"A Slightly New Shade of Lipstick": Gendered Mediation in Internet News Stories

Cindy Burke
Sharon R. Mazzarella
Clemson University

Grounded in frame theory and the gendered mediation thesis, this study examines the use of gendered descriptive language, metaphors, status and power designations as well as personal detail in Internet news stories. One hundred sixty-eight lead stories appearing on CNN.com, FoxNews.com, and NYT.com were examined. The findings reveal that Internet stories rely on gendered language and male metaphors and analogies. Moreover, they are more likely to include personal information on females while simultaneously omitting information related to females' status and power. These findings provide evidence that major Internet news outlets place more emphasis on the male sphere of influence than the female sphere, thereby reinforcing the notion that the male standard is the norm in society with females presented as outside of that norm.

In 1997 the *Evening Standard* described five female British political candidates as the "Spice Girls" (Ross, cited in Devere & Davies 2006, p. 68), while the media labeled 101 female Labour MP's as (Tony) "Blair's Babes" (p. 68). Although these types of blatantly sexist labels are extreme, news *is* "gendered" through subtle and not-so-subtle framing techniques. The purpose of this article is to investigate how online news stories are "gendered"— defined as "the highlighting of a person's gender, when this is not particularly relevant to the context" (Devere & Davies, 2006, p. 65).

While there has been extensive research into the gender biases inherent in broadcast and print news, currently only one journal article addresses these issues as they play out in Internet news (Yun, Postelnicu, Ramoutar, & Kaid, 2007). According to the PEW Research Center for People and the Press ("Online newspaper," 2005), the Internet is a growing source of

news for the U.S. public. Specifically, the PEW Center reports that nearly one quarter (24%) of those surveyed identify the Internet as their "main source of news," while 23% report going Online everyday to get their news (up 8% since 2000) (p. 6). Similarly, almost half (44%) report checking the Internet for news at least once a week, a figure that represents an 11% increase since 2000. While news consumers under age 30 are the most likely to get their news from the Web, they are not the only audience, as indicated by the fact that approximately 30% of PEW's respondents between the ages of 30 to 49 identify the Internet as their primary news source.

Moreover, as Yun et al. (2007, p. 930) assert, the Internet offers news outlets the "potential for space and equality" that print and broadcast/cable media typically lack. Specifically, the lack of space/time restrictions on online news should enable such outlets "to publish more diverse content with equal coverage" (Yun et al., 2007, p. 930), which should be reflected in whether online news is gendered. Given the early promises and predictions that the Internet would be a more gender-free space than traditional media,[1] it is important to examine whether such predictions have been borne out in the realm of Internet news. As Turkle (1986, p. 41) has observed, "The computer has no inherent gender bias. But the computer culture is not equally neutral." Indeed, based on her in-depth interviews with female online journalists, Thiel (2004) found that, after an initial period of editorial, managerial, and content diversity and inclusiveness, online news outlets quickly regress to resemble their print and broadcast counterparts—what she labels "the dominant patriarchal structures of the old traditional journalism" (p. 21).

While Yun et al. (2007) examined online news magazines, we examine the online versions of two television news networks (CNN and Fox News) and one U.S. "national" newspaper (*The New York Times*). Specifically, we examine journalistic practices such as source selection, the use of gendered language, the incorporation of gendered metaphors/analogies, and how news subjects and sources are described in terms of both professional credentials and personal information in order to explore the gendered presentation of news.

Literature Review

In this section, we first review the theoretical literatures that ground our study—that of framing and gendered mediation. We then examine the

previous research on news coverage of female public figures. From there we review the literature on various components of journalistic practice, specifically source selection and language choice including metaphors. We conclude by posing six hypotheses to be tested in this study.

Theoretical Grounding

In order to study the gendering of Internet news stories, it is critical to acknowledge that news stories in general are constructed or "framed." They can be said to "construct meaning" (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992, p. 374) about political and social issues, people, places, and so on. It is not, however, one individual story that constructs meaning, but rather the overall discourse—the "interpretive packages" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 2). Therefore, analyzing a large body of articles enables us to understand how mainstream online news outlets construct a particular way of thinking about females and males.

According to Gitlin, media frames "organize the world both for journalists who report it [as well as] for us who rely on their reports" (1980, p. 7). Frames do this through three interrelated processes: cultural resonance, sponsor activity, and journalistic practice (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). *Cultural resonance* relates to the relevance, familiarity, and salience of certain frames for the audience. *Sponsor activity* refers to those organizations or individuals (e.g., the White House, Greenpeace, presidential candidates, etc.) who, guided by their own agendas, influence journalists. *Journalistic practices* refer to the norms and routines of news gathering—for example, the daily decisions that are made about which stories to cover, which sources to quote, and which speech verbs,[2] metaphors, and analogies to use when telling those stories. While all three of these processes work together to frame stories, it is the third of these on which we focus in this study.

Many feminist scholars have found the concepts of frame theory useful in studying gender portrayals in news media, enabling them to move beyond simply studying the amount (or "lack") of news coverage of women and/or whether such coverage is positive or negative (Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996). Studying such related concepts as "gendered mediation," "gendering," and/or "gendered discourse," feminist scholars from around the world have focused on "the gendered nature of representational politics as well as the gendered nature of media coverage" (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996, p. 103). As defined by Gidengil and Everitt, gendered mediation is the understanding

that "far from being gender-neutral, conventional news frames treat the male as normative" (2003b, p. 210). Specifically, gendered mediation is a type of framing that results when journalists use language differently depending on the sex of an individual or the gender-relevance of an issue. For example, news reports about the National Organization for Women (NOW) have often been written in such a way as to put it in the "'peculiar' box," denying the organization the legitimacy afforded to other political groups (Sreberny & van Zoonen, 2000, p. 146).

