

# "He Will Take Care of our Security Better than Her"

## Examining Socio-Cultural Conceptions of Gender in Israeli and American Press Coverage of Female Candidates for Top Political Positions, 2008-2009

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### Abstract

This study argues that distinct differences between two cultures and two political campaigns, may result in different press coverage of women running for leadership positions. To demonstrate this, we undertook a content analysis of Tzipi Livni's and Hillary Clinton's 2008-2009 campaigns in four Israeli and American popular and elite newspapers, examining coverage of nine gender-oriented media frameworks. We found that while the press in both countries strongly emphasized gender-oriented elements in covering the two leaders, the Israeli press was significantly more gender-biased, particularly due to military and religious influences. Additionally, the popular newspapers in both countries were more gender-biased than the elite newspapers, especially in "sensationally" highlighting candidates' sexuality and appearance.

**Keywords:** *Israel/U.S. election campaigns, political culture, media framing, women/female candidates, elite/popular press*

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## 1. Female High Level Political Leadership: Cultural Elements

For the past few years a growing body of work has demonstrated a strong relationship between local political culture and public opinion regarding crucial questions such as "Who is the best leader?" or "What traits are required for leadership?". It was found that many times political leaders' "positive image", based on the perception of their ability to handle a national crisis and even electability, is an outcome of deep-rooted social conceptions among individuals (Zhang & Benoit 2009; Anagondahalli 2012).

Although women throughout the world increasingly are running for top political office, and a few have been elected to lead their countries (Braden 1996; Ross 2002; Liran-Alper 2009), the gender gap continues to exist. Individuals still tend not to associate women with leadership (Mo 2015), and traits such as compassion, emotionality and honesty are still being cast as "feminine", thus less likely to fit the general public's idea regarding "suitable" leadership (Kacen 2000; Meeks 2013).

Due to these social norms, men traditionally tend to participate in the public and political spheres far more than women. This phenomenon is often described as ahistorical and universal, and it is even stronger in the case of high political positions due to the great national importance that people attribute to them (Carroll & Zerilli 1993; Golan & Herman 2004).

However, the evolution and success of the feminist struggle is uneven internationally, i.e. today, the status of women differs from one society to another. Concomitantly, female politicians' and leaders' electoral

difficulties are no longer monolithic and binary, but rather culturally relative and contextual (Dietz 2003; Krolokke & Scott-Sorensen 2006).

Scholars in Israel have suggested that Israeli women in general and Israeli female politicians in particular suffer specific cultural obstacles compared to their counterparts in other liberal democracies [1]. Originally, the early Zionist myth described women as equal to men in a variety of fields: from the gender-egalitarian ideology of the Kibbutz, through the early suffrage of Hebrew women in 1926, and up to the appointment of a female Israeli prime minister in 1969. However, in her study Herzog suggested that these early achievements were somehow misleading, as they created the illusion that gender issues in Israeli society are "non-issues", aborting future feminist activity and achievements, and enabling more conservative voices later on to shape the Israeli public sphere in this matter (1999).

An important example of this is the centrality of military values and norms in Israeli society as a result of the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This ongoing situation undermines women's ability to participate in the political arena, as military issues are traditionally considered "men-only issues" (Acker 1990; Horowitz & Lissak 1990; Lorber 1994; Herman & Kurtz, 1995; Jerby 1996). In addition, more than in other liberal democracies, the Israeli political sphere is directly (and deeply) influenced by religion: ultra-Orthodox (Jewish) parties have been gaining power and a significant number of Israelis experience an inherent religious dilemma in being represented by a woman (Jerby 1996; Samooaha 2000).

In the American case, historically most women did not receive formal education, and thus were illiterate, ipso facto prevented from decision-making. In 1917, the first woman was elected to Congress, and three years after that, American women gained the right to vote. In 1974, the first woman was elected governor (Meeks 2012).

Although feminism arose first in England (Woolstonecraft 1792) and continued there for over a century, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century the main ideological thrust came from the U.S., as liberal feminist organizations and advocates pushed for suffrage. From the 1960s-70s onwards, American liberal and radical feminism (if not the movement per se) has continued to gather de facto strength, with significant social, political, and to a more limited extent, economic success. In short, despite serious obstacles in early American history, the recent status of women in the U.S. has improved tremendously, and to a large extent – given its dominant cultural position on the world stage – it continues to lead the global feminist struggle (Dietz 2003; Krolokke & Scott-Sorensen 2006).

Cultural differences and gaps between Israeli and American public positions concerning the idea of female leaders can be demonstrated on two levels. The first level is expressed in national polls and surveys regarding gender stereotypes, women and leadership. In this context, a 2015 "Gallup" poll found that 92% of Americans would vote for a female president. Another poll found that a majority of Americans see little difference between men and women in traits required for leadership. 70% of Americans said that women in leadership roles would improve the face of American society, and the main reason given for the lack of women in leadership positions was that "women are held to higher standards" ("Pew Research Center" 2015). In the Israeli case, only 70% of Israelis said they would consider voting for a female prime minister, and only 7% said a female prime minister was "capable of dealing with security issues, such as the Iranian threat" ("Dialogue" 2013). In addition, the "Dialogue" poll found that most Israelis consider women as more capable of dealing with "feminine issues", such as healthcare and welfare, and 51% of Israelis said that the main reason for gender differences in politics is women's traditional, more family-oriented role.

