

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN DURING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

POLITICS AS SEEN BY QUEBEC UNIVERSITY STUDENT NEWSPAPERS: BALANCED GENDER REPRESENTATIONS

Summary of reports produced as part of the project

MORE WOMEN IN POLITICS

THE MEDIA AND MUNICIPAL BODIES: KEY ACTORS!



Table de concertation
des groupes de femmes
du Bas-Saint-Laurent



Table de concertation
des groupes de femmes
de la Montérégie

Table de concertation
du mouvement



des femmes
de la Mauricie



ZONE
CAMPUS
LE JOURNAL DES ÉTUDIANTS DE COCÉ

WHAT?

Plus de femmes en politique ? Les médias et les instances municipales, des acteurs clés ! (More women in politics? The media and municipal bodies: key players!) is a project, financed by the Status of Women Canada's Women's Program, that aspires to a better understanding of systematic obstacles that constitute barriers for women's access to political life and aims to collaborate with the media and municipal bodies in order to enable women to fully participate in spheres of power.

WHO?

Table de concertation des groupes de femmes du Bas-Saint-Laurent (Alliance of women's groups of the Bas-Saint-Laurent) (TCGFBSL)

Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Montérégie (Alliance of women's groups of the Monteregie) (TCGFM)

Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie (Women's movement alliance of the Mauricie) (TCMFM)

Groupe des médias étudiants (student media group) at the l'Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (GME UQTR)

As well as :

- Researchers from the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR)
 - Réseau des tables régionales de groupes de femmes du Québec (Network of regional alliances of women's groups of Quebec) (RTRGFQ)
 - Union des municipalités du Québec (Quebec Union of Municipalities) (UMQ)
 - Elected municipal officials actively involved in their municipalities
-

HOW?

Through this initiative, the partners would like to call upon the media and municipal bodies to :

- Become aware of their **influence and their capacity to act as agents of change** in the expansion of women's place and their voice in public and media discourse;
- **Adopt new attitudes, new processes, and new ways of doing things** in order to encourage the involvement of women to political life.

As part of the media component of this project, two reports were produced to establish a portrait of media representation practices regarding female politicians in privately owned and community medias on the one hand and university medias on the other hand.

The observations and recommendations raised by these studies constitute a base upon which the project partners hope to build dialogue with the journalist field regarding media representation practices around women politicians and identify possible solutions for a neutral and egalitarian treatment of women who participate in the political life of their communities.



MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS



BY :

Marianne THÉBERGE-GUYON · Catherine BOURASSA-DANSEREAU · Laurence MORIN

Table de concertation de groupes de femmes de la Montérégie

UQÀM | **Service aux collectivités**
Université du Québec à Montréal



RESEARCH SUMMARY

1. Study presentation¹

This document aims to present the main points of the *Les représentations médiatiques des femmes aux élections municipales* project. Our study is the fruit of a partnership established between a research team at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and the Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Montérégie (TCGFM), in collaboration with the Service aux collectivités (Community Engagement Service) at UQAM. It represents one of the components of *Plus de femmes en politique ? Les médias et les instances municipales, des acteurs clés !* project. A second report, entitled *La politique vue par les journaux étudiants universitaires québécois: des représentations genrées équilibrées (Politics as seen by Québec university student newspapers: balanced gender representations)*, rounds out the study of the context of media representations of female politicians undertaken as part of this project.

The conceptual framework and the methodological tools used in our research project follows the path carved out by a study by Mireille Lalancette and Mélissa Doucet (2014).

2. Introduction

The participation of women in political life constitutes an important social and research issue in Quebec. In 2017, 44% of Quebec's Members of Cabinet was composed of women (Premier of Quebec's website, 2018), and 31% of elected officials were women at the municipal level (Council for the Status of Women, 2018). The media was identified as one of the obstacles to women's participation in political life (Ibid.). As intermediaries between the world of politics and regular citizens, the media plays a leading role in politicians public image (Tremblay, 1999).

3. Women, politics, and media: what the literature says

A brief literature review allowed us to make various observations regarding the advancement of research concerning female, Quebec and Canadian, politicians in the media :

- A significant amount of the Quebec and Canadian literature regarding media representations of politicians is over ten years old (Tremblay, 1999; Robinson and Saint-Jean, 1991; 1995; Gingras, 1995; Tremblay and Bélanger, 1997; Gidendil and Everitt, 2003), which highlights the necessity of studying the issue of the political world and the media in the current context;
- Gendered differences in the media's treatment of male and female politicians persist over time (Drouin and Lalancette, 2016; Lemarier-Saulnier and Lalancette, 2012; Lalancette, Drouin, and Lemarier-Saulnier, 2014);



IN 2017
31%
OF ELECTED OFFICIALS AT
THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL WERE
WOMEN



**GENDERED DIFFERENCES
IN THE MEDIA'S TREATMENT OF MALE
AND FEMALE POLITICIANS PERSIST
OVER TIME**
(DROUIN AND LALANCETTE, 2016; LEMARIER-SAULNIER
AND LALANCETTE, 2012; LALANCETTE, DROUIN,
AND LEMARIER-SAULNIER, 2014)

¹The full report can be consulted at: <http://tcgfm.qc.ca/download/Representations-Mediatiques-Femmes-Elections-Municipales-Rapport>. To access the complete list of references, consult the detailed report.