As Rakow and Kranich remind us, the news is characterized by a "masculine narrative" (1991, p. 8)—what Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996, n.p.) refer to as "the masculinist norms of the news industry." According to van Zoonen (1994, p. 43), scholars must take into consideration the "gendered structure of news production," or the fact that the news media are fields dominated by males in positions of power—positions that serve as gatekeepers and determine standards of journalistic practice. For example, Barker-Plummer and Boaz (2005) document how "the dominance of men in war news production" as reporters, editors, and sources alike, has contributed to the masculinist framing of coverage of the Iraqi war—coverage they argue has been characterized by, among other things "a tendency to talk about the war in the language of other highly gendered pursuits such as sports, games, and hunting" (p. 371).

News Coverage of Female Public Figures

Studies of news coverage of female political candidates provide compelling evidence of the gender biases in news reporting. This is partly because high-level participation in the political sphere by women across the globe is still a relatively recent phenomenon, and therefore of interest to the public. Unfortunately, it is this non-traditional aspect that often leads to the tendency to frame women in a different light than their male counterparts (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Devere & Davies, 2006; Parry-Giles, 2000; Scharrer, 2002).

For example, while the media typically publish personal details about political candidates regardless of sex, gendered mediation occurs when the discrepancies in the amount and content of this kind of personalized reporting is based upon the sex of the subject. For example, in their study of New Zealand newspaper coverage of Helen Clark, the current Prime Minister of New Zealand, Devere and Davies (2006) found that articles during the 1999 election repeatedly focused on her appearance, her personality, and her childless state. The trend continued in the 2005 election,

when Clark was pitted against a male opponent, during which time she was likened by the press to a rottweiler because of her aggressive approach in a debate. According to Devere and Davies (2006, p. 75), "There is evidence that the qualities expected in a leader, such as assertiveness, ambition and strength, are perceived as inappropriate for a woman." Similarly, Devitt (2002) found that seasoned female politicians received statistically less issue-based coverage and more personal coverage than their male counterparts. This has dramatic implications for the electoral process because without critical issue-based coverage, the public has no basis for determining whether female candidates are qualified for office.

In addition to focusing on personal issues, journalists may also demonstrate bias in the language used to report on female candidates. One method of measuring this is by examining speech verbs according to their emotional content. In their study of Canadian network news coverage of the 1993 and 1997 Canadian elections, Gidengil and Everitt (2003b) measured and categorized every verb used by anchors, reporters, and correspondents to describe the speech of candidates. Verbs that contained emotional overtones were referred to as "illocutionary reporting verbs" (p. 214)—verbs such as "attack," "accuse," "ridicule," "complain," and "boast." These verbs provided the basis for measuring differences in reporting styles according to the gender of the person being described. Survey respondents rated these words as more negative and more aggressive in tone than "neutral" or "structuring" speech verbs. Gidengil and Everitt (2003b, p. 227) found that such "negative and aggressive language" was used more often to describe speech acts by the female candidates. In addition, the following negative and emotional verbs were used *only* to describe female politicians' speaking styles, and not to describe that of a single male politician: "blast, bash, drive home the point, hammer home, lambaste, slam, take a crack, and rebuff" (p. 227).

Studies comparing news coverage of female politicians (or other public figures) with coverage of males in similar categories also reveal dramatic differences (e.g., Aday & Devitt, 2001; Scharrer, 2002; Stabile, 2004). For example, Scharrer found that coverage of Hillary Clinton's 2000 senatorial campaign differed significantly from coverage of her opponent Rudy Giuliani's campaign. Specifically, while the total number of negative statements about each candidate was roughly equivalent, the most common negative statements about Giuliani focused on administrative related issues and the campaign, while the most common negative statements about Clinton focused on undermining her qualifications to be in the race.[3]

Similarly, Aday and Devitt (2001) compared coverage of Elizabeth Dole's 2000 presidential campaign with that of fellow Republican candidates George W. Bush, John McCain, and Steve Forbes, and found that coverage of Dole was less likely to focus on issue positions and more likely to focus on her personal characteristics.

Such comparative studies are not limited to studies of female politicians, but include studies of other female public figures and women in general. For example, Stabile (2004) compared press coverage of Martha Stewart during the time she was charged with, and then convicted of, obstruction of justice, with coverage of former Enron executive, Kenneth Lay—both of whom had been accused of insider trading. In contrast to articles about Lay, which often referred to him by his corporate title, Stewart was often referred to by descriptive terminology, such as "diva," "princess," or "czarina." The perverse joy of seeing those in high and mighty positions tumble cannot be the entire explanation, as the comparison of the press coverage of Stewart and Lay reveals. Stabile believes that Stewart's violation of the traditional female norms of behavior may be the dominant reason for her negative treatment by the press. In fact, this violation of norms is a primary tenet behind the gendered mediation thesis.

Journalistic Practice: Descriptive Language and Source Selection

While the vast majority of scholarship being conducted in this area (Everitt & Gidengil, 2003; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Ross & Sreberny, 2000; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996) is specifically focused on news coverage of female politicians and, occasionally, other public figures, the concepts inherent in the gendered mediation thesis—including the purposeful use of metaphors and speech verbs—provide a fertile grounding for studying news reporting of females and males in general—something we test in this investigation. In fact, Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996) contend that researchers studying the news coverage of gender must be mindful of "double gendering"— "the gendered nature of representational politics as well as the gendered nature of media coverage" (p. 103), both of which they argue should be analyzed together.

Part of the focus of scholarship grounded in the gendered mediation thesis is a deep analysis of language, of the "gendered discourse" at work in news coverage (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996, n.p.). For exam-

ple, one way in which the male narrative in journalism is perpetuated is through the use of metaphorical language. According to Condit and Condit (2001, p. 30), "Metaphors have the capacity to organize materials both cognitively and emotionally." Because they are, as Vavrus reminds us, symbolic representations of real life, they function as "prescriptive linguistic devices that guide and shape thinking" (2000, p. 194). Moreover, when describing people, metaphors provide both "a degree of social or personal detachment" as well as a way to transmit information concisely (an "economy of expression") (Hegstrom and McCarl-Nielsen, 2002, p. 223).