The second level involves managerial and political participation and leadership. From a corporate perspective, a 2014 poll found that only 9% of CEOs in the Israeli market were women, with the rate even smaller in the leading companies: 5.2% ("BDI-COFACE" 2014). In the U.S., the situation is exactly the same in the case of leading companies – 5.2% of CEOs are women – but the rate is much better in the general market, 16.9% ("Pew Research Center" 2015). In terms of general economic participation and opportunity, in Israel the middle class "average family" finds both parents working (unlike some middle class demographic sectors in parts of the U.S., where gender "roles" are regarded as more binary). However, in its 2014 "Gender Gap Index", the World Economic Forum showed that the U.S. is ranked far better than Israel in general women economic participation and opportunity (the U.S. ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of

142 countries, while Israel ranked 65<sup>th</sup>). To take a critical example, "wage equality" in the U.S. ranked 65<sup>th</sup>, whereas Israel ranked 130<sup>th</sup>.

Similarly, a 2015 poll found that in the academic field women make up to 14% of the leading academic staff in Israel, compared to 31% in the U.S. (Council for Higher Education 2015). In the political realm, an OECD study from 2013 showed that although women's representation in parliament is approximately similar in both countries, the percentage of women in the Israeli *government* is much lower than in the U.S.: Israel ranked 29<sup>th</sup> out of 34 countries, while the U.S. ranked 13<sup>th</sup> (Shapira et al. 2013). The relative lack of Israeli female politicians in ministerial and executive positions is a good indication of a more conservative perspective, as these specific positions are considered significantly more prominent and influential than legislative roles.

## **2. Communication as Culture, Media Framing in Popular and Elite Press and Media Gender Bias**

According to James Carey's "cultural approach to communication", the mass media are a powerful and effective tool, reflecting socio-cultural norms as well as strengthening them. Carey argued that communication is not only a transfer of information, but also constitutes a cultural ritual. For example, we should comprehend news reading less as sending or gaining new information and more as attending Mass: a situation in which nothing new is learned, but a particular cultural view of the world is portrayed and confirmed (Carey 1989).

"Media framing" is one of the most common ways in which journalists may both reflect and reinforce social norms and agendas. Framing is an interpretative schema, enabling media consumers to more easily identify, tag, process information and store new knowledge. We can relate to media framing as a "socio-cultural package" that turns episodic reports into thematic, general ways of thinking, concerning individuals, events, social conceptions and social groups (Carey 1989; McQuail 2010).

Research differentiates between popular and elite media sources in general, and popular and elite newspapers in particular. Elite media are usually shown to be more "open" to interpretation and "self-framing" by media consumers, as their media messages tend to be far more objective and neutral. Popular media, on the other hand, are more "close-minded", in the sense that their frames are far more biased and one-sided, preventing consumers' critical thinking and self-analysis of reality. Popular newspapers are often described as emotional, sensational, having an individual-perspective orientation, while elite newspapers are more rational, solid and tend to have a greater societal orientation. In addition, the popular press is identified with "soft news", compared to the elite press that is more identified with "hard news" (Bloch-Elkon & Lehman-Wilzig 2007; Gans 2010; Lehman-Wilzig & Seletzky 2010; Baum & Jamison 2011).

As media can reflect common local, social norms and ideas, and as the patriarchal ideology is still firmly established in many societies, it is clear why such a large body of research has found consistent gender bias in the media. Irrelevant and stereotypical media framing of women has troubled many scholars throughout the years. Some found that the organizational structure of media institutions heavily affects news production (Molotch & Lester 1974); as most editors are men, gender bias is inevitable (Israeli 1999). Others have argued that the media symbolically annihilate women from the public agenda as a social means for maintaining hegemonic social class status and power (Gerbner 1972; Gerbner & Gross 1976). Finally, it was consistently demonstrated that the media tend to reduce women's diverse social behaviors to limited gender-oriented frames, focusing on very specific themes such as sexuality and appearance (Bordo 1998; Evans 2003), motherhood and housework (Lemish & Drob 2002; Tartaglia & Rollero 2015), sentimentality and weakness (First 2002; Kacen 2000).

### 3. Recent Exchanges in Gender-Oriented Media Frameworks of Female Politicians

Several media studies have concluded that gender bias occurs – often even more significantly – in the case of female *politicians*. Media visibility of female politicians is usually much lower than their male opponents, and they are generally portrayed within gender-stereotypical media frames. Through these frames and patterns of coverage, it has been shown that the media associate female politicians in highly “characteristic” fashion. Moreover, as voters often use the media to consolidate their electoral position, this tendency is even more crucial during election campaigns (Kahn 1991; Kahn 1992; Kahn 1994; Lawrence & Rose 2009; Schneider & Bos 2014).