- Gender-based differences in media treatment remain an obstacle for female politicians (Goodyear-Grant, 2013; Lemarier-Saulnier and Lalancette, 2012);
- More subtle gender biases are inherent in media discourse (Wagner, 2014; Gidengil and Everitt, 2003);
- Other markers, such as ethnocultural affiliation and age, must also be considered in an analysis of media coverage of female politicians (Tolley, 2016; Wagner et al., 2017; Gingras, 2005);
- Few studies deal specifically with municipal politics (Wagner, 2017). Also, several questions remain relevant: How are female electoral candidates currently depicted in the written media in Québec? Are they represented on the same scale and in the same way as male candidates?

4. Research approach

In order to better understand how, and the extent to which, women candidates for mayoral and municipal council positions are represented in Quebec newspapers, we chose the method of analyzing media discourse. 1110 articles were compiled from francophone Quebec newspapers and community media covering the period of the first day of the electoral period to the day after the election (September 22 to November 6, 2017).

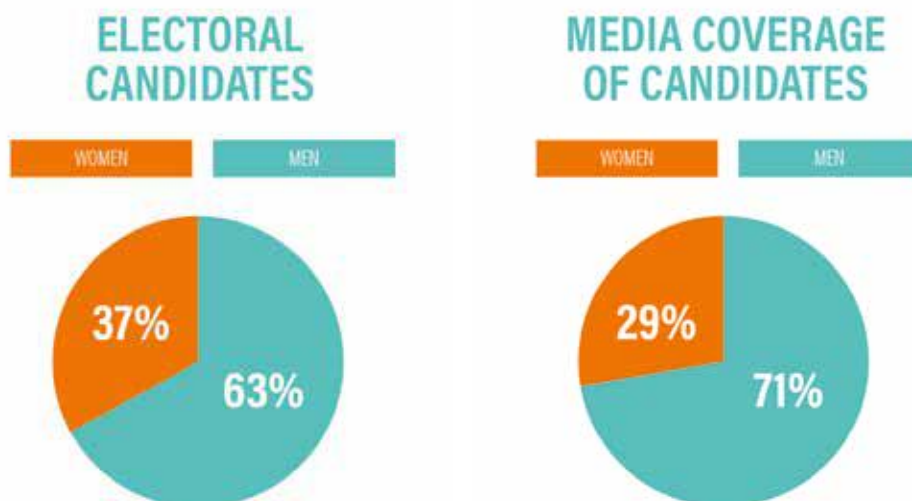
With the aim of representing the diversity of municipal realities in Quebec, we focused on newspapers from eight municipalities of differing size (Montréal, Québec, Longueuil, Trois-Rivières, Saguenay, Rivière-du-Loup, Repentigny, and Lac-Mégantic) situated in eight distinct administrative regions.

5. Highlights of the quantitative results

This section presents the quantitative results of the study ("how many times" different indicators were present) obtained by comparing the media coverage of male candidates and female candidates. Here are the general results we obtained from our data, and also the most surprising and interesting results regarding the municipalities in our sample.

5.1. Fewer women in politics, even fewer in the media

- More men (63%) than women (37%) ran as candidates in the municipal elections. That being said, the media space given to male candidates (71%) and female candidates (29%) was even more unequal to the disadvantage of female candidates.



- Male candidates in Lac-Mégantic, Rivière-du-Loup, Trois-Rivières, Saguenay, Montréal, and Québec undeniably received greater media attention than their female counterparts.
- Only 30 newspaper articles were written for Longueuil, a city of nearly 240,000 inhabitants. Only 39.1% of female mayoral and municipal councilor candidates received media coverage. In our sample, Longueuil was the only municipality to have an all-female mayoral race.

5.2. Which place do female candidates occupy in the news?

- For every article focused on a female candidate, three articles were focused on a male candidate.
- Alone or alongside other people, male candidates played a primary or secondary role in the news two or three times more often than female candidates.
- The remarks about male candidates in the form of direct quotes, paraphrasings, or analyses, were presented in much greater number (71.4%) than those about female candidates (29.6%) in the articles in our corpus.
- In Longueuil, Saguenay, and Trois-Rivières, in proportion to the number of times their behaviour was covered by the media, female candidates were depicted in a passive light, as though they were experiencing an action, more often than their male counterparts.

5.3. Long, short, and medium-length articles and visual representation for all

- We did not observe an important difference in length between articles portraying male candidates and those portraying female candidates.
- The longest articles in our collection involved male candidates (12.9%) as the main subject more often than female candidates (7.6%).
- An equal number of articles portraying female candidates as articles portraying male candidates were accompanied by a photo.

5.4. Speak well about them, speak ill about them, just speak about them!

- The majority of the articles, the identifiers used for male candidates (89.7%) and female candidates (86%) were neutral.
- We observed a slightly higher incidence of non-neutral identifiers (positive or negative) being used to designate female candidates than male candidates. Female candidates are therefore more often subject of judgement than male candidates in the way in which they are designated, even in articles that present themselves as neutral.
- Female candidates were featured in articles with a positive tone more often than male candidates.

- Male candidates were featured in articles with a negative tone more often than female candidates.
- Articles about female candidates were more often judgemental in tone when written by men than when written by women. However, we also noted that more men than women write columns on municipal politics.

5.5. Greater disparity in newspapers from medium-sized municipalities

- Regardless of the size of the municipality, a much higher number of articles were written about male candidates than female candidates.
- Male politicians were given the chance to speak more often in municipalities of all sizes: small (69.7%), medium-sized (75.7%), and large (70%).
- The greatest disparities were observed, in our corpus, in medium-sized municipalities.