When they are almost exclusively male, as in most electoral and war news reporting (Barker-Plummer & Boaz, 2005; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999; Parameswaran, 2006), metaphors reinforce the ethos of male as "norm" and female as "other." For example, in their analysis of international news magazine coverage of the Iraqi War, Barker-Plummer and Boaz (2005, p. 371) identify the masculine metaphors that have permeated this coverage—metaphors such as how Saddam Hussein was "flushed out of his lair" (hunting) and that U.S. troops were "playing the odds" (gaming) on the streets of Baghdad. Such metaphors, they argue, serve to perpetuate a masculinist framing of war news.

It is not simply the dominance of male metaphors that works to negatively portray the female sphere in news coverage. Martinez (2003), for example, shows how gendered metaphors in news coverage of the Elián Gonzales case "define and reduce women to their reproductive position" (p. 22). Similarly, Vavrus (2000) highlights the power of metaphors in her study contrasting news coverage of the 1992 U.S. election year (dubbed the "Year of the Woman" in praise of strong, female politicians) with that of the 1996 elections (when female political "power" was linked to the role of "soccer moms").

Despite the potential power of gendered metaphors, Hegstrom and McCarl-Nielsen (2002, p. 219) point out that research examining "the extent to which metaphors and similes are gendered is in its nascent stage." Yet cognitive linguists (Lakoff, 1996; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) remind us that the linguistic and representational devices we rely on to make sense of our everyday lives are rooted in the larger value and belief systems of the culture, what Parameswaran (2006, p. 48) describes as "the underlying hierarchical power relations that we accept, legitimize, or reject." Given the deep-seated patriarchal values of western culture, it makes sense that the news media would utilize metaphors that perpetuate

a patriarchal world view that celebrates masculine power (Parameswaran, 2006).

While metaphors are an important component of gendered news framing, the choice of information sources is also important because it is those sources ultimately who provide "the point of view being supported in a given story" (Ross, 2007, p. 450). Previous research documents journalists' reliance on male sources (Armstrong, 2004, 2006; Bridge, 1995; Freedman & Fico, 2005; Liebler & Smith, 1997; Rakow & Kranich, 1991; Ross, 2007). This finding holds for both "nonexpert" and "expert" sources alike, with an even greater gender disparity when "expert" sources are used (Freedman & Fico, 2005). According to Hartley, not only is news told by and about men, news is also "overwhelmingly seen through men" (1982, p. 146).

While some studies show that female reporters are more likely to use female sources than are male reporters (Freedman & Fico, 2005), others find no difference (Ross, 2007). Moreover, Liebler and Smith (1997) found that female reporters were no more likely to use professional titles for female sources than were male reporters. In fact, both male and female journalists were more likely to use professional designations for male sources, suggesting female journalists' complicity in perpetuating patriarchal language in journalistic contexts. According to Ross (2007), the gendering of news sources matters greatly. "If what we see and read and hear are men's voices, men's perspectives, men's news, then women continue to be framed as passive observers rather than active citizens" (p. 467). In summary, the use of primarily male sources perpetuates the impression that males are the main purveyors of knowledge and expertise in a given culture.

Clearly, scholarship in this area indicates that the news media report differently on females and males, whether or not they are public figures. This is accomplished in part by framing, which uses language, placement, repetition, and source selection to promote a view of the female sphere of influence as subordinate to the male sphere. The media also practice gendered mediation, which differentiates unnecessarily between male and females in news accounts. Finally, the pervasive use of the "male ethos" in the form of metaphors and analogies contributes to the maintenance of the male media standard. The question for this study is whether these findings hold for online news outlets.

Hypotheses

Given the growing popularity of the Internet as a news source in the U.S. as well as its potential to allow for more diverse coverage (Yun et al., 2007), we chose to study whether gendered mediation is present in news stories found in three major online news outlets—the *New York Times* (NYT), Cable News Network (CNN), and Fox News (FOX)—in order to test the following six hypotheses:

Hypotheses related to the underrepresentations of females[4] in Internet news:

H1: Internet news stories feature more males than females.

H2: Internet news stories quote from more male sources than female sources.

Hypotheses related to the gendering of language in Internet news:

H3: Internet news stories typically use male metaphors and analogies to describe events.

H4: Internet news stories are more likely to omit relevant occupational, status, and power identifiers for females featured in stories (including female sources) than for males.

H5: Internet news stories are more likely to include personal information about females featured in stories than about males.

H6: Internet news stories contain a preponderance of unnecessarily gendered language.

Methods

The three online news outlets studied reflect the national, mainstream political and social news milieu and represent a fairly balanced view of the range of major, corporate news outlets available online. Specifically, they represent: 1) a site generally considered to have conservative leanings (FOX); 2) a site generally considered to have a liberal bent (NYT); and 3) a site that could be considered a bit more middle-of-the-road than the other two (CNN), (although we certainly acknowledge that there are many who would be more likely to label CNN as liberal).[5] Moreover, FOX and CNN are television-based news sources while NYT is primarily a print source, yet all three have a strong Internet presence.

In order to study these online news outlets, the first author[6] sampled and coded the daily lead stories for each of the three outlets during two separate 28-day periods—September 1, 2006, through September 29,

2006, and January 5, 2007, through February 4, 2007.[7] We chose these dates not because they correspond with any particular event, incident, or time span, but rather because they provide us with a snapshot of typical day-to-day news coverage.

In most cases, the top story was readily apparent due to size and placement on the Web page. In the case of NYT, the lead story was usually indicated by being listed first, both on the Web site and on the electronic facsimile of the actual front page. Because the front page lead story almost always coincided with the top story featured on the home page, we decided to use the first story listed on the front page facsimile in every case. Occasionally, on both the CNN and FOX Web sites, two stories appeared equivalent in placement and size. In these cases, if one of the stories was linked to a section representing "soft news" such as travel, health or family, we deemed the other article to be the "hard news" lead and selected it for coding.[8] In the rare case when both articles were hard news stories, one of the two articles mirrored the top story on one of the other two Web sites, and, consequently, we chose it for coding. We do not feel this biases the study in any way since we are neither comparing *topics* of news stories nor are we making any comparisons across the three news sources. Rather, we are concerned with how they collectively mediate gender.

