

Article

# Gender Stereotypes and Election Coverage in South Korea: An Exploratory Analysis in Presidential and Seoul Mayoral Elections\*

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## Introduction

Women are underrepresented in virtually all elected offices worldwide. For example, despite making up over 50% of the world's adult population, as of January 2016, less than ten percent of heads of state are women, and women occupy only around twenty percent of parliamentary seats worldwide. Korea is no exception to this. Women have historically been underrepresented in the Korean National Assembly as well as other elected political positions. Today, women hold only 15.7% of seats in the Korean National Assembly (IPU 2016). In the West, Women's underrepresentation in elected office can be attributed—at least in part—to the pervasive use of gendered stereotypes that undermine women's credibility as political leaders (Bauer 2015a). These stereotypes have been perpetuated by biased, differential media coverage of male and female politicians (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008). Media coverage of female candidates is important because differential media coverage of female and male politicians may activate gender stereotypes among voters, call attention to the ways that women do not fit the typical masculine stereotypes associated with leadership, and ultimately undermine their credibility as leaders (Goodyear-Grant 2013; Niven and Zilber 2001; Palmer and Simon 2010; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1995). Moreover, biased news coverage of candidates shapes societies' evaluations of women's ability to hold political office, legislate on certain issues, handle crises, and manage other important political responsibilities (Alexander 2012; Holman et al. 2011; 2016).

Yet, remarkably little is known about the relationship between gender stereotypes and media coverage outside of western democracies.<sup>1</sup> This research addresses this important gap in the literature by examining media coverage of female political candidates in Korea. In recent elections, a number of female candidates have been nominated for powerful electoral posts, and several of these candidates have won major elections (e.g., presidential and mayoral

elections). In 2013 Park Geun-hye assumed the office of President, becoming the first female head of state in Northeast Asia in modern history. These rapid changes in women's presence in high-profile political positions provide an interesting opportunity for scholars of gender, media, and politics to extend theories of media framing developed in the United States of America to the Korean context.

To address this gap in our knowledge we draw on existing literature to posit three competing hypotheses regarding media coverage of female candidates. On the one hand, substantial research on the U.S. and other western democracies identifies biased media coverage where women are subject to traditional gender stereotypes regarding the traits candidates exhibit and the issues and policy areas where women are competent to legislate (Goodyear-Grant 2013; Kittilson and Fridkin 2008). As women in Korea are subject to many of the same stereotypes as women in the west, the *Biased Coverage Hypothesis* argues that a similar gender bias is reflected in Korean media coverage of politicians. On the other hand, the *Gender Compensation Hypothesis* suggests that this relationship may not be straightforward. This is because women often try to compensate for gender biases by exhibiting more masculine characteristics during their campaign, focusing more of their attention on masculine policy domains, and solidifying their qualifications in areas where women are traditionally viewed as weak or less competent (Bauer, forthcoming; Fridkin and Kenny 2015; Swers 2013). If it is the case that women make intentional efforts to counteract gender stereotypes, media coverage may reflect these efforts, such that, women may receive more coverage and attention on traditionally masculine or hard policy domains and traits and less coverage on traditionally feminine or soft policy domains and traits. Nonetheless, recent work on media coverage shows that gender differences may be waning and that men and women are covered in a gender-neutral manner (Hayes and Lawless 2015; Jalazai 2006; Yoon and Lee 2013). Building on findings from this research, the *Gender Neutral Hypothesis* posits that media coverage in Korea may also be gender neutral.

Using a novel dataset of newspaper coverage of male and female presidential and mayoral candidates in four high-profile Korean elections, we systematically examine gender bias in media coverage in the five leading Korean newspapers. Our explorative data analysis offers support for the *Gender Compensation Hypothesis*. That is, female candidates in Korea are portrayed

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1. But for notable examples, see Yoon and Lee 2013; Yoon and Kim 2008.

in both conservative and liberal newspapers in more masculine ways. This finding is consistent regardless of whether the female candidates are either from the liberal party or the conservative party. In all elections, including the 2012 presidential election, the 2006 and 2010 Seoul Mayoral elections, and the 2011 Seoul Mayoral by-election, this pattern is consistently observed.