5.6. Community newspapers: overshadowed by privately owned newspapers

- We were only able to include 11 articles from community newspapers.
- In these articles, female candidates were featured three times less than male candidates.
- In the case of privately owned newspapers, both the male and female candidates were identified in a neutral way.

What stands out from our quantitative analysis of the 1100 articles in our corpus is that male municipal electoral candidates still occupy a more significant place in the news than female candidates. Overall, whether it be the number of articles or the importance given to actors in the news, the media coverage of the 2017 Quebec municipal election campaign by the newspapers in our sample favoured the male candidates to the disadvantage of the female candidates.

6. Presentation of qualitative results

The qualitative data (what was written and in what way) presented in this section of the report relate to 539 articles about female municipal electoral candidates. We present our results about the way in which female candidates were represented – psychologically, physically, and socially – in the media. We then explore media coverage of feminist discourses and gender roles in relation to female candidates. As none of the 11 articles from community newspapers touched on the themes covered in this section of the report, we do not discuss them in our analysis.

6.1. Physical appearance

- In our corpus of 539 articles, only 22 mentioned the physical appearance of the female candidates. For the most part, it was in the large municipalities in our sample that the physical appearance of the female candidates was mentioned.
- Media coverage of female candidates' gestures and facial expressions can cause their political identities be perceived as connected to their physical appearance, which can hinder the representation of their political profession (Tremblay, 2000).
- The remarks of a female candidate who denounced the attention given to the physical appearance of female candidates and raised the issue of the impact of this on their participation in politics was the subject of one article from Trois-Rivières, the only one in the corpus.

6.2. The psychological

Personality traits

- Where personality traits associated with leadership are concerned, female candidates in the article in our corpus were shown as confident women who show strength of character and are authentic.
- When female candidates were, on occasion, portrayed as having the charisma of a leader, they were also depicted in terms of how they are charming, even though it has nothing to do with their political work.
- The female candidates were largely presented with an emphasis on their interpersonal qualities. In cases where the candidate did not have good interpersonal skills, her leadership ability was questioned. In this way, expectations with regards to traditional female roles were articulated as associated to the leadership roles of the female candidates.
- When female candidates showed themselves to assertive and capable of giving orders, they were sometimes portrayed in the media as rigid women and were advised to loosen up.
- Female candidates were associated with typically feminine personality traits (motivational, charming, unifying) in the newspapers in our corpus, which can contribute to perpetuating gender stereotypes and discrediting women's ability to work in politics.

Abilities

- Several mayoral female candidates were depicted as capable of having a vision for their municipality.
- Female candidates were often presented as having good listening and communication skills, both of which are elements associated with representations of feminine leadership.
- In the articles, the human resources management abilities of female mayoral candidates were highlighted, as opposed to their abilities to manage the material and financial resources of the municipality.
- A candidate's political experience was often presented as linked to her ability to become a councillor or mayor.
- Some articles appear to highlight an incompatibility between female candidates' success and their professional abilities.

6.3. The social

- The articles did not serve as a platform for presenting female candidates' personal experiences of oppression or privilege that result from the complex and non-linear interaction between their gender and other aspects of their identity (age, religion, social status, disability, etc.).
- Female candidates' academic and professional baggage were used to portray their political concerns and leadership styles, while their social engagement, which received less media coverage, was sometimes depicted as an entry point to a political career.
- Female candidates' private lives were the object of journalistic visibility in almost a quarter of the articles, which painted a portrait of these women through their traditionally female roles of mothers and wives.
- Female candidates' stereotypical and counter-stereotypical behaviours received media coverage. Stereotypical behaviours (discretion, lack of aggression) were less frequently reported and seem to have been presented as being inconsistent with political work and the masculine nature of the political sphere (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003).

6.4. Feminist discourses and issues

- The reach of some Montréal candidates' identification with the feminist movements was diminished by the overexposure in the media of antifeminist statements made by another female candidate.
- Thanks to the current nature of the #MeToo and the #BeenRapedNeverReported movements at the time of the campaign, the written media reported on female candidates' denouncement of sexist behaviours adopted by citizens and other politicians.
- Equality in itself was an electoral issue that the media outlets in our sample represented in a positive light in the vast majority of cases.
- The male-female complementarity argument is problematic in terms of maintaining efforts that should lead to equality. Media coverage of it may have contributed to making it credible for the general public.
- The articles in our corpus often made use of sport or combat metaphors to describe the elections, which contributes to the perpetuation of a gendered view of the political world and the supporting of the status quo (disproportionate male/female ratio) (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003).

What stands out from our qualitative analysis of the 539 articles about female municipal election candidates in our corpus is that a double standard still exists in the way in which male and female politicians are portrayed (Gingras, 2014). In their discussion of physical appearance, psychology, and social status, the media contributed to perpetuating a gendered view of the political world (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003), to supporting the logic of gendered roles in politics (Lalancette and Doucet, 2014), and to associating the notion of leadership with masculinity (Carroll and Fox, 2006). It appears that the way in which female candidates were represented in the media may have constituted a career obstacle for them (Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec, 2018).

IN THEIR DISCUSSION OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, PSYCHOLOGY, AND SOCIAL STATUS, THE MEDIA CONTRIBUTED TO PERPETUATING A GENDERED VIEW OF THE POLITICAL WORLD (GIDENGIL AND EVERITT, 2003), TO SUPPORTING THE LOGIC OF GENDERED ROLES IN POLITICS (LALANCETTE AND DOUCET, 2014), AND TO ASSOCIATING THE NOTION OF LEADERSHIP WITH MASCULINITY (CARROLL AND FOX, 2006).