Variables

We coded all articles for *type of story* (international, U.S. political news, sports, environmental, crime, science and technology, health, business, and other); *name of each and every individual featured within the story* (in one story, this included 22 individuals); *sex of each individual featured within the story; inclusion of any personal information about each person* and whether that information was *relevant* to the topic of the story; *"gendered language"; identification of any analogies and/or metaphors in each article; "gender" of analogy or metaphor; names of sources quoted in article; sex of sources quoted*; and *status/power identifiers for sources.*

We did not consider individuals mentioned only in passing as *individuals featured within the story.* The key determinant was that they had to be "featured." For example, in describing politician Ann Richards, a story from FOX read, "She was chairwoman of the Democratic Convention that nominated Bill Clinton for president." In this case, Clinton was mentioned only in the process of identifying which convention Richards chaired, so

he was not coded as a featured individual. In another passage, the article read: "Richards rose to governorship with a come-from-behind victory over millionaire cowboy Clayton Williams." In this case, Williams was considered to be an individual featured in the article because his candidacy is germane to the topic of the article, which is the political career of Ann Richards. On the other hand, no matter how central to the article, President George W. Bush was never coded as a featured individual since he was featured in a preponderance of the articles. Coding him as an *individual featured within the story* would have dramatically skewed the data regarding the frequency of male individuals, sources, and status/power references for males.

We operationally defined the remainder of the variables as follows:

1. *Irrelevant personal information*: Details of a personal rather than professional nature outside of the context of the article such as "grandmother activist" or "widowed councilman"—information having nothing to do with the topic of the article.

2. *Relevant personal information*: Details of a personal rather than professional nature but fitting the context of the article such as "grandmother saves grandchildren from burning building," or "widow helps others adjust to the loss of a spouse."

3. *Gendered language*: Any descriptive word or phrase related to an individual that could have been replaced with a gender-neutral word or phrase. Specifically, this included both: 1) gratuitous use of gendered descriptors such as "male nurse" or "female engineer" and 2) the use of gendered words or titles rather than their gender-neutral counterparts such as "fireman" instead of "firefighter" or "stewardess" instead of "flight attendant."

4. *Gendered metaphors and analogies*: Symbolic representations in which one word/phrase was used to descriptively stand for another. We measured these according to whether they had a male, female, or neutral cultural connotation—for example, "making a game plan" (male) or "cooking up a solution" (female). We coded metaphors and analogies (M/As) as "neutral" if they involved politics or business, although some would categorize these topics as traditionally male. We defined "male" M/As as those relating to such activities or realms as fishing, hunting,

fighting, war, sports, horse racing and other pursuits traditionally considered in our culture to stem from a traditionally male ethos. On the hand, we coded M/As relating to "hearth and home," cooking, reproduction, beauty/fashion, and nurturing as "female."[9] For example, a CNN story on President Bush's January, 2007, State of the Union address included the quoted phrase that "the president has once again chosen to trot out this same old pig, albeit one with a slightly new shade of lipstick." In that instance we coded "trot out this same old pig" as masculine for its farming reference while we coded "new shade of lipstick" as feminine for its beauty/fashion reference. Some stories contained gendered names such as those in the following phrases: "an Iraqi who was code-named Curveball" and "Operation Medusa . . . entered its eighth day." While gendered (baseball=masculine; Medusa=feminine), we considered such references to fall under the category of existing names of people or endeavors, and not gendered word, metaphor, or analogy *choices* made by journalists. Therefore, we did not code them as either *gendered language* or *gendered metaphors/analogies*.

5. *Sources*: We coded all *sources* if they were directly quoted and we could determine their sex. We determined sex in one of three ways: 1) the source was named and we were aware of her/his sex; 2) the source was named but we were unfamiliar with her/him, in which case we "Googled" her/his name for further information; or 3) the source was unnamed but her/his sex was identified (e.g., "according to an unnamed male source"). In every case in which a source was "Googled," we were able to ascertain her/his sex.

6. *Status and power identifiers*: The identification of individuals featured in stories and/or sources by their professional titles and/or qualifications.[10]

Results

Our findings reveal that the lead Internet stories on CNN, FOX, and NYT are dominated by males. (Refer to Table 1 for a visual comparison of key findings.) Of the 1,281 individuals featured in these 168 stories, 1,093 (85.3%) were male while only 188 (14.7%) were female ($\chi^2 = 72.81$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$).[11] Moreover, of the 596 sources quoted in these

Table 1

Individuals Covered, Sources Quoted, and Metaphors by Sex

Percent	Female Frequency	Percent	Male Frequency	Percent
Individuals Featured in Articles (n = 1,281)[a]	188	14.7%	1,093	85.3%
Individuals identified by status[b]	139	73.9%	1,049	96.0%
References to personal details[c]	92	48.9%	122	11.2%
Sources Quoted in Articles (n = 596)[d]	88	14.8%	508	85.2%
Sources identified by status[e]	68	77.3%	495	97.4%
Gendered Metaphors (n = 159)[f]	14	8.8%	145	91.2%

[a] $\chi^2 = 72.81$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$
[b] $\chi^2 = 115.19$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$
[c] $\chi^2 = 137.06$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$
[d] $\chi^2 = 33.29$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$
[e] $\chi^2 = 58.23$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$
[f] $\chi^2 = 22.24$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$

articles, 508 (85.2%) were male while only 88 (14.8%) were female ($\chi^2 = 33.29$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). In fact, two-thirds of the stories (69%, n = 115) quoted at least two male sources, yet nearly two-thirds (61.3%, $n = 103$) quoted no female sources. While these findings support Hypotheses One and Two as well as highlight the under-representation of females in Internet news stories, they do not in themselves reveal evidence of gendered mediation—the idea that "news frames treat the male as norma-tive" (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003b, p. 210). For that, we have to look further

at how males and females are framed in these stories and how the stories themselves are "gendered."