Sexuality and appearance are good examples of a consistent theme: unlike male politicians' coverage, in the case of women politicians the agenda tends to relate to clothing, footwear, fashion or style, makeup and cosmetics. Occasionally, female politicians and public figures are portrayed as sex objects, being placed in mostly irrelevant contexts and described or evaluated through media frames of body image and beauty ideals (Kacen 2000; Gedalya Herzog & Shamir 2011).

Women's traditional roles as wives and mothers are also a major pattern. With female politicians socially comprehended as active in both family-oriented and public arenas, the media tend to strongly emphasize their personal relationships and abilities to function in their private sphere (Trimble & Gerrits 2013; Lachover 2015). Furthermore, female politicians' choice of public life and politics is framed sometimes by the media as "damaging to femininity" or a betrayal of their "natural", i.e. more "sentimental", social role (Gedalya, Herzog & Shamir 2011; Meeks 2012).

Associating "feminine issues" with female politicians is another media frame. When evaluating candidates for office, voters consider their ability to handle political issues. Separating "feminine issues" and "masculine issues" is a traditional social practice suggesting that women are more likely to align with issues that stereotypically match their compassionate and family-oriented role in society, such as health-care, education, women's rights, environment and social welfare. On the other hand, men are traditionally perceived as financial breadwinners and protectors. Therefore, military, defense, crime and economic issues are socially defined as "masculine issues" (Rudman & Kilianski 2000; Heldman et al. 2005; Meeks 2012; Han 2015).

In addition, female politicians are often attributed gender-novelty and norm-breaking behavior. Novelty labels are media frames that categorize events or people as "historical", "new" or "different". Female politicians and leaders are by definition norm breakers in many countries, and this fact might encourage journalists to describe them, positively or negatively, as pioneers (Shoemaker 1985; Meeks 2012).

Finally, studies have found that the media's reflection of social gender divisions extends to character traits. Female politicians are usually associated with "feminine" character traits, such as compassion, emotionality, honesty, altruism and congeniality. Men, on the other hand, are usually associated with "masculine" traits, such as strength, assertiveness, aggressiveness, independence and confidence (Banwart & Mckinney 2005; Banwart 2010; Meeks 2012; Meeks 2013). This kind of media stereotype and gender dichotomy can affect voters' assessments of political leaders, and reinforce the idea that women are inexperienced, less decisive and are not tough enough to lead or to win a campaign (Kahn 1994; Lawrence & Rose 2009; Meeks 2012).

In terms of cultural differences, a variety of studies throughout the western world<sup>[2]</sup> have suggested that when covering female politicians and female leaders the use of specific gender-oriented frames is widespread and common. In the Israeli case, previous as well as new studies have quite consistently found a similar phenomenon of reducing female politicians' behavior and visibility to particular repetitive and stereotypical themes (e.g., Herzog 1994; Shenkar-Shreck 2000; Cohen-Avigdor 2000; Halevi 2012).

Nevertheless, in the past few years, scholars have found change in social attitudes towards women, reflected as well in the media's approach towards female politicians: improved visibility and more gender-

balanced representation (e.g., Goodyear-Grant 2013; Raicheva-Stover and Ibroscheva 2014). Some scholars attribute these changes to the growing participation of women in the political arena, and particularly in top political leadership positions (Braden 1996; Ross 2002; Liran-Alper 2009; Meeks 2013; Lachover 2015).

Nonetheless, current scholarly literature has mainly focused on describing this issue in particular, single countries. However, when studying media coverage of female politicians compared to their male opponents, it is necessary to examine *different cultural environments, political campaigns and media institutions*. For instance, in their 2008 study, Kittilson and Fridkin compared American, Australian and Canadian media coverage of female politicians, and found *slight differences* between the three countries. That study constituted a unique example of a "cross-national" analysis, but due to the cultural similarities between the three countries, and as most of the differences demonstrated in its findings were not of a cultural origin, it cannot be considered as a cross-cultural analysis.

Perceptually, Ross (2002) found that female politicians in the U.K., Australia and South Africa view the media as a barrier for office. However, this study merely offers insight into women's personal *perspective* regarding news framing, whereas it is important to analyze their *actual news coverage*.

Despite changes and improvements regarding gender-bias in the media, only by understanding specific *local cultural* obstacles and difficulties that women still face in media coverage, can we better learn how to improve media framing of women in specific cultural contexts.

## 4. Methodology

This study's objective is to demonstrate whether and to what extent *differences between two political campaigns in two diverse cultures can result in differential press coverage of women running for leadership positions*. It is in line with a growing recognition that women's media coverage is no longer systematic and dichotomous, as past studies have suggested, but rather can change along with other variables, such as socio-cultural norms. Focusing on the specific theme of female *leaders* enables us to check a deeper level of the media-society relationship, as media observations of leadership can expose cultural and gender-oriented norms reflective of society, at large

**RQ1:** Were news frames of Tzipi Livni's and Hillary Clinton's 2008-2009 campaigns related to both countries' different political culture, and if so, to what extent? As previous studies have found that media framing of women can change along with additional variables, and as the "cultural approach to communication" assumes that media can reflect social values and norms, this study hypothesizes (**H1**) that Tzipi Livni's coverage in the Israeli newspapers will provide a more gender-biased perspective than Hillary Clinton's coverage in American newspapers, reflecting particular cultural difficulties for the status of women in Israel.