7. Conclusion of the study

Contrary to what Goodyear-Grant (2013) observed in her analysis of the autobiographies of Canadian female politicians and interviews with federal politicians (both male and female), our study shows that a quantitative distinction remains between media coverage of male and female municipal election candidates which favours the former. Although more men than women ran for the municipal elections, media coverage given to male candidates versus female candidates was proportionally even more unequal. Female candidates were more often not mentioned in an article because of their association with other politicians and their remarks were less frequently reported in the news. Also, we observed that the tone of the articles about female candidates written by men were more often judgemental than when written by women.

ALTHOUGH MORE MEN THAN WOMEN RAN IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, MEDIA COVERAGE GIVEN TO MALE CANDIDATES VERSUS FEMALE CANDIDATES WAS PROPORTIONALLY EVEN MORE UNEQUAL.

In addition, our qualitative analysis of the media image of female candidates shows that a small amount of journalistic attention is still given to their appearance, as Goodyear-Grant (2013) has pointed out. Although the newspapers in our sample presented the female candidates by pointing out several of their qualities and abilities, we noted that, by putting emphasis on the traditionally feminine qualities and abilities of female candidates and insisting on their ineptitude and incompetence in terms of facing the demands of municipal politics, they contributed to perpetuating gender stereotypes – as

Gidengil and Everitt (2003) have also shown – and to perpetuating the differentiation of expectations of female candidates and male candidates (Lalancette and Doucet, 2014). As observed in the literature (Goodyear-Grant, 2013; Lemarier-Saulnier and Lalancette, 2012), although these women were represented in terms of their political work in conjunction with their professional identities, certain representations of their traditionally female roles and their private lives also interfered with the media coverage in which they were subject. Finally, the way in which the campaign was presented through gendered metaphors, thereby supporting the view of the political sphere as masculine (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003), did not help the cause of the representation of female politicians and may have constituted an obstacle to the political careers of female candidates.

FINALLY, THE WAY IN WHICH THE CAMPAIGN WAS PRESENTED THROUGH GENDERED METAPHORS, THEREBY SUPPORTING THE VIEW OF THE POLITICAL SPHERE AS MASCULINE (GIDENGIL AND EVERITT, 2003), DID NOT HELP THE CAUSE OF THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE POLITICIANS AND MAY HAVE CONSTITUTED AN OBSTACLE TO THE POLITICAL CAREERS OF FEMALE CANDIDATES.

8. Successes

8.1. Quantitative analysis

We salute the fact that, overall, male and female candidates were portrayed as taking (subject of the action) and experiencing (object of the action) an action in a proportion equivalent to their political representation.

Although for certain municipalities distinctions remain, we recognize the very limited gender distinction, generally speaking, in terms of the length of articles as well as the composition of the photographs that accompanied them. This is proof of the authors' journalistic professionalism.

Fortunately, the majority of the articles used neutral identifiers to designate female candidates in the municipal elections, avoiding all forms of positive or negative judgement.



8.2. Qualitative analysis

We salute the fact that only about twenty articles of our corpus of 539 discussed the physical appearance of female candidates.

It was encouraging to observe that the female candidates were portrayed through the presentation of several of their personality traits and abilities that highlighted their leadership abilities.

The content of the articles more often referred to the public sphere (professional life, education, etc.) than to the private sphere (family life, marital status, etc.) of the female candidates' lives.

It is important to highlight that both the issue of equality and the denunciation of sexist behaviour in the political sphere received a great deal of media coverage in the corpus via the remarks of the female candidates.

9. Recommendations

9.1. Quantitative analysis

Faced with the obvious disproportionality between media coverage of male and female candidates, both in terms of the corpus as a whole and of certain municipalities in and of themselves, we would like to underline the importance of providing the readership with representative and diversified information. Additionally, we believe that media coverage of male and female politicians in a proportion equivalent to the space they occupy in the political sphere would be a way to achieve this goal.

In terms of the composition of articles dealing with the campaign, in order to make clear the central, secondary, or tertiary role of the female and male candidates, it seems to us essential, in order to continue to provide the public with a fair and representative perspective on the political world, to give a central place to male and female politicians in a similar proportion, by giving them equivalent attention in articles.

We believe that the fact that female candidates were qualified negatively more often than male candidates in articles that were not opinion pieces constitutes an even more damaging distinction for the female candidates' image in that these articles are assumed to present a certain type of journalistic neutrality. Although the use of neutral identifiers was well-integrated, we would like to remind people of their importance, especially for designating female candidates in articles.

Given the minimal number of articles (11) about both female and male candidates for municipal councils in the community newspapers selected, we invite these newspapers to increase their coverage of municipal elections, right up to the day of the vote.

9.2. Qualitative analysis

While it was encouraging to see that very few articles dealt with the physical appearance of female candidates, we should continue to ensure that a disproportionate amount of attention is not given to an aspect of a female candidate's physical appearance, to the detriment of her message.

As numerous articles highlighted traditionally feminine qualities and abilities and represented certain traits and abilities of the female candidates that are perceived as masculine in a disapproving way, we believe that journalists must remain attentive to the representation of personality traits and abilities in female candidates. They must ensure that the portrayal of their characteristics and abilities are free of stereotypes and gendered expectations of women politicians.

We would like to draw attention to the need for journalists to think about the neutrality of the news and the implications of presenting certain behaviours of male and female politicians differently in order to avoid perpetuating certain double standards and a masculine image of the political sphere.