## Gender Stereotypes of Female Politicians

A large body of research on female candidates focuses on the impact of gender stereotypes on evaluations of women running for office. Gender stereotypes serve as information shortcuts for voters and influence the way society views female politicians' traits and policy competencies (Bauer 2015b; Holman, Merolla, and Zechmeister 2011; Schneider and Bos 2013). With respect to traits, scholarship shows that women are viewed as being more ethical, honest, compassionate, and generally concerned with people's welfare (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014; Dolan 2005; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). By contrast men are viewed as better leaders, confident, aggressive, assertive, and capable of effectively handling crises (Burrell 1994; Kahn 1996; King and Matland 2003; Lawless 2004; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989).

Gender stereotypes also structure societies' evaluations of politicians' policy competencies. Women are typically believed to be better suited for handling "soft" or feminine issues such as healthcare, childcare, education, women's issues, and the environment. By comparison, men are thought to be more competent at handling the economy, security issues, foreign affairs, and agriculture (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Dolan 2010; Koch 1999; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Sapiro 1981). Women working on "hard" issue areas often come under more scrutiny regarding their ability to handle such issues (Swers 2013). These stereotypes inform societies' evaluations of female politicians (Fox and Smith 1998; Holman et al. 2016; Lawless 2004; Sanbonmatsu 2002), and work to limit women's access to powerful and prestigious political appointments. For example, women are often sidelined into cabinets (Krook and O'Brien 2012; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2005; O'Brien et al. 2015) and legislative committees (Barnes 2014, 2016; Heath et al. 2005) that have jurisdiction over soft policy issues such as healthcare, education, social policies, and women's issues, and are excluded

from ministries and committees with jurisdiction over hard policy areas such as defense and the economy (Barnes 2016; Barnes and O'Brien, forthcoming; Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2016).

All in all, there is copious evidence from previous research that women in politics are subject to a host of gender stereotypes. Stereotypes about women's ability to lead and their issue competencies influence women's access to power, their ability to do their jobs effectively, and their experiences in office. In the following section we consider the use of gender stereotypes in a key political arena: the media. Building on previous research, we develop three competing hypotheses of newspaper media coverage from Korea, in an effort to gain a better understanding of the use of stereotypes in media coverage beyond western democracies.

## Media Coverage and Gender Stereotypes

Previous research shows that gender stereotypes are often perpetuated by biased media coverage of male and female politicians (Kahn 1996; Palmer and Simon 2006). As compared to their male colleagues, women receive less prominent news coverage (Kahn 1992, 1994; Kahn and Goldenberg 1991) and less total coverage (Aday and Devitt 2001; Heldman, Carroll, and Olson 2005; Yoon and Lee 2013). Male candidates are typically portrayed as more qualified and competent than women. By contrast, coverage of female candidates is more likely to focus on the horse-race aspects of campaign (Smith 1997) or on women's personal life, appearance, and personality (Aday and Devitt 2001; Conroy et al. 2015; Escobar-Lemmon et al. 2016) essentially characterizing women as less powerful and politically vulnerable (Carroll and Schreiber 1997).

Not only does media coverage focus on different traits for male and female candidates, but media coverage has also been shown to focus on different issues when covering male and female candidates (Atkeson and Krebs 2008; Kittilson and Fridkin 2008). Specifically, press coverage tends to emphasize issues such as foreign policy, defense, trade, taxes, and the economy when focusing on male candidates. By contrast, coverage focuses on issues related to social policies such as education, healthcare, welfare, the environment, and poverty when featuring female candidates (Bystrom et al.

2001; Carroll and Schreiber 1997; Kahn 1996).

Although most research on gender differences in media coverage has focused on the United States, comparative work on Argentina, Australia, Canada, and South Africa shows that these trends are generalizable to other countries (Escobar-Lemmon et al. 2016; Goodyear-Grant 2013; Kittilson and Fridkin 2008). In particular, Kittilson and Fridkin (2008) find that similar gender gaps in issue and trait coverage are present in Australia and Canada. In Australia, hard or masculine issues receive less media attention overall, but when such issues are covered media is almost twice as likely to emphasize these issues when covering a male candidate as a female candidate. Similarly, in Goodyear-Grant's (2013) examination of the 2000 federal election campaign in Canada, she finds that male party leaders received more coverage on hard issues such as the economy, security, and trade than did McDonough, the sole female party leader. Instead, attention to McDonough was more likely to focus on soft issues such as healthcare, education, poverty, and social issues.