**RQ2:** Were the popular or elite newspapers more likely to use stereotypical coverage of both Tzipi Livni's and Hillary Clinton's candidacy? Since popular newspapers are generally more sensational and emotional, and less socially responsible than elite newspapers, it is hypothesized (**H2**) that the popular newspapers analyzed in this study will provide a more stereotypical and gender-biased coverage of both leaders.

As stated, then, news coverage of two leaders in four newspapers, elite and popular press, was analyzed during their 2008-2009 Israeli and American political campaigns. The candidates for office were:

- Former Israeli Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, *Tzipi Livni*, who was considered, as the head of the "Kadima" progressive party, a major candidate for the office of prime minister of Israel in the general elections, held in February 2009.
- Senator *Hillary Rodham Clinton*, who ran for the U.S. Democratic nomination for presidency in 2008.

These two case studies were chosen as they constitute a unique historical example of women running almost simultaneously for the highest political position in two countries. Moreover, not only does each have significant prior political experience, but “coincidentally” both have law backgrounds, i.e. relevant professional experience, both come from “political families”: Clinton married to the former U.S. President; Livni, the daughter of a three term Likud member of Knesset. Ideologically, both can be placed in the “Center” of their respective country’s political spectrum – Livni having moved from the Right to the Center, and Clinton from the Left to the Center. In short, socio-demographically and politically they are about as similar as two women politicians can be, living in two quite dissimilar countries. The two cases were analyzed individually in previous separate studies, but never compared cross-culturally.

To ensure a sufficient and comprehensive analysis, elite and popular large-circulation newspapers were selected: Israel’s elite newspaper *Haaretz* and mass-popular *Yedioth Ahronoth*, and the U.S. elite newspaper *The New York Times* and mass-popular *Newsday*. From the 1970's until 2010, *Yedioth Ahronoth* was the largest-circulation newspaper in Israel (today it is a close second). *Haaretz* has a much smaller readership (7% daily), but it is the only real example of an elite daily newspaper in Israel (Rivak 2010). *The New York Times* has the third highest circulation of any U.S. newspaper, famous for its worldwide cultural and political influence. *Newsday* also has an impressive circulation of about 437,000 copies per day (Nielsen NetView 2010; Beaujon 2012).

One limitation of this study concerns the fact that all four newspapers are known for being somewhat “liberal” in their political tendency, with editorial staff and most consumers located at the cultural and economic centrum of both countries (NYC and Tel-Aviv). This was an outcome of some logistical research difficulties regarding the availability of the press sources in both countries. Nevertheless, as stated above, these newspapers do in fact represent *major and significant thought patterns within both societies and public opinion*.

The study performed content analysis of *Haaretz* and *Yedioth Ahronoth* coverage of Tzipi Livni's 2009 campaign, and also *The New York Times* and *Newsday* coverage of Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign – in both cases over the last three months of their campaigns. News items were assembled using a keyword search of the two candidates' *full* names during the selected periods. The final sample consisted of 1,652 news items, with 690 for Livni's coverage and 962 for Clinton's.

Each news item was analyzed and coded as an individual unit with presence (=1) or absence (=0) of nine gender-oriented news frameworks, demonstrated in previous literature:

- *Appearance* (including references to candidate's weight, age and aesthetics);
- *Sexuality* (including any kind of sexual innuendos);
- *Family-oriented labels* (such as, "wife", "mother", "sister" and "husband");
- Emphasizing *feminine character traits* (such as, compassion, emotionality, honesty, altruism and congeniality);
- *Masculinity* (including references to "masculine traits" and "absence of femininity");
- Emphasizing *feminine issues* (such as, health-care, education, environment and social welfare) *in the context of candidate's gender*, or undermining the politician's ability to deal with *masculine issues* (such as, military, defense, crime and economy);
- *Novelty labels* (such as, "first", "new", "historic");
- Noting a politician's *lack of experience or electability* in a gender-oriented context;
- Emphasizing the politician's activity in the context of *women's rights* (e.g., references to candidate's feminist views or activities).

Inter-coder reliability was assessed with exactly 25% of the final sample ( $n = 413$ ) by two coders. Inter-coder reliability coefficients (using Scott's  $\pi$ ) ranged from  $\pi = .82$ , for family-oriented labels, to  $\pi = .94$ , for novelty labels, in all frameworks – reliable enough to draw conclusions.

## 5. Findings

Differences between the Israeli and American cases were demonstrated by summing the final numbers and percentage of news items with gender-oriented frameworks, and then dividing the papers according to country of origin.

**Table 1**

Israeli and American Press News Items with Gender-Oriented Frames  
(Number and Percentage): Livni's 2009 Campaign Coverage alongside Clinton's 2008.