Where appropriate, it could be interesting to address the challenges associated with the intersecting axes of oppression that some female politicians must contend with, while being mindful not to victimize them.

We believe that particular attention should be paid to the use of gendered metaphors (sports and combat metaphors) in talking about the campaign, and that it be limited.

10. Broadening thinking on media coverage of female politicians

We think it necessary that a future study undertake a specific analysis of the representation of female politicians in community newspapers based on a sample made up only of community newspapers in order to: 1) validate the observations we made based on a larger sample of articles and 2) deepen our understanding of the reasons that explain the lack of interest of community newspapers in municipal politics during electoral periods.

As the sample of female candidates who received media attention in our corpus was not very ethnoculturally diverse, it would be useful for a future study to focus specifically on media coverage of female politicians through the lens of their ethnocultural affiliation.

The qualitative observations of our report being exclusively based on an analysis of the media image of female municipal candidates, it would be useful for a future research project to undertake a comparative qualitative analysis of the type journalistic representation male and female candidates receive. This could deepen our understanding of how, and based on which elements, male and female politicians are covered in the media in distinct or similar ways.

What is more, a semiotic analysis of the photographs that accompany newspaper articles could also deepen our understanding of the media coverage of male and female candidates for mayor and municipal councils. Also, the results of our research being specific to newspapers, we believe it necessary that a future study analyze the media coverage of male and female municipal election candidates by televised news programs.



POLITICS AS SEEN BY QUEBEC UNIVERSITY STUDENT NEWSPAPERS: BALANCED GENDER REPRESENTATIONS

BY :

Carol-Ann ROUILLARD · Mireille LALANCETTE

UQTR



Université du Québec
à Trois-Rivières



PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

This document outlines the main elements of the research report entitled *La politique vue par les journaux étudiants universitaires québécois : des représentations genrées équilibrées*¹ (Politics as seen by Quebec university student newspapers: balanced gender representations). This research is part of Plus de femmes en politique ? *Les médias et les instances municipales, des acteurs clés!* (More women in politics? The media and municipal bodies: key players!) project. The highlights presented in this document only provide an overview of the main research results. Therefore, the document does not replace the full report, which offers a more explicit and detailed description of the study's context, its methodology and its results.

1. Context

This study focuses on how female politicians are represented in francophone university student newspapers. To create this portrait, we asked ourselves several questions:

- What are newspapers reporting about female politicians' past experiences?
- Which issues are brought up when newspapers write about female politicians?
- How is their leadership depicted?
- What does the opposition or the political community say about them?
- Do newspapers write about obstacles or barriers that are specific to women in politics?
- What are the similarities and differences between how female and male politicians are presented?

2. The media, female politicians and representation: An overview of previous studies

Several theoretical proposals help to clarify why research on the representation of female politicians in the media is relevant. We already know that:

- Media plays a role in how male and female politicians are represented to the public;²
- Male standards continue to significantly influence the public domain—of which politics are a part—while female traits are more often associated with the private sphere;³
- These gendered standards influence leadership to the point where femininity is often constructed as the antithesis of political standards;⁴
- Gender influences how traditional media depicts politicians in different ways.⁵ For example, Catherine Lemarier-Saulnier (2018, p. 111) has shown that gendered presentations of masculine traits, values, or behaviours were very present in the media coverage of the 2014 provincial electoral campaign, for both women and men;

¹ The full report is available at: <http://www.tcmfm.ca/>. For complete references, please refer to the detailed report.

² See Cutler and Mathews (2005), Doucet (2015), and Lemarier-Saulnier (2018), among others.

³ See Ballmer-Cao et al. (2000), Jamieson (1995), Vosko (2003), and Bereni (2008), among others.

⁴ For more on leadership and gender, see Bereni (2008), Lemarier-Saulnier and Lalancette (2012), Carroll and Fox (2006), Lalancette and Doucet (2014), and Blanc and Cuerrier (2007), among others.

⁵ This observation comes from several research papers, for example, Heldman et al (2005), van Zoonen (2005), Trimble et al. (2010), Lemarier-Saulnier and Lalancette (2012), Goodyear-Grant (2013), Lalancette and Lemarier-Saulnier (2013), Lalancette et al. (2014), and Lemarier-Saulnier (2018).

- One of the obstacles women face when entering politics is the influence of media representation,⁶ which also affects their chances of success during the electoral process.⁷

We also know that several research papers focus on traditional political fields, such as provincial and federal politics, and on mainstream media representations.

However, very few studies have focused on university student newspapers. Therefore, with this research, we hope to fill the gap by attempting to better understand how women and men in politics are represented by student media.

3. Choice of student media

Why were we specifically interested in student media? First of all, this is a seldom-studied type of media, one which deals with a different context than mainstream media, which has already been analyzed by numerous researchers. Student newspapers focus on political subjects that are given very little attention, such as student, university, and municipal politics, which can serve as points of transition to other levels of politics. For example, the 2012 student leaders Martine Desjardins, Léo Bureau-Blouin, and Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois were all encouraged to take part in provincial politics following their involvement in various student associations. On the other hand, student newspapers often serve as a starting point for future professional reporters or public servants. In fact, many journalists started off as student journalists.

To explore this phenomenon, we identified six independent francophone university student newspapers; that is, self-managed newspapers whose financing does not come directly from university's administration or student associations. These are: *Impact Campus* (Université Laval), *Le Griffonnier* (Université du Québec à Chicoutimi), *Montréal Campus* (Université du Québec à Montréal), *Quartier Libre* (Université de Montréal), *Zone Campus* (Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières), and *Le Collectif* (Université de Sherbrooke).