Gendered patterns of socialization are prevalent across countries, and have persisted over time (Alexander and Welzel 2011; Diekman et al. 2005; Wilde and Diekman 2005), thus there is reason to believe that media coverage outside the west may perpetuate similar gender stereotypes. In particular, previous research shows that women in Korea are subject to many of the same gender stereotypes as women in the west. These stereotypes are shown to permeate media coverage and voter perceptions alike (Yu 1997; Kim and Song 2001; Kim 2002; Yang 2002; Kim 2004; Hyun and Kim 2005; Keum and Kim 2006). An earlier study demonstrated that media coverage was likely to emphasize female candidates' outsider status, to characterize them as agents of change and to draw attention to the novelty of female candidates when they were the first women to pursue a given office (Hyun and Kim 2005). As such, female candidates in Korea may be subject to similar biases in the media today. To evaluate whether media coverage in Korea exhibits similar gendered patterns to those previously observed in Korea and in western democracies we test the following hypothesis:

**(H1) Biased Coverage Hypothesis:** Media coverage of female candidates will focus more on feminine traits and issue areas than media coverage of male candidates.

### *Women Compensate for Gender Biases*

Second, it could be the case that women receive more coverage on hard issues than do men. Widespread perceptions of female politicians' strengths and weaknesses on issue areas may shape women's strategies when they run for office. If female candidates fear that gender stereotypes impede their ability to be elected to office, they can create an image that counters gender stereotypes to signal leadership competency and policy expertise in traditionally masculine policy domains (Kahn 1996; Iyengar et al. 1996; Iyengar and Simon 2000; Herrnson et al. 2003).

There is some evidence to suggest that female candidates sometimes adopt a more masculine approach to politics in an effort to offset the potentially negative effects of gender stereotypes (Bauer, forthcoming; Fridkin and Kenny 2015; Kahn 1996; Fox 1997).<sup>2</sup> Research shows that female candidates may try to counterbalance stereotypes about their abilities and priorities by emphasizing different issues (Kahn 1996; Wagner, Gainous, and Holman, forthcoming). Female politicians may choose to devote more of their time and energy to developing a policy expertise in areas where women are traditionally believed to be less qualified (Swers 2013). By attending public events, introducing legislation, or making public speeches, female politicians can demonstrate their competency in a range of policy domains and counter gender biases. In the U.S. for example, female politicians seek to bolster their credibility on issues such as homeland security and defense and to signal that they prioritize such issues (Swers 2013). In an effort to prove themselves on these issues, Swers finds that women introduce a larger number of bills and amendments on defense issues than their male copartisans. They strengthen their image with constituents by prioritizing visits to military bases, and attending public events on foreign policy with more frequency than their male colleagues. Another prominent example of this in the United States setting is vice presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's television ad emphasizing her experience and expertise on foreign policy and defense issues. The ad showed Hillary Clinton answering the red phone in the Whitehouse 3 a.m. to attend to a foreign policy crisis (Lawrence and Rose 2010).

2. Still other find that women campaign in ways that reinforce traditional gender stereotypes (Kahn 1996; Fox 1997), and some find no gender differences (Dolan 2005, 2008; Williams 1994).

Taken together, extant research suggests that women make explicit efforts to downplay their feminine traits and to raise their profile on “hard issues” in an effort to strengthen their credibility. Thus, if female candidates respond to gender stereotypes by actively trying to counteract them and demonstrate their competencies in areas where women are traditionally believed to be weaker, then it stands to reason that media coverage may focus more on masculine or hard issue coverage of women than men.

With respect to media coverage in Korea, recent studies focused on President Park Genu-hye’s candidacy found that both liberal and conservative media outlets emphasized Park’s “political influence” and framed her in a positive manner (Lim et al. 2010). Similarly, other scholars found that in the most recent presidential election, newspapers emphasized the masculine aspects of Park’s leadership style and the feminine aspects of Moon’s leadership style (her male opponent) (Youn and Lee 2014). Although this research is limited to one specific candidate, it lends preliminary evidence to suggest that media coverage in Korea may focus more on the masculine aspects of female candidates’ campaigns. To evaluate whether this finding is generalizable to other female candidates of different political parties, and whether this coverage style is consistent across the leading newspapers in Korea, we test the following hypothesis:

**(H2) Gender Compensation Hypothesis:** Media coverage of female candidates will focus more on masculine traits and issue areas than media coverage of male candidates.

### *Gender Neutral Coverage*

Despite these stark differences in media coverage of male and female candidates, some research demonstrates gender biases in media coverage may be decreasing (Bystrom et al. 2001; Hayes and Lawless 2015) and gender differences are becoming less pronounced (Jalalzai 2006; Smith 1997). Under some circumstances, female candidates are even receiving more coverage than men (Bystrom et al. 2001). Research on campaign advertisements and press coverage reveal few gender differences (Sapiro et al. 2009).