One way to examine the overall gendering of a news story is to look at the metaphors and analogies chosen by journalists. Hypothesis Three, that Internet news stories typically include male metaphors and analogies (M/A), was strongly supported. M/As were coded as either male, female, or neutral. Of the 242 M/As coded, 83 (34.3%) were coded as neutral, leaving 159 (65.7%) that were gendered in some way. It is expressly upon those gendered M/As that we now focus. Specifically, there was a statistically significant difference in the number of male versus female gendered M/As ($\chi^2 = 22.24$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Of the 159 gendered M/As used in these stories, 145 were gendered male (91.2%) while only 14 (8.8%) were gendered female. For example, male gendered phrases included "packed enough punch," "Apollo on steroids," "catch the big fish," "wave the white flag," and "level the playing field" while female-gendered phrases included "cookie-cutter order," and "with a slightly new shade of lipstick." Overall, reporters used ten times more male M/As than female. Approximately 42% of stories ($n = 70$) contained at least one male M/A as opposed to only 7.1% ($n = 12$) that contained female M/As. This finding mirrors those of Gidengil and Everitt (1999, p. 59) who found "little evidence of stereotypically feminine imagery" in their study of the use of metaphors in news coverage of the 1993 Canadian leaders' debates.

In order to test Hypothesis Four—that Internet news stories are more likely to omit relevant occupational, status, and power identifiers for females featured in stories (including female sources) than for males—we coded whether each person was identified by a title or occupation. The results showed that of the 188 female individuals identified in the stories, 139 were identified by some title or occupation (73.9%). On the other hand, 1,049 of the 1,093 male individuals identified in the stories were identified by some title or occupation—a staggering 96% ($\chi^2 = 115.19$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Moreover, when focusing specifically on the sex of *sources* (a subset of individuals featured in articles), the statistical significance continued to hold. Specifically, 97.4% ($n = 495$) of the 508 male sources were identified by some kind of title or other occupational/status indicator while only 77.3% ($n = 68$) of the 88 female sources were so identified. Certainly the fact that over three-quarters of female sources were identified by title/occupation/status is important, but it does not even begin to approach the nearly 100% of male sources who were so identified ($\chi^2 = 58.23$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Given these findings, Hypothesis Four was

supported: Pertinent information related to status and power tends to be omitted more often for female subjects in news accounts.

Based on prior literature (e.g., Devere & Davies, 2006; Devitt, 2002), we hypothesized (H5) that more personal details would be included for females featured in the articles than for males. Indeed, of the 188 female subjects, 92 (48.9%) were described using some kind of personal information such as a reference to being the "wife" or "mother" of a male featured in the story. On the other hand, of the 1,093 male sources, only 122 (11.16%) were described using personal details ($\chi^2 = 137.06$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). While females made up only 14.67% of the individuals featured in the articles, 43% of the personal details used by journalists were applied to them. In most instances, however, the inclusion of personal information *was* relevant to the theme of the article whether the individual in question was male or female. Generally, such information was found in stories such as those about someone who had died or had undergone tragedy, such as a hurricane. In other cases, the personal details were obviously germane to the article. For example, in an article concerning Senator John McCain and his argument against weakening the Geneva Convention against torture, it was mentioned that McCain was a former prisoner of war. For the most part, irrelevant personal detail consisted of listing the ages of subjects when there was no clear reason to do so. Overall, however, Hypothesis Five was supported as these stories were significantly more likely to include personal details for females rather than males.

Finally, Hypothesis Six posited that online news stories would contain a preponderance of unnecessarily gendered language—words with gender neutral counterparts. In fact, nearly half of the stories (44%, $n = 74$), included such language while 20% ($n = 34$) contained two or more gender-specific words. "Chairwoman," "chairman," "spokeswoman," and "spokesman" were the most common examples, but this also included "manned," "a car guy," and "the space station's first *female* tourist." Hypothesis Six was partly supported as just under half of the stories contained gendered language. While such language did not appear in the majority of articles, these findings do provide evidence that its use is a common component of journalistic practice.

Discussion

These findings paint an overall picture of a system of journalistic practice in which more emphasis is placed on the male sphere of influence

than the female sphere—evidence of "the male-centered frame that continues to prevail in the news industry" (Parameswaran, 2007, p. 61) despite the greater potential for diversity offered by the Internet (Ebo, 1998; Yun et al., 2007).

Based on previous studies, we expected to find that news sources would be predominantly male, and this was borne out. In terms of sheer numbers, the lead stories on the Internet news outlets of CNN, Fox News, and the *New York Times* are overwhelmingly focused on males. The vast majority of individuals featured in stories were male as were the vast majority of sources quoted—in fact over 85% in both cases. Nearly six times as many male individuals were featured and quoted as females. Given the wealth of previous research (Armstrong, 2004, 2006; Bridge, 1995; Freedman & Fico, 2005; Liebler & Smith, 1997; Rakow & Kranich, 1991; Ross, 2007) documenting journalists' reliance on male sources, we were not surprised by these findings. While we expected to find an underrepresentation of females, female voices, and female metaphors, we did not expect to find such a large discrepancy—so large, in fact, that even when using an expected frequency of 75% male and 25% female to calculate chi squares, our findings were still significant even at the .001 level. Clearly, this is more than a simple underrepresentation; it is evidence of the "symbolic annihilation" of women in Internet news (Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1978); a disturbing finding given the potential of the medium to allow for greater diversity (Ebo, 1998; Yun et al., 2007).

Undeniably, these Internet news stories are dominated by the "male" viewpoint, supporting Hartley's claim that news "is overwhelmingly seen through men" (1982, p. 146). It is important to remember, also, that we studied the *lead* story appearing each day on each of these three online news outlets. Journalistic practice includes the role of gatekeepers who make decisions about which stories to cover to begin with, as well as which stories are worthy of that lead slot. In this instance, gatekeepers clearly considered male-focused stories of greater importance than female-focused stories.

While some researchers studied whether female reporters are more likely to use female sources than are male reporters (Freedman & Fico, 2005), just under one-third of the stories analyzed for this project (most of the stories on FOX, in fact) listed the Associated Press as the story's byline. As a result, we were unable to study whether there was any relationship between the sex of the reporter and the sex of the sources quoted.