4. Methods of analysis

We performed a qualitative analysis of the media content of the editions of these six student newspapers published between August 2011 and June 2017. Three political events were analyzed: 1) the 2013 municipal election campaign; 2) rectorial races; and 3) student politics between 2011 and 2017. In all, we analyzed 400 documents and 1,360 units of meaning⁸ were identified and analyzed. The following table shows the number of documents and units of meaning collected according to the three political events analyzed:

Table 1: Documents selected and units of meaning analyzed

Event	Number of documents	Units of meaning		
		Total Number	Number dealing with women	Number dealing with men
Municipal politics	15	149	31	116
Rectorial races	24	163	72	91
Student politics	361	1 048	432	616

⁶ Several studies have focused on this subject, including: Lawless and Fox (2010), Anderson (2011), and Johnson (2015).

⁷ For more on this subject, see Gidengil and Everitt (2003).

⁸ A unit of meaning is defined as a text- or specific time-related unit, which could correspond to part of a sentence, a whole sentence or a group of sentences

Using different analysis techniques, such as content and discourse analysis, we sought to understand the context in which newspapers deal with female and male politicians and what was said about them. These elements helped us to better understand how women and men in politics were represented. We also compared the media treatment of women and men in order to highlight gendered differences, if applicable.

Because of the specific nature of student newspapers as compared to other media texts, and due to the small number of studies that focused on the political events we analyzed, a qualitative approach, based on understanding data (Bonneville et al., 2007), enabled us to bring out a wealth of data from this corpus.

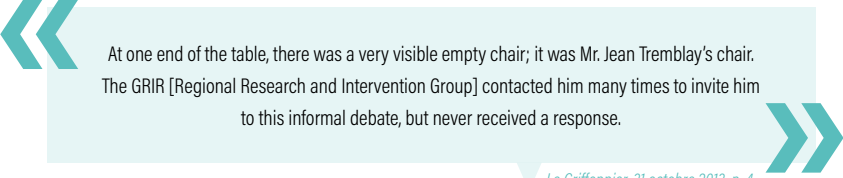
5. Presentation of results

Initial finding: fewer women than men

As shown in Table 1, female politicians are not written about as often as their male counterparts in student media. This is due to the fact that there are less women involved in the political spheres analyzed, which reduces the number of occasions for them to voice their opinions in the media.

5.1 Municipal politics

- The newspapers we studied showed a keen interest in issues affecting students, such as public transit, access to affordable housing, and post-graduation employment, during the 2013 municipal election campaign.
- Coverage also had a special focus on the decision to enter politics at a young age.
- The political practices of some outgoing mayors, who refused to participate in university-organized debates, and the authoritarian attitude of one of the outgoing candidates—an attitude often associated with the male gender—were criticized by the younger candidates who wanted to enter municipal politics to be closer to the people and make a difference in their lives:



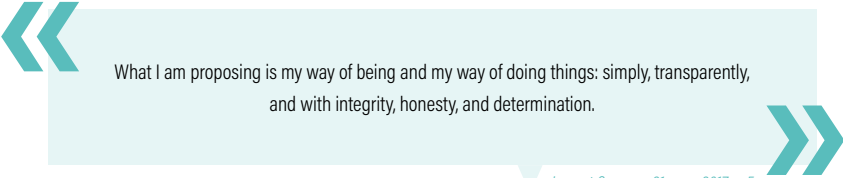
At one end of the table, there was a very visible empty chair; it was Mr. Jean Tremblay's chair. The GRIR [Regional Research and Intervention Group] contacted him many times to invite him to this informal debate, but never received a response.

Le Griffonnier, 31 octobre 2013, p. 4

5.2 Rectorial races

Gendered differences according to the leadership level portrayed varied significantly depending on who was running for rector. In one case, one female candidate's unifying leadership was presented, while coverage of another candidate focused on conflicts that had occurred during her previous mandate as rector. In another case, the fact that the candidate was born in another country and that she had worked at another university were emphasized.

Sophie D'Amours, a candidate for the position Rector of Université Laval, explained:



What I am proposing is my way of being and my way of doing things: simply, transparently, and with integrity, honesty, and determination.

Impact Campus, 21 mars 2017, p. 5

A journalist wrote the following about Nadia Ghazzali, elected Rector of Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières after a career at Université Laval:

The new rector will need to adapt to the reality of a regional university, which is something she is not necessarily familiar with.

Zone Campus, 6 février 2012, p. 3

- The issue of the rise of women politicians to the position of rector and the question of equality within the senior management team were at the heart of the student journalists' preoccupations:

She [Sophie D'Amours] believes in sending a "positive message" about women in society by showing that "any one of them can access these positions today."

Impact Campus, 2 mai 2017, p. 3

The mishandling of equality at the head of UQAM

Montréal Campus, 5 avril 2017, p. 3

Although it demonstrates a sensitivity regarding the number of women in politics, their interest in these matters contributes to reinforcing the idea that it is exceptional for female candidates to successfully carve out a spot for themselves at higher levels⁹.

5.3 Student politics

- Newspapers reach out to student association members mainly because they are spokespeople of the students or to benefit from their expertise on a specific subject:

Ms. Durocher mentioned that there have not been any important discussions about higher learning since the 60s. She feels that it is very responsible to initiate a serious reflection and discussion on Quebec's educational system.