Gender news frame	Frequency in Israeli press	Frequency in American press
Appearance	38 (5.5%)	23 (2.3%)*
Sexuality	13 (1.8%)	11 (1.1%)
Masculinity	23 (3.3%)	22 (2.2%)
Family Labels	45 (6.5%)	57 (5.9%)
Feminine Traits	88 (12.7%)	37 (3.8%)**
Feminine Issues	44 (6.3%)	11 (1.1%)**
Novelty Labels	70 (10.1%)	76 (7.9%)*
Lack of Experience	107 (15.5%)	29 (3.0%)**
Feminist Activity	28 (4.0%)	14 (1.4%)*

For the Israeli press,  $N = 690$

For the American press,  $N = 962$

Significant differences, as indicated by t-test for equality of means:

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

To test **H1** an *independent t-test for equality of means* was run. The results revealed that in six of nine frames, Israel's press showed a significantly ( $p < .05$ ) greater gender-bias in Livni's news coverage than Clinton's news coverage in the American press. The three greatest differences between the two leaders' media coverage ( $p < .01$ ) were in the categories of *feminine traits*, *feminine issues* and *lack of experience*.

Concerning *feminine traits*, the Israeli press showed a much stronger tendency to portray Livni as a naïve, childish, stressed and dependent politician, with common repetitive descriptions such as "hysterical", "hollow" and "passive". In addition, Livni was commonly portrayed as a "puppet" of her crew of advisors, as in these quotes from *Haaretz*: "She says whatever her advisors tell her to say" (November 6, 2008); "Spin doctors are pushing an image without any essence" (November 23, 2008). The American press showed a similar phenomenon towards Clinton's supposed dependence on her spouse, former president Bill Clinton. For example, in this sentence from *Newsday*: "Clinton learned her own parry-and-thrust from her husband, Bill" (March 8, 2008), and in this sentence from *The New York Times*: "She bases her credentials in large part on years spent as a president's wife" (March 6, 2008). However, this tendency was more limited in the American case.

In the category of *feminine issues*, the Israeli press generally referred to Livni as unsuitable and unqualified with regard to maintaining Israel's security. For example, in this sentence from *Yedioth Ahronoth*: "Netanyahu is a strong leader, he will take care of our security and economy better than her"

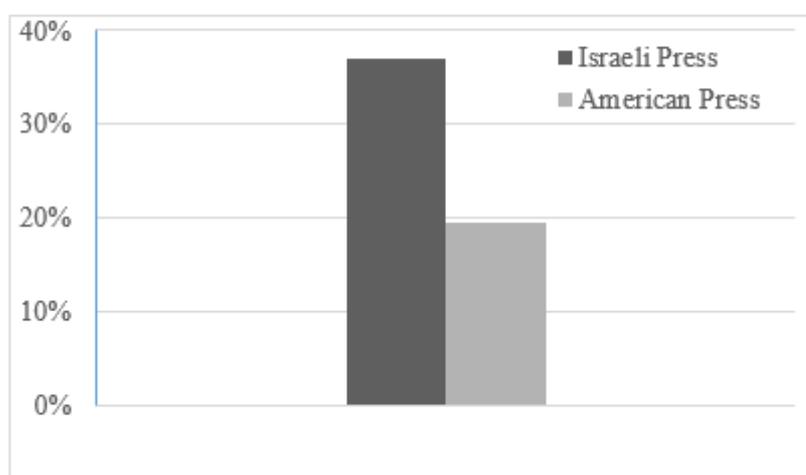
(October 28, 2008), and in this sentence from *Haaretz*: "She is incapable of dealing with the Iranian threat" (October 28, 2008). In Clinton's coverage, the phenomenon was more moderate and usually appeared in the context of particular incidents, such as criticism regarding Clinton's claim of having foreign affairs experience as the former "First Lady". For example: "Why is framing her 80 trips abroad as first lady preparation for dealing with foreign affairs as president?" (*The New York Times*, March 25, 2008). In Livni's case, criticism was more general and often without any specific context.

Finally, the Israeli press showed a significant tendency to portray Livni as an *inexperienced* leader and politician, with repetitive phrases such as: "amateur", "unqualified" and "unsuitable". This category was also much less prominent in Clinton's case.

Figure 1 shows the general percentage of gender-biased news items out of all the news items that were collected and analyzed in this study.

### Figure 1

Percentage of Israeli and American Press News Items with *any* Gender-Oriented Frame: Livni's 2009 & Clinton's 2008 Campaign Coverage.



Whereas the press in both countries strongly emphasized gender-oriented frameworks when covering both leaders, the Israeli press was significantly more gender-biased: 37% of news items in the Israeli newspapers included gender-oriented elements, compared to only 19% in the American case.

Summing the overall number and percentage of news items with gender-oriented frameworks in each newspaper also enabled a comparison between the elite press and popular press in both countries.

**Table 2**

Elite and Popular Press News Items with Gender-Oriented Frames  
(Number and Percentage): Livni's 2009 Campaign Coverage in *Haaretz*  
Compared to *Yedioth Ahronoth*; and Clinton's 2008 Campaign Coverage  
in *The New York Times* compared to *Newsday*.

Gender news frame	Elite Press		Popular Press	
	<i>Haaretz</i>	<i>NYT</i>	<i>Yedioth Ahronoth</i>	<i>Newsday</i>
Appearance	23 (4.3%)	20 (2.7%)	15 (9.4%)*	3 (1.25%)
Sexuality	10 (1.8%)	4 (0.5%)	3 (1.8%)	7 (2.9%)*
Masculinity	17 (3.2%)	18 (2.4%)	6 (3.7%)	4 (1.6%)
Family Labels	31 (5.8%)	36 (4.9%)	14 (8.8%)	21 (8.7%)
Feminine Traits	68 (12.8%)	27 (3.7%)	20 (12.5%)	10 (4.1%)
Feminine Issues	33 (6.2%)	10 (1.3%)	11 (6.9%)	1 (0.4%)
Novelty Labels	39 (7.3%)	59 (8.1%)	31 (19.4%)**	17 (7.0%)
Lack of Experience	68 (12.8%)	25 (3.4%)	39 (24.5%)**	4 (1.6%)
Feminist Activity	21 (3.9%)	13 (1.8%)	7 (4.4%)	1 (0.4%)

For *Haaretz*,  $N = 531$ ; For *Yedioth Ahronoth*,  $N = 159$

For *The New York Times*,  $N = 722$ ; For *Newsday*,  $N = 240$

Significant differences, as indicated by Tukey's range test:

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

To test **H2** a *Tukey's range test* was run. The results revealed that differences between the two types of the press were far more significant in the Israeli case where three out of nine media frames displayed significant differences between the two newspapers ( $p < .05$ ). In the American case, differences were generally less significant, although *Newsday* was significantly ( $p < .05$ ) more "sexist" than *The New York Times*.

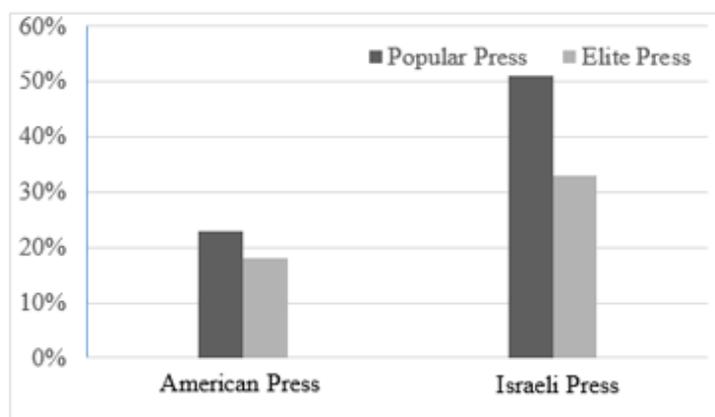
*Yedioth Ahronoth* chose to emphasize Livni's *appearance* in a series of articles (for example, from October 30, 2008) comparing her appearance to a so-called "look-alike", and using photos in order to "examine" the similarities and differences between the two. In addition, the paper was significantly far more gender-biased ( $p < .01$ ) than *Haaretz* in *novelty labels* (for example, in this sentence from October 26, 2008: "'SHAS'[3] is not ready for a female prime minister"), and in emphasizing Livni's "*lack of experience*".[4]

Concerning the American press, as previously mentioned, *Newsday* was significantly more gender-biased ( $p < .05$ ) in referring to Clinton's *sexuality* and in sexual innuendos regarding her candidacy. For example: "She is a veteran of sex scandals" (March 23, 2008); "Clinton likes a tippie, happy times or sad, and the woman doesn't like to drink alone" (June 2, 2008).

Figure 2 shows the general percentage of gender-biased news items out of all the news items that were collected and analyzed in this study, comparing the popular press to the elite press in both countries.

**Figure 2**

Percentage of Elite and Popular Press News Items with *any* Gender-Oriented Frame: Livni's 2009 Campaign Coverage in *Haaretz* Compared to *Yedioth Ahronoth*; and Clinton's 2008 Campaign Coverage in *The New York Times* compared to *Newsday*.



Whereas the popular press emphasized gender-oriented frameworks more than the elite press in both countries, the differences between the two types of the press were far more significant in the Israeli case: 51% of news items in *Yedioth Ahronoth* included gender-oriented elements, compared to only 33% in *Haaretz*. In the American case, although *Newsday* was generally more gender-biased than *The New York Times* (23% gender-biased news items compared to only 18%), the difference was relatively minor.

In sum, gender stereotyping differences between the Israeli and American press were greater than the differences between the two types of the press within each country.

## 6. Discussion

This study contributes to political communication and gender by emphasizing the "cultural differences factor" regarding the known "phenomenon" of female politicians' biased media coverage. First and foremost, as in previous studies (e.g., Kahn 1991; Schneider & Bos 2014), media framing of both Livni's and Clinton's historic candidacy strongly emphasized gender-oriented elements. Here the present findings parallel previous studies concerning the role of the media in reinforcing gender stereotypes during political campaigns. Second, cross-cultural differentiation reinforces the more recent but growing recognition that female politicians' media portrayals are relative and contextual (e.g., Raicheva-Stover and Ibroscheva 2014; Lachover 2015), i.e. significant cultural differences in two different societies can be reflected in female leaders' media framing.