Although most people would not admit to a conscious belief that there are nearly six times as many male experts in existence as female ones, certainly it is hard to counter this image of males as the purveyors of knowledge. In addition, when over 85% of all official, named sources are male, might it not seem logical to the average reader to also assume that the plethora of *unnamed* news sources are male as well? Whenever a reader encounters a reference to "a high-ranking official," "a confidential source," "a Western diplomat," or any other unnamed source, might the natural human tendency to categorize information efficiently lead her/him to assume that these other sources are also male? As Ross (2007, p. 456) reminds us, "who speaks matters because access to the media is access to influence."

In this context of the male voice being presented as more relevant, knowledgeable, and authoritative, the gendering of metaphors and analogies becomes even more important. Such linguistic devices serve as a means of tapping into the collective consciousness by creating a shorthand form of meaning-creation, "a ready frame of reference to simplify the telling of a story" (Gidengil & Everitt, 1999, p. 51). Certain words, phrases, and images are universally understood within the culture, and so facilitate this shorthand form of storytelling. Metaphors and catchphrases are integral components of news framing (Gamson, 1988) because, as Vavrus points out, they "are woven through our common symbolic environment" (2000, p 195). It is this cultural resonance that combines with journalistic practice to perpetuate a male gendering of news (Parameswaran, 2006). For example, studies show that the most frequent metaphors found in election news stories relate to warfare, fighting, general violence, and sports (Blankenship & Kang, 1991; Gidengil & Everitt, 1999)— typically spheres dominated by males. According to Gidengil and Everitt (1999, p. 48), "metaphors of warfare and confrontation dominate media coverage of politics, reinforcing traditional conceptions of politics as a male preserve." While we found an overwhelming amount of male-gendered metaphors in this study, we did not specifically quantify the derivation of those metaphors. Even a quick glance back through our coding forms, however, reveals that warfare and conflict metaphors are prevalent in general news coverage as well as in election coverage. Moreover, given that we did not limit our study to political (i.e., election) news as have other studies of gendered metaphors, it is interesting to see that such warfare and conflict metaphors are so prevalent in general news coverage as well as election coverage. Quite simply, when this form of

shared meaning is overwhelmingly gendered male by the news media, it has the potential to perpetuate the symbolic (and perhaps actual) dominance of the male ethos in our culture.

Similarly, the journalistic practice of incorporating unnecessarily gendered descriptive language is significant since denoting gender in the title of a news subject or source further serves to gender the news. As mentioned earlier, the vast majority of gendered words/titles found in these articles were "chairwoman," "chairman," "spokeswoman," and "spokesman." It is interesting that the use of gendered words such as "chairman" or "spokeswoman" is prescribed by the major journalism style guides published by the Associated Press (Goldstein, 2004) and the *New York Times* (Siegal & Connolly, 1999). Each guide specifically advises *against* the use of "chair*person*" or "spokes*person*." Despite this guideline, *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usages* (Siegel & Connolly1999, p. 203) has a lengthy entry on "men and women" which begins:

> Times writing treats the sexes equally. It reflects a society that no longer assigns roles or occupations to men only or women only. Thus the copy shuns stereotypes and assumptions. Thoughtful writing is also un-self-conscious: it sidesteps offense without calling attention to the pitfalls. It may, for example, cite *spokesmen* and *spokeswomen*, but will refer to a mixed group as *press officers* rather than use, the ostentatiously desexed *spokespersons*.

Later, in the same entry, however, contradictory advice suggests that it is preferable to use a "neutral job title" such as police officer and letter carrier as opposed to policeman/woman or mailman. Moreover, the NYT guide strongly urges journalists to "resist modifiers that imply a 'norm' of maleness or femaleness" such as "male nurse" or "female judges" (pp. 203-204). Given these guidelines to avoid gendering job titles, one wonders why such frequently used titles as chairperson and spokesperson are frowned upon by the guides and why the NYT guide considers them to be "ostentatious."

The journalistic practice in question here is dictated by highly influential style guides that are the bibles of journalists and the texts of journalism schools. While the sex of a chairperson or spokesperson has no more bearing on her/his duties than the sex of a nurse or police officer, journalism style guides, and therefore journalists themselves, continue to

gender their stories with words such as chairman or spokeswoman. It should be clarified that we did not code whether the descriptive words were gendered male or female, just whether reporters used gendered language. Therefore this does not provide evidence of a male gendering of descriptors specifically, but rather an overall and unnecessary gendering of descriptors.

Conclusion

Like all studies, this investigation is not without its shortcomings. For example, in retrospect, we would like to have coded and quantified more than the simple male/female/neutral gendering of metaphors, but also the specific "origins" of such gendering—war, sports, the domestic sphere, and so on. In addition, we had hoped to be able to compare findings across story types, but the vast majority of stories fell into one of two categories, "international" (53.6%) or "U.S. political" (29.8%). There simply were not enough stories in other categories to justify comparative statistical analysis. Clearly, this is a byproduct of our focus only on "lead" stories. In future studies, it would be worthwhile to examine, for example, the "top 10" stories on each day so as to generate a more diverse pool of story types for comparative analysis. Similarly, our focus on the gendering of news did not allow us to explore how race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and other such facets of people's identities were discussed. Given the Internet's potential to increase diversity in news coverage, it would be interesting to pursue further research on these other identity markers as well.

Overall, however, this study joins a growing body of research evidencing a journalistic practice that genders news—in this case, daily, lead, Internet news stories. Moreover, for the most part, that gendering is male. In addition, this study expands the application of the gendered mediation thesis in two ways: First, by studying the gendering of news stories *in general*, it extends the application of the thesis beyond a focus almost solely on specific political/public figures or specific elections. Second, it shifts the focus from print or broadcast news to Internet news stories. In so doing, it provides support for the viability of the gendered mediation thesis as a theoretical grounding for studying news and gender across media platforms. In addition, it provides evidence that the gender-neutral "cybertopia" originally predicted to characterize the Internet has not been achieved when it comes to mainstream Internet news. Instead, our study supports the fears of early Internet critics that "the Internet will retain

vestiges of traditional communities with similar hierarchical social link-
ages (Ebo, 1998, p. 2)—in this case a journalistic community character-
ized by practices and decision making that place emphasis on the mascu-
line.