Zone Campus, 1^{er} octobre 2012, p. 2

- An analysis of student politics showed some instances of gendered treatment, specifically when the players were personalized. This was especially the case when there was tension or conflict, which was the subject of significant coverage:

However, several associations such as Philosophy, Music, Political Science, and Classical Studies, have demonstrated their dissatisfaction with Mireille Mercier-Roy [sic]. They voted against the motion to congratulate her and, to further show their disapproval, left the convention during her end-of-mandate speech.

Quartier libre, 27 mars 2013, p. 5

- The differences noted between the treatment of a female student and a male student in favour of the tuition fee increase in 2012 speak for themselves. The criticisms of the female student were more personal and aggressive, while the male student was given greater credibility and respect:

The individualism she is being accused of is also criticized by several journalists: "Next to Arielle Grenier's cacophonous and individualistic pro-tuition hike arguments, any other argument seems calm and rational"

Montréal Campus, 29 février 2012, p. 2

⁹ For more on this subject, refer to Lalancette and Lemarier-Saulnier (2013).

6. Discussion of results

In general, when compared to studies carried out on traditional newspapers, gendered differences are not as obvious. However, these differences are present, most notably when events are personalized. Thus, the differences between female and male leadership become apparent when one analyzes how candidates are presented. There are also differences depending on the type of politics, specifically with respect to the subjects discussed and the types of leadership described.

Valued leadership

In sum, despite the differences in the media's coverage of the three political events, we noted that the type of leadership that was valued focused on the human side of things and on collaboration. This is the leadership style most often associated with women, while a more authoritarian management style, often associated with men, was more often criticized.

Obstacles faced by women and intersectionality

The experiences of, and the obstacles faced by women politicians, or the issue of intersectionality, which consists in thinking about interactions between race and gender when thinking about the forms of oppression that women face, are subjects that are seldom broached. With the exception of some mentions of the topic of male-female representativeness in high-level academic positions, the question of a woman's place in these political spheres is seldom discussed. Furthermore, because politicians remain largely white, non-disabled persons without the status of "other," student newspapers have fewer opportunities to write about intersectionality in politics.

Why is there a difference in media coverage?

Since various research papers have concluded that there is indeed gendered representation and stereotypes surrounding women in politics, one could ask why there is a difference in coverage between student newspapers and other media. This raises many avenues for reflection. Is it that the new generation does not see politics in terms of gendered stereotypes as much as previous generations did? More specifically, will this change permeate traditional newspapers when student journalists enter the job market? One could also ask what role the context of student newspapers, which are published less frequently and are thereby less prone to personalization, plays in the fewer instances of gendered media representation they contain.

7. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions we reached during our research, we prepared some recommendations for editorial teams of student newspapers.

First and foremost, we would like to **congratulate the newspapers** for their political coverage and the variety of subjects and issues discussed. It is important to recognize the interest shown by student newspapers in politics and in the issues affecting higher education. Indeed, although these issues may not be discussed as often since 2014—perhaps due to the onset of student newspaper blogs, which enable any subject to be discussed almost instantaneously—we nonetheless noted awareness of the issues when the sociopolitical or student context required politically focused media coverage.

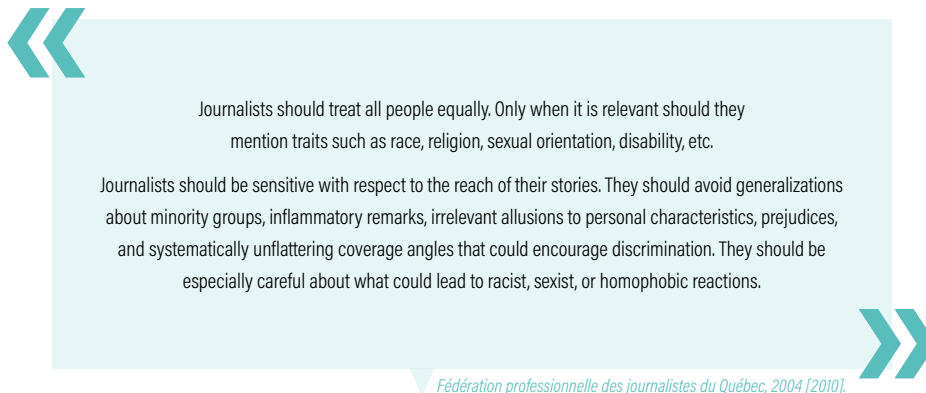
We would also like to encourage journalists to **pursue their efforts in systematizing and improving their journalistic practices with respect to gendered media representations**. Clear benchmarks that define the newspaper's editorial line regarding these issues should be established. These benchmarks should be part of a journalist's training and included in existing editorial policies. Where none exist, there should be motivation to create them in order to clearly state the newspaper's position with respect to gender equality.



RECOMMENDATIONS

As Erin Tolley suggested in her study of how Canadian media covered race in politics, media outlets need to **implement clear guidelines for their reporters**, otherwise sociodemographic information can become inconsistent, context-driven, and subject to the journalist's perception, choice, and intuition on what is relevant and newsworthy. For more on that subject, see Lalancette and Lemarier-Saulnier (2013) (Tolley, 2016, p. 179). As Tolley explains, these choices and these institutions are not neutral. Instead, they are informed by a preconception of what is "standard" in politics, a field that is for the most part occupied by white men (Tolley, 2016). Therefore, as highlighted by Drew (2011), the lack of editorial benchmarks in media becomes even more problematic when journalists can obviously perpetuate gendered or racist stereotypes.