While covering Livni's candidacy, the Israeli newspapers tended to express and represent particular socio-cultural obstacles and difficulties women in Israel still face – an additional confirmation of Carey's "cultural approach to communication" (1989). The American newspapers, on the other hand, although occasionally gender-biased, were more progressive, corresponding to the more advanced status of American women.

The cultural gaps between the two countries were significantly reflected in three categories. First, Israel's press frequently attributed "feminine traits" to Livni (e.g., naïve, childish, stressed out and dependent). Personal character traits are perhaps the most important factor in the public's evaluation of political leaders. A variety of studies found that public opinion still generally believes feminine traits, and therefore women, to be less suitable for leadership (e.g., Mo 2015). Israeli researchers (e.g., Jerby 1996), have shown that different groups within Israeli society have *particular* dilemmas regarding political

representation by a woman, and in associating women and femininity with leadership, mainly due to cultural and religious factors.

The Israeli press, as a social institution, strongly expressed and reinforced these dominant specific conceptions. For example, the strong tendency to portray Livni as a "puppet" of her spokespersons and advisers clearly reflected the common conservative idea that women are passive, "do not have what it takes to lead", and necessarily need men for decision-making (Kacen 2000). In the American press, the phenomenon of associating Clinton with feminine traits was much less dominant, indicating once again that the American public has a more complex perspective on gender divisions and greater openness towards the idea of women in leadership positions.

Second, the Israeli press was far more gender-biased than the American press in calling into question the candidate's ability to deal with security issues. Scholars (e.g., Herman & Kurtz 1995), have suggested that the dominance of military values and norms within Israeli society harms the general status of women in Israel. Indeed, while covering Livni's candidacy, Israel's press powerfully doubted the idea of her taking care of security matters, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iranian threat. Gender divisions based on military experience were highly dominant in Livni's coverage. Therefore, in this case not only are public views reflected in the media, but the media might also actively reduce the electability of female candidates, especially as Israelis consider security to be an essential element in evaluating political leaders (Izraeli 1999).

In the American case, the findings did not point to a similarly consistent undermining of Clinton's leadership concerning U.S. security issues, implying a more gender-balanced perspective here as well (although one cannot discount the fact that in 2008 her principal opponent, Barack Obama, had even less national security experience than her, so that it would have been difficult to accuse her of lacking security experience in that electoral context).

Third, the Israeli press was significantly more gender-biased in challenging the candidate's overall experience, and therefore electability. A crucial argument related to potential media influence on voters' assessment of political candidates is the idea that female leaders are "by nature" inexperienced and less likely to win a campaign (Kahn 1991; Lawrence & Rose 2009). In this context, Livni's experience was systematically ridiculed and compared to her seemingly more experienced male opponents. For example, in this sentence from *Yedioth Ahronoth*: "She doesn't have any experience in nothing" (February 2, 2009), and in this sentence from *Haaretz*: "Unlike her, Netanyahu and Barak are smart and experienced" (October 26, 2008). Once again, these themes reflect particular cultural barriers in Israeli society to accepting the idea of women as leaders (Jerby, 1996) – for Livni actually held seven different ministerial portfolios between 2001-2008, hardly an example of "inexperience"! In the American case, when Barack Obama was close to winning the primary campaign, Clinton's electability was occasionally doubted (for example, in this sentence from *The New York Times*: "She is far from being more electable than Barack Obama", April 27, 2008). However, the media frame in such cases frequently appeared to rely on "objective" events and developments related to the political campaign, rather than on gender-oriented causes.

In addition to these three main categories of difference between the press in both countries, it is important to mention that in the media frame of *novelty labels*[5], one of the main themes in Livni's coverage was the religious resistance on the part of ultra-Orthodox communities to supporting her candidacy and the low probability of her forming a coalition with ultra-Orthodox parties. For example, from *Yedioth Ahronoth*: "Eli Yishai[6] is concerned with the possibility of a female prime minister" (October 26, 2008); "There's a concern that her campaign posters will be vandalized in the ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods"; "Her campaign posters will not be presented in the ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods" (October 28, 2008). These elements strongly exemplify the deep inherent religious obstacles (Samooha 2000) women still face when running for office in Israel (pictures of any female are never displayed in ultra-Orthodox newspapers). The American press did not report on any religious considerations as expressed by the American public, and most novelty labels concerning Clinton's candidacy were connected to her being one of the only female candidates running for presidential nomination in the history of the U.S. For example, in this sentence from *Newsday*: "She's a woman who has done what no woman has done before" (June 4, 2008).

Concerning the comparison between the two different types of the press within each country, as shown in *Figure 2*, the Israeli press exhibited large differences between the popular and elite newspapers, while the American press presented relatively minor differences.

*Yedioth Ahronoth* was significantly more gender-bias than *Haaretz* in three main media frameworks. First, *Yedioth Ahronoth* systematically highlighted Livni's appearance, corresponding to the known tendency of the popular press to include "soft news" alongside its coverage of essential issues (Baum & Jamison 2011). For example, the series of articles concerning Livni's so-called "look-alike" in *Yedioth Ahronoth* and the frequent use of photos in this context, eventually attributed a "softer" perspective to her candidacy – a practice that might have damaged the seriousness of Livni's public image.

Second, the strong orientation of popular newspapers to tell stories from a sensational and emotional perspective was demonstrated in *Yedioth Ahronoth's* prominent categorization of Livni's candidacy with novelty labels, such as "first", "historic" and "norms breaking". In addition, in its attitude towards Livni as a "pioneer", *Yedioth Ahronoth* reflected the tendency of the popular press to cover the news from a personal standpoint rather than from a societal perspective (e.g., Lehman-Wilzig & Seletzky 2010), focusing on Livni as a particular public figure, instead of emphasizing the general social implications of female participation in the political sphere.

Third, *Yedioth Ahronoth* was almost twice as gender-biased as *Haaretz* in questioning Livni's experience. Quotes such as "She is like a high-school student going out for an activity outside her school" (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, December 19, 2008), show that the more "graphic" and poetic language of the popular press (e.g., Bloch-Elkon & Lehman-Wilzig 2007) can significantly harm the media portrayal of women running for office. *Haaretz*, although occasionally doubting Livni's experience, was much more socially responsible in its descriptions. For example, "She has not gained enough authority, leadership and political experience" (*Haaretz*, October 26, 2008).

In the American case, *Newsday* was more "sexist" than *The New York Times*, and the gaps between the two papers in this matter were strongly reflected in the more consistent *Newsday* framing of Hillary Clinton with Bill Clinton's longstanding "yellow journalism" sex scandals. The extended identification of Hillary Clinton with this topic, despite its "yesterday's-news" irrelevance to her candidacy, suggests once again that the tendency of the popular press to involve "soft news" and to sensationalize the coverage of essential issues, may lead to a more stereotyped, gender-biased news frame of female politicians, and eventually damage their electability.

Overall, then, this study has demonstrated a strong relationship between press coverage of Tzipi Livni's & Hillary Clinton's historic candidacies, and the local political culture within their societies. We found that the more progressive and gender-egalitarian country, the U.S., provided much more gender-balanced news framing. On the face of it, there seems to be a paradox here, for the only country of the two that actually had a former female leader – PM Golda Meir (1969-1974) – is the one to show greater gender bias in the media. However, in a sense this seeming anomaly actually reinforces the main point: without deep-rooted change in social mores, even a highly visible anomaly is not enough to make much of a difference in society's gender orientation and in the media's journalistic coverage. The Second Wave of feminism in the U.S. that commenced in the 1960s led to significant change within a decade or two, whereas Israel lagged several decades behind in this social area (as in most others). Thus, the Israeli press continued to reflect macho cultural elements in Livni's case as well: difficulty accepting the idea of *women as representatives*; *military influence* on the general status of women; and *religious resistance* to the phenomenon of women in top positions.

Moreover, the "structural difference" between the two countries' voting systems and election processes also contributes to demonstrating the main point. In general, voting systems that are highly individual-centered (e.g., direct presidential election campaigns) tend to encourage and magnify gender differences in public opinion regarding politicians and political candidates (Kittilson & Fridkin 2008). However, in our case the country with a parliamentary/indirect voting system was in fact the one to more deeply relate to the candidate's gender. This may imply that general cultural influences, reflected in the media, can be powerful enough to overcome even longstanding structural/bureaucratic elements.

To summarize the comparison between the two types of the press, differences were relatively smaller than predicted. However, in the Israeli case some significant differences between the two newspapers were indeed found. Generally, a number of specific gender-oriented elements, such as "appearance", "sexuality", "novelty labels" and "lack of experience", are more likely to be found in popular newspapers. These findings are attributable to some of the known characteristics of popular newspapers, such as *soft news*, *sensationalism*, *common use of photos* and "graphic" language and highlighting *individual perspectives*.

In conclusion, this study shows that the stereotypical coverage of both Livni's and Clinton's 2008-2009 campaigns was culturally (society) and professionally (media) contextual and relative. Thus, although more gender-balanced news coverage is possible, it necessitates a deeper change in general socio-cultural norms, as well as in ethical and professional habits of journalists and editors – some of whom might not even be aware of their "instinctive" stereotyping.

Future research should continue to examine different cultural, historical and political conditions among sundry nations, and to what extent these are reflected in media coverage of female politicians. Not only can such coverage over time indicate the extent to which any specific society is undergoing normative change, but it would also enable us to pinpoint the specific normative barriers women still face while running for office, not least due to the media's biased and/or overly stereotypical reportage.

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[1] Samooha (2000) refers to Israeli democracy as an "ethnic democracy", rather than a liberal democracy, as ethnic divisions, military issues and religious influences are among the "stains" of the Israeli democratic system.

[2] For example, in the U.S. (Falk 2010), in Canada (Trimble 2006), in Germany (Ferree 2006), in Australia (Worth & Augoustions 2015) and in France (Campus 2013).

[3] "SHAS" is an Israeli ultra-Orthodox party.

[4] See examples aforementioned.

[5] Differences between the two countries' press in this category were indeed relatively smaller, but still very significant ( $p = 0.0113$ ).

[6] Eli Yishai was the head of the ultra-Orthodox "SHAS" party, 1996-2015 (Knesset homepage 2016).