The emergence of more gender-neutral patterns may be in part due to

female candidates’ decisions to avoid focusing their campaign around gender-stereotyped issues (Dolan 2005) or it could be a product of diminished bias in the media (Hayes and Lawless 2015). For example, in his analysis of the United States Senate and gubernatorial campaigns, Smith (1997) concluded that media was trending towards more equitable coverage of male and female candidates and the media was employing fewer gender stereotypes. As gender differences in media coverage dissipate, media may also move towards more balanced issue and trait coverage of candidates. By this logic we would expect to see very minor gender differences in media coverage.

With respect to Korea, recent research demonstrates that the influence and prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes may be eroding as more female politicians occupy prevalent roles in Korean politics. According to Jung and Kim (2012), young voters are more reluctant to consume information from media that describe female politicians using traditional gender stereotypes. These changing attitudes may be sufficient to influence the Korean media to modify their coverage of female candidates. To assess the extent to which traditional gender stereotypes have eroded and no longer permeate media coverage of female candidates in Korea, we test the following hypothesis:

**(H3) Gender Neutral Hypothesis:** Media coverage of male and female candidates will not exhibit gender biases.

### **Research Design**

To test the three competing hypotheses, we focus on four recent, high-profile elections, including the three recent mayoral elections in Seoul Metropolitan city (2006; 2010; 2011) as well as the 2012 presidential election. These four elections provide ideal cases for our study, as two distinct partisan candidates competed in each of these elections, one of which was female and the other was male. Equally important, our sample selection contains both conservative and liberal male and female candidates. Table 1 shows the years for which conservative and liberal male and female candidates competed for office. Specifically, in 2006, the first election in our sample, a liberal female candidate competed against a conservative male candidate. This same pattern occurred in the 2010 election. Then in 2011 and 2012, a conservative female candidate

competed against a liberal male candidate. This variation in candidate's ideology by gender is important to discern if media coverage is biased towards candidates' genders or if it simply reflects differences in candidates' ideologies.

**Table 1: Sample Selection**

Party	Gender	
	Female	Male
Conservative	2011 (Na) 2012 (Park)	2006 (Oh) 2010 (Oh)
Liberal	2006 (Kang) 2010 (Han)	2011 (Park) 2012 (Moon)

To examine whether the media portrays women differently than men, we analyze the gender frame of each sentence of news coverage dedicated to each individual candidate in our analysis. Thus, our unit of analysis is an individual sentence. To conduct our analysis we first obtained newspaper articles from the top three conservative newspapers, the *Chosun Ilbo*, the *Joongang Ilbo*, and the *Donga Ilbo*, and the top two progressive newspapers, the *Hankyoreh* and the *Kyunghyang Shinmun*. Specifically, we first gather each newspaper article that mentions one of the two candidates' names that was published within a month prior to each election. Then, we divide the newspaper articles by sentence. We code the sentence as belonging to a female candidate if a sentence exclusively mentions a female candidate, and as belonging to a male candidate if it exclusively mentions a male candidate. If the sentences include both or neither of two candidates, we exclude them from this analysis. In total, we gathered 22,582 sentences from across the five major newspapers that covered one of the top two candidates from one of the four elections.

Table 2 summarizes the number of sentences for the male and female candidates covered by each newspaper in the four elections investigated here. It is clear from Table 2 that the presidential elections in 2012 received a great deal more media coverage than did any of the mayoral elections. Specifically, the coverage of the presidential election is almost twice that of mayoral elections. Nonetheless, with few exceptions, it appears that both male and female candidates are receiving similar amounts of coverage by all newspapers during each election.

**Table 2: Number of Sentences Covering Candidates: By Election and Newspaper**

Newspaper	Year	Male	Female	Total
<i>Chosun Ilbo</i> (Conservative)	2006	100	117	217
	2010	66	78	144
	2011	528	338	866
	2012	1502	923	2425
<i>Joongang Ilbo</i> (Conservative)	2006	120	174	294
	2010	89	101	190
	2011	659	294	953
	2012	1184	892	2076
<i>Donga Ilbo</i> (Conservative)	2006	132	171	303
	2010	69	82	151
	2011	569	219	788
	2012	1077	728	1805
<i>Hankyoreh</i> (Progressive)	2006	146	128	274
	2010	150	218	368
	2011	1086	670	1756
	2012	2300	2544	4844
<i>Kyunghyang Shinmun</i> (Progressive)	2006	169	104	273
	2010	124	165	289
	2011	573	380	953
	2012	1948	1665	3613

In order to identify how the media frames individual candidates, we use one hundred keywords across five issue areas, including politics, international relations, economics, society, and culture in the Trend 21 Corpus Project (Chung et al. 2013). The Trend 21 Corpus Project collected all news articles of the four major Korean newspapers (the *Chosun Ilbo*, the *Joongang Ilbo*, the *Donga Ilbo*, and the *Hankyoreh*) from 2000 to 2011 and extracted one hundred keywords for each of the five categories based on its relative frequency (Kim et al. 2013; Chung et al. 2013). We use these keywords as a proxy to examine if media coverage of candidates is focusing more on feminine and soft traits and issue areas or masculine and hard traits and issue areas.

We operationalize our measure of masculine or feminine media coverage as the difference in the number of times masculine keywords appear in each

sentence in our analysis compared to the number of times feminine keywords appear in each sentence. Specifically, we measure the number of masculine references found in a sentence by summing the words that are categorized as belonging to the politics, international relations, and economics categories. We refer to the sum of these words as the *Masculine* or *Hard* media frame. We also count the number of feminine references in each sentence by summing the word that is categorized as belonging to the social and culture categories. The sum of these words gives us the number of times the media uses a *Feminine* or *Soft* frame. Finally to create our dependent variable, *Gendered Framing*, we subtract the number of *Hard* frames from the number of *Soft* frames. For instance, if a sentence has 4 political keywords (a masculine or hard frame), 1 international relations keyword (also a masculine or hard frame), and 2 cultural keywords (a soft frame), the value of the dependent variable in this sentence is -3 (2-4-1). Since it is a negative number, it shows the sentence focused disproportionately on hard issues and traits. In contrast, if the number is positive, this indicates the sentence has a focus disproportionately on soft issues and traits. In our data, this variable ranges from -24 through 9, with its mean of -3.43 and its standard deviation of 2.93.

To test the three competing hypotheses, we use an OLS regression. We first test our hypotheses using election-level analyses. To do this, we estimate one model for each election under investigation. This allows us to examine the hypotheses across each election in our analysis. Then we examine the hypotheses using a pooled model, considering all data points in a single regression.

Our main explanatory variable is the candidate's gender, coded 1 if the candidate is female and 0 otherwise. If we observe a consistent pattern of estimated coefficients of this variable across all models, this empirical finding supports one of the three hypotheses in the previous section. If the estimated coefficient of the Female variable is positive and statistically significant, it implies that women receive more coverage on feminine soft issues and traits and H1, the *Biased Coverage Hypothesis*, is supported. If the result is negative and statistically significant, it implies that women receive more coverage than men on masculine or hard issues and traits, lending support to the *Gender Compensation Hypothesis* (H2). In the case that the result presents no significant coefficients in all models, regardless of the direction of coefficients, it implies no discernable gender differences in our analysis and H3, the *Gender Neutral*

*Hypothesis*, is supported.

Regarding control variables, we employ several indicators. In the election level models we include a series of dummy variables to identify each newspaper. The reference category for newspapers is the *Chosun Ilbo*. In the pooled model, in addition to the newspaper, we control for each candidates' party affiliations (either liberal party or conservative party), and a series of dummy variables for capturing each election. The reference category for elections is the 2006 Seoul mayoral election.

## Empirical Findings

The results for the election level analyses are in Table 3. The result for the pooled analysis appears in Table 4. Overall, Table 3 and 4 show that the results support H2, that Korean female candidates are more likely to be portrayed by Korean media in ways that are inconsistent with gender stereotypes. The estimated coefficients for the female variable in all four elections in Table 3 as well as in the pooled analysis in Table 4 are consistently negative and statistically significant. That is, female candidates are portrayed with more masculine frames than their male competition, regardless of the partisanship of the candidate or the ideological leanings of the newspapers. This result is opposite of what we would expect based on western gender stereotypes and it is inconsistent with most of the findings reported by western scholars examining coverage of male and female candidates (Atkeson and Krebs 2008; Goodyear-Grant 2012; Kittilson and Fridkin 2008). To gain a clear understanding of the media coverage across each election, we begin by discussing each of the election-level analysis in the next section. Then we turn to our pooled analysis.

**Table 3: OLS, Election Level Analysis**

	Dependent Variable: Gendered Frame			
	(1) 2006	(2) 2010	(3) 2011	(4) 2012
<b>Female</b>	- 0.305** (0.152)	- 0.783*** (0.177)	- 0.285*** (0.079)	-0.187*** (0.047)
<b>Donga Ilbo</b>	- 0.991*** (0.246)	-0.109 (0.346)	0.159 (0.136)	0.004 (0.088)
<b>Hankyoreh</b>	-1.216*** (0.252)	0.038 (0.292)	- 0.233** (0.115)	0.259*** (0.070)
<b>Joongang Ilbo</b>	-0.183 (0.248)	0.410 (0.328)	0.027 (0.130)	-0.082 (0.084)
<b>Kyunghyang Shinmun</b>	-1.185*** (0.253)	- 0.210 (0.303)	-0.153 (0.130)	0.101 (0.074)
<b>Constant</b>	- 2.024*** (0.205)	- 3.194*** (0.265)	- 2.460*** (0.099)	-3.370*** (0.060)
<b>Observations</b>	1,361	1,142	5,316	14,763
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.033	0.022	0.005	0.003
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.030	0.017	0.005	0.002
<b>Residual Std. Error</b>	2.770 (df = 1355)	2.968 (df = 1136)	2.762 (df = 5310)	2.820 (df = 14757)
<b>F Statistic</b>	9.270*** (df = 5; 1355)	5.051*** (df = 5; 1136)	5.812*** (df = 5; 5310)	8.202*** (df = 5; 14757)

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis. \*p<.1,\*\*p<.05,\*\*\*p<0.01.

*Chosun Ilbo* is the baseline newspaper.

### *Election-Level Analyses*

The 2006 Seoul mayoral election was the fourth mayoral election since the introduction of local elections in the early 1990s (prior to this time local level officials were appointed). The incumbent Myung-bak Lee did not run for this election, as he declared to run for the 2007 presidential election as a candidate of the opposition party of the Grand National Party. The election included two major candidates. Kum-sil Kang was a female candidate of the ruling party (the Uri Party), while Se-hoon Oh was a male candidate of the opposition party (the Grand National Party). In this election, Oh won a landslide victory with

more than 61% votes (National Election Commission 2011; Kang 2010). The first column in Table 3 represents the statistical result from 1,361 sentences in the 2006 election. As the estimated coefficient for the Female variable is negative and statistically significant, our results indicate that the female candidate is portrayed in a more masculine way than the male candidate.

In the 2010 election, the incumbent Oh ran for another term. In this election, he was a governing party candidate, as the Grand National Party won the 2007 presidential election. From the opposition party, the Democratic Party, Myeong-sook Han ran for the election. In this election, Oh won by a slim margin of 0.6 percent of the vote share (National Election Commission 2010; Lee and Lim 2011). One notable difference between the 2010 election and the 2006 election is the gender of the governing party's candidate. While the governing party's candidate was a woman in 2006, it was a man in 2010. However, the statistical result for the 2010 election, as shown in column 2 in Table 3, is similar to the results for the 2006 election. That is, in 2010 the female candidate Han was portrayed more in a masculine way than the male candidate Oh. This variation in the sex of the ruling party's candidate helps us to rule out the possibility that the results observed here are due to the candidate's affiliation with the ruling party.

In 2011 Oh resigned from office after he lost in the Seoul Free Lunch Referendum. Shortly after his resignation, a by-election for the Seoul mayor was held to replace Oh. In the by-election, Kyung-won Na, a woman, was nominated as the candidate for the ruling party—the Grand National Party. Won-soon Park was her competition. He ran as an independent candidate with an endorsement from other opposition parties, including the Democratic Party and the Democratic Labor Party. Park won by 7.2 percent of the vote share in this election (Lee 2011). One conspicuous difference between this election and the two previous elections is that in 2011, the conservative party nominated a female candidate, whereas the liberal camp designated a male candidate. Regardless of this difference, the third column in Table 3 shows that once again, in 2011, the female candidate was featured in a more masculine way than her male competition.

In the 2012 Korean presidential election, Geun-hye Park was a female candidate of the ruling party of the Saenuri Party (previously known as the Grand National Party). Her counterpart was Jae-in Moon of the opposition party of the Democratic United. In this election, Ms. Park defeated Mr. Moon

with 51.6 percent of the vote share and became the first female president of South Korea. As the first female presidential candidate from a major party, Park faced conflicting demands either to emphasize a traditional feminine stereotype or to develop a more masculine image to offset the negative effects of gender stereotypes (Choi 2012; Park 2012; Bae 2012). Our analysis of media coverage demonstrates that Ms. Park was cast in a more masculine light as compared to her competition, Mr. Moon. Indeed, the results presented in the fourth column in Table 3 show that the media coverage of Ms. Park in the 2012 presidential election was consistent with the media coverage of other female candidates in previous mayoral elections.

### *Pooled Analysis*

Our election level analyses demonstrate a consistent pattern across each of the four elections. Specifically, we find that women are more likely than their male competitors to receive masculine media coverage. This set of results demonstrates support for the *Gender Compensation Hypothesis* across the various political contexts in our analysis in both national and local level elections. To further evaluate the consistency of our results, in this section we conduct a final test in which we pool the data across elections. Recall that we include variables in our analysis to account for the sex and ideology of the candidates, the newspaper, and the election year. The results for the pooled analysis are reported in Table 4.

Consistent with the previous election-level analyses reported in Table 3 the pooled model also demonstrates support for the *Gender Compensation Hypothesis*. The estimated coefficient for the Female variable is negative and statistically significant indicating that women were more likely to receive *masculine* media coverage than their male counterparts. This result supports our finding of counter-biased media portrayal in the four recent high-profile executive elections in Korea. Regardless of either the level of contest (i.e., local- or national-level election) and regardless of the election type (i.e., regular election or by-election) there is a strong and consistent pattern across all four elections, wherein female candidates are discussed more in masculine ways than male candidates in the South Korean media.

**Table 4: OLS Pooled Analysis**

	<i>Dependent variable: Gendered Frame</i>
<b>Female</b>	- 0.336*** (0.060)
<b>Liberal Party</b>	- 0.133** (0.060)
<b><i>Donga Ilbo</i></b>	- 0.019 (0.069)
<b><i>Hankyoreh</i></b>	0.057 (0.057)
<b><i>Joongang Ilbo</i></b>	- 0.003 (0.067)
<b><i>Kyunghyang Shinmun</i></b>	-0.046 (0.061)
<b>2010</b>	- 0.681*** (0.113)
<b>2011</b>	0.241*** (0.086)
<b>2012</b>	-0.455*** (0.080)
<b>Constant</b>	-2.681*** (0.105)
<b>Observations</b>	22,582
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.015
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.014
<b>Residual Std. Error</b>	2.816 (df = 22572)
<b>F Statistic</b>	37.839*** (df = 9; 22572)

**Note:** Standard errors in parenthesis, \*p<.01,\*\*p<.05,\*\*\*p<0.01.

*Chosun Ilbo* is the baseline newspaper.

2006 Seoul mayoral election is the baseline election.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Women are slowly gaining access to political decision-making bodies worldwide. As women make inroads into the historically male dominated political arena it is increasingly important to evaluate how women's pathways, opportunity structures, and political experiences differ from men's—as it is these experiences that may influence women's decisions to run for office and party leader's decisions to recruit and nominate women for office. One of the most important factors that shapes women's experiences in politics and their opportunities to effectively compete for and win office is media coverage. For this reason, scholars, think tanks, and non-governmental organizations have become increasingly interested in understanding how media coverage of female politicians differs from that of their male colleagues. Although a burgeoning body of research has devoted substantial attention to answering these questions about women's experiences in western democracies, scholars have paid considerably less attention to women in eastern democracies. As such, this analysis represents one of the first attempts to systematically compare media coverage of male and female candidates in Korea (see also Yang 2002; Yoon and Kim 2008; Yoon and Lee 2013).

The contribution of this research is threefold. First, this study represents the first comparative analysis of media coverage of female executive candidates in Korea. We examine media coverage from four different executive elections in which both conservative and liberal high profile candidates competed for mayoral and presidential elections. Whereas previous research has examined media coverage of a female candidate in the presidential election (Yoon and Lee 2013), we build on this research by extending the scope of the analysis—to include mayoral elections and by increasing the number of candidates examined in our analysis—which allows us to draw more general conclusions about media coverage of female candidates in Korea.

The second contribution of this research is that we develop an original large-N data set that includes observations for eight executive candidates from five different newspapers. As this study represents one of the first attempts to examine the gendered nature of media coverage in Korea, there are a number of unanswered questions in this research area. Our novel data collection will serve as a foundation for future research on newspaper coverage of political candidates in Korea, providing a number of opportunities for research in this field.

Third, we test three competing hypotheses that emerge from previous research on western democracies using data from Korea. The results from our analysis demonstrate a consistent finding across the four elections examined here. We show that contrary to the conventional wisdom in western democracies, media coverage of female candidates in Korea cannot be characterized by stereotypical gendered media bias in which women receive more coverage on feminine characteristics, traits, and issue areas. Further, unlike recent research in western democracies, which show that media bias is waning, we do not find that media coverage of male and female candidates was gender-neutral. Instead, our study uncovers consistent gender differences across every contest examined in the analysis. Our results show that in recent Korean elections, media coverage of female candidates can be characterized as counter-stereotypical, focusing on more masculine and “hard” traits and issues. This finding is interesting because it suggests that the gendered nature of media coverage and electoral politics in North East Asia diverge from the conventional patterns observed in western democracies.

Beyond informing our understanding of media coverage of Korean candidates, our results provide not only reasons for optimism, but also cause for concern. To begin with, the results suggest that the media is not sidelining women and women's media coverage is not being reduced to coverage that focuses on traditionally “feminine” aspects of politics or campaigns. This is encouraging as it suggests that women are perceived as serious candidates. Nonetheless, coverage is not gender-neutral—instead, our analysis still uncovers bias—and any gender bias in media coverage signals some cause for concern. Our findings indicate that either, women and men are receiving differential coverage, or that women feel they must compensate for gender stereotypes to be seen as earnest and viable candidates and that these compensation tactics are captured in media coverage. Regardless of the reason for gender bias in media coverage, the gender differences uncovered in our analysis indicate that women are not competing on a completely level playing field. Nonetheless, more work needs to be done to understand how the cultural and political context shape media coverage outside of western democracies and to fully understand the political implications of our findings.

Indeed, this study represents a first step in comparing gender differences in eastern media coverage of political candidates. Our analyses examine the gendered nature of the traits and issues reported by the media. But, more

work is necessary to distinguish between coverage on candidates' *traits* vs. issue coverage. This distinction is essential for understanding the extent to which gender differences uncovered in our analyses result from male and female candidates' personal and familial characteristics or whether they derive from men's and women's issue positions and policy proposals. Importantly, our expansive data collection will afford scholars the opportunity to examine this question as well as a number of other aspects of media coverage that are necessary to understand the gendered nature of media coverage.

Our extensive data collection lays the foundation for future work to examine whether male and female candidates are equally likely to make headline news and to receive meaningful coverage as opposed to news coverage that focuses on the "horse race" aspects of the election. Indeed, earlier work on President Park's 2007 campaign found that Park received less coverage than her competitor and she was featured in fewer headlines (Yoon and Lee 2013). Future research should examine the generalizability of this finding to Park's second campaign and to other executive elections where women competed. A second fundamental extension of this research is to consider differences in tone and sentiment of media coverage. Recent improvements in software and programs designed to execute content analysis of documents written in English allow scholars to examine these important differences. As of yet, these same advances do not sufficiently extend to content analysis of Korean documents, although there are recent expansions in this area and it continues to rapidly improve (e.g., Park et al. 2016). Given the rapid rate of improvement in this area, however, it is likely that such tools will be available to scholars in the near future. Finally, scholars should consider how candidates' own policy rhetoric compares to media coverage. This is a crucial extension of the present research if scholars want to understand the extent to which gender differences observed in media coverage are imposed by the media itself or the degree to which they reflect differences in candidates' campaign styles.

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## Abstract

We explore how Korean media describe male and female politicians in high-profile elections. In western societies, there are competing views regarding media coverage of male and female politicians. The conventional view is that biased media coverage subjects women to gender stereotypes regarding the traits candidates exhibit and the issues on which women are competent to legislate. Yet, recent research contends that gendered differences are becoming less pronounced, and some studies even demonstrate that female politicians get more media coverage in areas that are stereotypically seen as masculine issues. The 2012 presidential election and multiple recent Seoul mayoral elections offer a unique opportunity to explore media coverage of male and female Korean politicians. Using a novel dataset of media coverage from the top five Korean newspapers, spanning four high-profile elections, we evaluate the presence of gendered media bias in Korean mayoral and presidential elections. Our original data analysis uncovers an interesting finding that female candidates consistently receive more coverage than their male competitors on stereotypically masculine traits and issue areas such as politics, economics, and international issues. This research represents one of the first attempts to examine the gendered nature of media coverage in Korea.

**Keywords:** women and politics, electoral campaign, gender stereotyping, political communication