In fact, some media outlets like the Toronto Star and the Canadian Press (Tolley, 2016) have editorial guidelines or policies that dictate the angle and approach to be used to ensure fair journalistic treatment of gender and race, among other things. For example, the *Guide de déontologie de la Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec* (Quebec Professional Journalists' Federation Code of Ethics) recommends the following:



Student newspapers can take their cues from existing guides, although we feel that these guidelines could be further expanded.

Benchmarks for a non-sexist policy

Based on the various studies that focused on gendered media representation, and on the findings of our study, the following elements are those we feel need to be taken into account and integrated in editorial policies so that newspaper articles do not perpetuate gender inequality.

• Mentions of gender or race

If the general consensus is to **avoid mentioning a person's gender or race**, then it is important to specify in which context it would be acceptable to do so. For example, the Toronto Star's guide suggests that references to a person's race should only be made if it is relevant to the story (e.g. the search for a criminal suspect) (Tolley, 2016).

Similarly, it would be relevant to have a discussion as to when it is acceptable to use wording such as "the first woman" the impact of its use on other women.

• Equal treatment and risks of personalization

As stated in Erin Tolley's work, equal treatment would be more easily achieved if people thought about what would happen if journalists used the same messages when writing about marginalized groups as they did when writing about (white) men. **By asking themselves, when reporting on a female politician** (as James McCarten suggests doing in The Canadian Press Stylebook, 2013), whether they would mention certain things when writing about a man, or if the coverage would be the same for a male politician as a female politician, some gender stereotypes could be avoided. For example, in the case of Arielle Grenier, the terms "young redhead" and "pretty redhead" surely would not have been employed had the article been about a male politician.

In student newspapers, personalization has been shown to lead to gendered media representation. **Awareness of the risks of personalization** could be raised at student newspapers. Among the measures that could be adopted, we would like to draw attention to a step taken by Zone Campus that appears to have contributed to the creation of a non-gendered and non-personalized approach: they identify student representatives by position (e.g., president) rather than by name. This technique creates distance between the person and the actions carried out by them as part of their job. We believe that this type of approach could lead to eliminating the idea that men are the ideal politicians.

It is important to mention, however, that real attention to these elements is only possible when journalists have a systemic understanding of equality and of gender stereotype issues, an understanding that can be shared through training. Therefore, journalists should continuously strive **to work towards a systematic understanding of these issues**.

• *Equality of sources and participants*

As noted through our comparison of units of meaning concerning female and male politicians, men are more often written about in student newspapers. While journalists who write about politics must take into account the female/male ratio of the elected politicians when discussing politics, **sensitivity to the place occupied by women in the media** could also be observed. There are several ways this could be carried out. For example, journalists could be encouraged to see politicians under an angle other than what their gender traditionally associates them with. Reporters could also seek to obtain a female/male balance (as well as racial diversity) when interviewing experts.

• *Diversity within the journalism team*

Also, **greater diversity in the newsroom** could help to reduce the production of stereotypes surrounding societal diversity (gender, race, sexual orientation). What is more, **building an equal journalism team should be considered**, although this should not be an end in itself as it does not necessarily curtail gendered judgments that both female and male reporters already possess.

• *Gender-neutral writing and abbreviated doublets*

In the same vein, **adopting gender-neutral writing**, which includes putting feminine and masculine spellings side-by-side, progressively moving away from the generic masculine (i.e. to encompass both genders), and ensuring equal representation of women and men in a text (*Office québécois de la langue française* [Quebec's French Language Bureau – OQLF], 2018) could be other solutions.

Where space is limited, the OQLF recommends using abbreviated doublets rather than the generic masculine. The OQLF's writing tool, the *Banque de dépannage linguistique*, includes an article entitled "Féminisation et rédaction épicène" (Feminization and Gender-Neutral Writing) which offers useful guidelines for those wishing to produce gender-neutral texts.

8. References

The full version of the references quoted in this document is available in the report entitled *La politique vue par les journaux étudiants universitaires québécois : des représentations genrées équilibrées*.

CONCLUSION

The studies presented here definitely fill a void in literature that deals with media representation of female politicians. The studies enabled us to verify whether previous research findings on the media's representation of women applied to municipal politics. Secondly, they enabled us to ascertain the type of media coverage provided by university newspapers.

With over 8,000 elected officials in municipal politics who play an important role within their community, it was important to examine the media's portrayal of female municipal candidates. Moreover, university newspapers are a training ground for many journalists who then move on to traditional and community media. An analysis of the next generation of journalists therefore seemed fundamental when examining media practices surrounding the representation of women in politics.

In summary, these complementary studies paint a nuanced picture of the media's practices and their messages. First, the report *Les représentations médiatiques des femmes aux élections municipales* showed that coverage given to male and female candidates is disproportionate and that, despite several more balanced representations, media representation of women has often helped perpetuate certain gender stereotypes and led to different expectations from female and male candidates. Then, *La politique vue par les journaux étudiants universitaires québécois : des représentations genrées équilibrées* report found that gender only slightly influences student newspaper coverage, with the exception of some leadership coverage, which repeated stereotypical expectations of women and included some instances of personalization where a greater emphasis was placed on conflicts involving female politicians.

Based on these convincing results, the project's partners will work together to establish a dialogue with the journalistic field to discuss media practices surrounding the representation of women, and will seek to develop solutions for the neutral and equal treatment of women who enter politics in their community.



MORE WOMEN **IN POLITICS?**

Media and municipal bodies: key actors!

These studies were financed by the Status
of Women Canada's Women's Program



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada