accomplishments and her campaign coverage did not dwell upon the details of her private life. The negative repercussions of her perceived aggression were in relation to her role as a spouse.

Framing of political marriages has shifted since the work conducted by Robinson and St. Jean (1991). There were several different frames used to depict the marriage of Chow and Layton, including an equal-partner frame. The multiplicity of frames suggests that the social values and expectations associated with marriage continue to change. However, the majority of negative coverage related to the marriage resulted from the depiction of Chow as a power-broker in the relationship.

Fontaine (2002) asserted that all women in the political sphere can be the object of sexualized coverage. Yet the disparity between framing of Stronach and Bennett suggest that in the Canadian context, younger women may be more likely targets than older women.

My research also highlighted the role that columnists, of both genders, play in the use of gendered candidate framing. As the trend away from hard news and towards soft news and columns continues, the content of columns will have an increased impact on female candidates.

The case study format of this thesis was useful because it allowed me to probe the coverage of three women candidates in depth. Therefore, my findings are specific to these cases and cannot be generalized to news coverage of all women candidates in Canadian election campaigns. Additionally, my study was limited to overall evaluations of the race, and did not take into consideration changes in framing over the course of the race. Do major campaign developments reshape frames of women candidates? Furthermore, I chose large chain newspapers as a medium for analysis as they provided coverage of all three candidates. This does not mean that future research should not probe framing of women candidates in the local or ethnic newspapers.

Despite these limitations, I feel that my research has laid the groundwork for future media research about Canadian women candidates during elections. My findings about the varied nature of candidate coverage can serve as a starting point for more in-depth studies about election framing of women candidates at the constituency level. What impact does the self-framing of candidates, through brochures and candidate websites have on the frames used in media coverage? Are media frames mirrors of candidate self-framing or are they distinct?

Privatizing discourses which reinforced gender frames were often reproduced by columnists. Further studies could assess if the gender of a columnist, or a news worker in general, impacts the types of gender frames that are employed in coverage. Additionally, these candidates represented urban constituencies. Comparing urban and rural riding coverage could also form the basis of future gender framing research.

Finally, all the candidates in the study went on to win their races. How might coverage of a campaign loser differ from that of a victor? In light of the victories, it could be asked whether their framing impacted their electability at all?

In conclusion, this thesis has provided the foundation for future research into how women candidates are framed in Canadian federal elections at the constituency level. It sets in context that gender is only one obstacle which women candidates face in obtaining equal media coverage with male counterparts. More scrutiny needs to be given to other discriminatory barriers in media coverage which could preclude women's full inclusion in the political sphere. It is the responsibility of media researchers to continue to probe political news coverage and clarify the nature of frames as they can impact the political viability of women candidates and the possibility for Canadians to be properly informed about candidates standing for election who wish to represent them.

Endnotes

¹ Based on the book *Mediated Politics* (2000), the term refers to the changing nature of democracy in light of the dramatic changes in the media of mass communication such as the internet, television and newspapers.

² The “Stronach effect” will be more fully discussed later on in the section on women and the media.

³ McAllister (2007) suggests that Trudeaumania marked the first time in modern postwar politics that the popularity of the leader, due to personalization, surpassed the popularity of his political party.

⁴ Kahn (1991) refers to horse race coverage as any coverage that declares, predicts, or alludes to a likely political winner or loser in a political race by evaluating the credibility or viability of a candidate.

⁵ Quoting an interview conducted with Jeffrey Stevens of the *Globe and Mail*.

⁶ Equal Voice, a national organization that promotes the participation of women in Canadian political life, compiled statistics on all female candidates who ran during the 2006 federal election. The GTA ranked first among regions with the largest number of female candidates. It should be noted, of course, that Ontario holds the largest number of ridings of any province in the country, and as Toronto is the largest city, it also consists of more ridings. Although Quebec had the overall largest number of female candidates, the scope of this study is limited to Anglophone print publications. Full listings of candidates can be viewed on the Equal Voice website. Retrieved on February 9, 2006 from http://www.equalvoice.ca/uploads/13_44a282541e4b9.html

⁷ Toronto Metro editions of newspapers were used in this study.

⁸ A copy of the coding sheet can be found in the appendices

⁹ Candidates generally fell into two categories of coverage, heavy coverage with several articles appearing weekly and minimum coverage with a single cursory article mentioning their candidacy. The ridings selected all received coverage that spanned multiple weeks.

¹⁰ Taking into the account that many news organizations are looking to update their newspaper election coverage by using non-traditional layout formats, such as grouping various themed articles under one headline, several of the articles included in this research feature more than one candidate. Therefore, the number of news items discussed exceeds the number of articles included in the research.

¹¹ Capella and Jamieson specifically referred to the theatrical framing of election races as comprising performers, critics and an audience.

¹² A Strategic Counsel poll as published in the *Globe and Mail* 29 November, 2005, showed the Liberals ahead at 35 per cent of decided voters with the Conservatives behind at 29 per cent.

¹³ The term appeared in the February 19, 2005 edition of *The Economist* and was titled: “Mr. Dithers and his distracting ‘fiscal cafeteria.’”

¹⁴ Biographical information was obtained from Carolyn Bennett’s official website.

¹⁵ Biographical information was obtained from Oliva Chow’s official website.

¹⁶ Biographical information was obtained from Belina Stronach’s official website.

¹⁷ According to Dornan (2000) broadsheet newspaper is typically 22 inches in length. Broadsheet newspapers are considered to be more intellectual, whereas compact newspapers is an industry term which is synonymous with tabloid-style news. Compact newspapers like The *Toronto Sun* cater to a predominantly blue collar readership.

¹⁸ Belinda Stronach was born in 1966. Olivia Chow was born in 1957. Carolyn Bennett was born in 1950.

Appendix A

Coding Sheet

Article code:

Newspaper title:

Date:

Article title:

Author:

Section:

Name of candidate(s):

	YES/NO	DETAILS
News		
Feature		
Column		
Editorial		
Photos		
Headline		
Cartoon		
Named 3 times or more in article		
Marital status		
Romance		
Parental role		
Family ties		
Clothing		
Physique		
Star candidate		
Campaign supporters		
Wealth/finance		

Appendix B

Candidate Visibility

	Globe	Sun	Star	Totals
Chow	29	22	45	96
Bennett	4	5	13	22
Stronach	15	25	21	61
Totals	48	52	79	179

Appendix C

Visual Coverage (photos and political cartoons)

	Globe	Sun	Star	Totals
Chow	4	6	12	22
Bennett	0	1	2	3
Stronach	5	11	8	24
Totals	9	18	22	49

Appendix D

News item by type

	Bennett	Chow	Stronach
News	14	53	21
Feature	1	0	4
Column	4	18	11
Editorial	0	3	1
Photos	3	21	22
Cartoon	0	1	1
Headlines	0	11	15
Totals (not including headlines)	22	96	61

Appendix E

Candidate Appears Three or More Times in News Item

	Globe	Sun	Star	Total	% of new items
Bennett	2	2	8	12	63
Chow	15	7	17	39	53
Stronach	6	8	10	24	66

Appendix F

Privatizing Discourses by Type

	Bennett	Chow	Stronach
Marital	0	43	11
Family	0	0	9
Appearance	3	3	7
Total	3	46	27

Privatizing Discourses of Candidates by Newspaper

	Globe	Star	Sun	Total
Bennett	1	1	1	3
Chow	18	22	6	46
Stronach	7	12	8	27

Privatizing discourses by candidate - Bennett

	Globe	Star	Sun	Total
Marital	0	0	0	0
Family	0	0	0	0
Appearance	1	1	1	3
Total	1	1	1	3

Privatizing discourses by candidate – Chow

	Globe	Star	Sun	Total
Marital	18	19	6	43
Family	0	0	0	0
Appearance	0	3	0	3
Total	18	22	6	46

Privatizing discourses by candidate – Stronach

	Globe	Star	Sun	Total
Marital	4	4	3	11
Family	3	4	2	9
Appearance	0	4	3	7
Total	7	12	8	27

Appendix G

Candidates Described According to Professional Role

	Globe	Star	Sun	Total
Bennett	5	3	2	10
Chow	3	2	5	10
Stronach	2	9	1	12
Total	10	14	8	32

Appendix H

References to Campaign Supporters

	Globe	Star	Sun	Total
Bennett	0	0	0	0
Chow	6	1	4	11
Stronach	5	6	2	13
Total	11	7	6	24

Appendix I

References to Wealth or Power

	Globe	Star	Sun	Total
Bennett	0	0	0	0
Chow	0	0	0	0
Stronach	6	3	8	17
Total	6	3	8	17

Appendix J

References to 'Star' Candidacy

	Globe	Star	Sun	Total
Bennett	0	1	0	1
Chow	0	0	1	1
Stronach	3	2	3	8
Total	3	3	4	10

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