In fact, given one of the primary findings of this study, that mainstream
Internet news stories incorporate male metaphors far more often than
female metaphors, it may seem strange that we titled this project using one
of the female metaphors, "a slightly new shade of lipstick." But, more than
any other, this metaphor symbolically captures our overall findings—that
while the Internet offers the potential for genuine change in news coverage
and journalistic practice, any differences between mainstream Internet
news and its print/broadcast counterparts are simply cosmetic. As with
most cosmetic changes, surface level style and format differences continue
to mask underlying flaws and blemishes. In this case, while Internet news
may look different than more traditional news media, the underlying
message continues to place more emphasis on the male sphere of influence
than the female sphere, thereby reinforcing the male as normative. The
strength of this study is that it looks beyond the cosmetic changes brought
about by the Internet, and exposes the continued gendered mediation
found in earlier print and broadcast news. Even the most well-applied
lipstick still wears off after a short time.

References

Active duty servicewomen by branch of service and rank, 2006. (2007). Information
    Please Database. Retrieved May 12, 2008, from http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/
    A0004600.html.
Aday, S., & Devitt, J. (2001). Style over substance: Newspaper coverage of Elizabeth
    Dole's presidential bid. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics,* (2), 52-
    73.
Armstrong, C. L. (2004). The influence of reporter gender on source selection in
    newspaper stories. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 81*(1), 139-
    154.
Armstrong, C. L. (2006). Story genre influences whether women are sources. *Newspa-
    per Research Journal, 27*(3), 66-81.
Barker-Plummer, B., & Boaz, C. (2005). War news as masculinist discourse. *Feminist
    Media Studies, 5*(3), 370-374.
Blankenship, J., & Kang, J. G. (1991). The 1984 presidential and vice presidential
    debates: The printed press and "construction by metaphor." *Presidential Studies
    Quarterly, 21*(2), 307-318.
Bridge, J. M. (1995). What's news? In C. Long (Ed.), *Women and media: Content/
    careers/criticism* (pp. 15-28). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
Condit, C. M., & Condit, D. M. (2001). Blueprints and recipes: Gendered metaphors for
    genetic medicine. *Journal of Medical Humanities, 22*(1), 29-39.

Devere, H., & Davies, S. (2006). The Don and Helen New Zealand election 2005: A media a-gender? *Pacific Journalism Review, 12*(1), 65-85.

Devitt, J. (2002). Framing gender on the campaign trail: Female gubernatorial candidates and the press. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 79*(2), 445-463.

Ebo, B. (1998). Cyberghetto or cybertopia? Race, class, and gender on the Internet. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Everitt, J., & Gidengil. E. (2003). Tough talk: How television news covers male and female leaders of Canadian political parties. In M. Tremblay & L. Trimble (Eds.), *Gender and electoral representation in Canada* (pp. 194-210). New York: Oxford University Press.

Fountaine, S., & McGregor, J. (2002, July). Reconstructing gender for the 21st century: News media framing of political women in New Zealand. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian New Zealand Communication Association, Brisbane, Australia.

Freedman, E., & Fico, F. (2005). Male and female sources in newspaper coverage of male and female candidates in open races for governor in 2002. *Mass Communication & Society, 8*(3), 257-272.

Gamson, W.A. (1988). The 1987 distinguished lecture: A constructionist approach to mass media and public opinion. *Symbolic Interaction, 11*(2), 161-174.

Gamson, W. A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W., & Sasson, T. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual Review of Sociology, 18,* 373-393.

Gamson, W., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology, 95*(1), 1-37.

Gidengil, E., & Everitt, J. (1999). Metaphors and misrepresentation: Gendered mediation in news coverage of 1993 Canadian leaders' debate. *Press/Politics, 4*(1), 48-65.

Gidengil, E., & Everitt, J. (2000), Filtering the female: Television news coverage of the 1993 Canadian leaders' debates. *Women & Politics, 21*(4), 105-131.

Gidengil, E., & Everitt, J. (2002). Damned if you do, damned if you don't: Television news coverage of female party leaders in the 1993 federal election. In W. Cross (Ed.), *Political parties, representation and electoral democracy in Canada* (pp. 223-237). New York: Oxford University Press.

Gidengil, E., & Everitt, J. (2003a). Conventional coverage/unconventional politicians: Gender and media coverage of Canadian leaders' debates, 1993, 1997, 2000. *Canadian Journal of Political Science, 36*(3), 559-577.

Gidengil, E., & Everitt, J. (2003b). Talking tough: Gender and reported speech in campaign news coverage. *Political Communication, 20*(3), 209-232.

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goldstein, N. (Ed.). (2004). The Associated Press stylebook and briefing on media law. New York: Basic Books.

Grossman, A. (2003, August 13). CNN gives Fox news run for money among conservatives. *HollywoodReporter.com.* Retrieved August 20, 2007, from LexisNexis database.

Hartley, J. (1982). *Understanding news.* London: Methuen.

Hegstrom, J. L., & McCarl-Nielsen, J. (2002). Gender and metaphor: Descriptions of familiar persons. *Discourse Processes, 33*(3), 219-234.

Hochschild, A. R., & Machung, A. (2003). *The second shift.* New York: Penguin.

Johnson, J. A., & Johnson, M. S. (2008). New city domesticity and the tenacious second shift. *Journal of Family Issues, 29*(4), 487-515.

Lakoff, G. (1996). Moral politics: What conservatives know that liberals don't. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Liebler, C., & Smith, S. (1997). Tracking gender differences: A comparative analysis of network correspondents and their sources. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 41*(1), 58-68.

Martinez, M. D. C. (2003). Mothers mild and monstrous: Familial metaphors in the Elián Gonzales Case. *Southern Quarterly, 42*(1), 22-38.

Online newspaper readership countering print losses: Public more critical of press, but goodwill persists. (2005). Washington, DC: The PEW Research Center for the People and the Press.

Parameswaran, R. (2006). Military metaphors, masculine modes, and critical commentary. *Journal of Communication Inquiry, 30*(1), 42-64.

Parry-Giles, S. J. (2000). Mediating Hillary Rodham Clinton: Television news practices and image-making in the postmodern age. *Critical Studies in Media Communication, 17*(2), 205-226.

Rakow, L., & Kranich, K. (1991). Woman as sign in television news. *Journal of Communication, 41*(1), 8-23.

Ross, K. (2007). The journalist, the housewife, the citizen and the press: Women and men as sources in local news narratives. *Journalism, 8*(4), 449-473.

Ross, K., & Sreberny, A. (2000). Women in the house: Media representations of British politicians. In A. Sreberny & L. van Zoonen (Eds.), *Gender, politics and communication* (pp. 79-99). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Scharrer, E. (2002). An "improbable leap": A content analysis of newspaper coverage of Hillary Clinton's transition from first lady to Senate candidate. *Journalism Studies, 3*(3), 393-406.

Siegal, A. M., & Connolly, W. G. (Eds.). (1999). *The New York Times manual of style and usage.* New York: New York Times Company.

Sreberny, A., & van Zoonen, L. (Eds.). (2000). *Gender, Politics and Communication.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Sreberny-Mohammadi, A., & Ross, K. (1996). Women MPs and the media: Representing the body politic. *Parliamentary Affairs, 49*(1), 103-115.

Stabile, C. (2004). Getting what she deserved: The news media, Martha Stewart, and masculine domination. *Feminist Media Studies, 4*(3), 315-332.

Thiel, S. (2004). Shifting identities, creating new paradigms: Analyzing the narratives of women online journalists. *Feminist Media Studies, 4*(1), 21-36.

Tuchman, G., Daniels, A. K., & Benét, J. (Eds.). (1978). *Hearth and home: Images of women in mass media.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Turkle, S. (1986). Computational reticence: Why women fear the intimate machine. In C. Kramarae (Ed.). *Technology and women's voices* (pp. 41-61). New York: Pergamon Press.

Turley, A. (2006). Who makes the news? Promoting gender equality in and through news media. *Pacific Journalism Review, 12*(1), 10-14.

van Zoonen, L. (1994). *Feminist media studies.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Vavrus, M. D. (2000). From women of the year to "soccer moms": The case of the incredible shrinking women. *Political Communication, 17*(2), 193-213.

Yun, H. J., Postelnicu, M., Ramoutar, N., & Kaid, L. L. (2007). Where is she? Coverage of women in online news magazines. *Journalism Studies, 8*(6), 930-947.

Notes

[1] See Bosah Ebo's thought-provoking anthology *Cyberghetto or Cybertopia: Race, Class, and Gender on the Internet* (1998), for a thorough discussion of both sides of the issue.

[2] According to Gidengil & Everitt (2003b), speech verbs can be defined as journalists' choices of which verbs to use when describing newsmakers' speech. These are important because, through such choices "the news writer or reporter, in effect, is telling the viewer how to interpret the intended meaning or the assertiveness of the statement being reported" (p. 214).

[3] At the time of this writing, some of the most negative comments in the 2008 presidential primary coverage of Hilary Clinton focus on her husband. (Thanks to one of the journal's anonymous reviewers for suggesting we make this point.)

[4] We use the words "female" and "male" instead of "women" and "men" in our hypotheses and throughout our study to refer to the subjects and sources of news stories because we do not assume such people are always adults.

[5] While most media pundits consider CNN to be a liberal news source, it actually attracts a fairly conservative audience. According to the *HollywoodReporter.com* televised CNN "actually reaches more 'very conservative' people in a week than Fox, with 37% of those respondents reporting that they watch CNN compared to 32% for Fox" (Grossman, 2003, n.p.)

[6] Although only the first author coded the stories, an intercoder reliability test of sorts was conducted by having the first author and two outside individuals separately code the three stories from the first day. While there were some minor differences that were easily cleared up by giving the outside individuals additional instructions, the main area of discrepancy related to the category of "gendered metaphor and analogy." Interestingly the first author had a slightly higher tendency to assign a neutral rating than a male one to a metaphor or analogy than did the outside coders. This is important when seen in the context of our findings because it evidences that researcher bias was not the cause of the high rate of male-themed metaphors and analogies found.

[7] On a couple of occasions there was a problem obtaining one or more stories for a particular day during the initially identified time period. In those cases, that day was left out of the sample and an additional day was added on at the end.

[8] We acknowledge that "hard" and "soft" news are gendered distinctions. Recent research (see for example, Turley, 2006, p. 12) has documented that "'soft' issues like culture and the arts are mainly consigned to women media practitioners, whereas 'hard' and therefore 'serious' issues like finance, economics and politics are more likely to be within the purview of their male counterparts."

[9] While it can be argued that certain realms such as the military and the kitchen are no longer limited to men and women respectively, they still continue to be "gendered." The most recent statistics available indicate that women comprise fewer than 15% of U.S. Department of Defense forces ("Active Duty," 2007). Similarly, while high-profile restaurants and cooking programs such as those on the Food Network highlight the artistry of celebrity male chefs including Emeril Lagasse and Bobby Flay, female celebrity chefs such as Rachel Ray and Paula Dean are as visible on the air as are their male counterparts. Moreover, when it comes to day-to-day cooking and domestic chores in the average household, women still bear the brunt of the workload, including working women in dual career families (Hochschild & Machung, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 2008).

[10] The category of "homemaker" was included on the list of individuals' occupations, although neither that word nor any variation of it appeared in any of the articles.

On the other hand, other types of descriptive words, such as Democrat, voter, shopper, or bystander were *not* considered to fall under the heading of title or occupation for coding purposes. In some instances, when there was no title given for a source and/or an individual featured in the story, and the person fell into the category of being so widely known by the readership that no title was needed (e.g., former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein) these were not counted in the tally of those individuals who were not identified by title and were coded. If a title could be easily inferred, for example in an article about space shuttle astronauts that mentioned "Commander Brent Jett," it was counted as providing a title (i.e., Space Shuttle Commander).

[11]Chi Square statistics for sex of featured individuals and sources as well as gendering of metaphors were calculated with an expected frequency of male = 75% and female = 25%. While one would normally expect a 50/50 male/female split, the differences were so significant that they continued to hold with a 75/25 male/female expectation even at the .001 significance level.