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Gender parity in political coverage: A content analysis of major Kenyan newspapers

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GENDER PARITY IN POLITICAL COVERAGE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF
MAJOR KENYAN NEWSPAPERS

by

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Bachelor of Education (Arts)
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1999

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree
Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies
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Graduate College
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May 2005
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The Graduate College
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April 19, 2005

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Entitled

GENDER PARITY IN POLITICAL COVERAGE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF MAJOR KENYAN NEWSPAPERS

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MA: Communication Studies

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

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Abstract

Gender Parity in Political Coverage: A Content Analysis of Major Kenyan Newspapers

by

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Media coverage of parliamentary races should be fair and issue-oriented. This study examined the newspaper coverage of the 2002 Kenyan parliamentary elections for the seats in which there were both male and female contestants. The study examined three national newspapers from the day parliament went on recess, signaling beginning of campaigns, to eve of elections. Four hypotheses postulating differences in quantity and quality of coverage for both male and female candidates were tested and support found for all the hypotheses. The findings indicate differences in the media coverage of male and female politicians during election campaigns. Female candidates are likely to be described in terms of their personality traits or attire, than their issue stand. Results also indicate that stories about male candidates are likely to receive front-page placement than those about female candidates.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the people who have made my graduate work and completion of this thesis possible. First, I would like to thank Dr. Paul Traudt for his wisdom, enthusiasm, and tireless efforts in guiding me with this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Dolores Tanno, Dr. Jennifer Bevan, and Dr. Lawrence Mullen, for their support and assistance with the project. Most importantly, I would like to thank my husband, Patrick Ikimire, for supporting me through my educational endeavors and taking up the challenge of raising our son in my absence; and my son Nicholas Kena for wonderfully adapting to life, and being a source of courage. My sincere gratitude also goes to the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program, whose generous scholarship has allowed me take up graduate studies and develop my leadership skills. This project would not have taken off were it not for the support of my colleagues at Kenya Literature Bureau especially those at the library and at the copier room, allowing me to make copies without financial cost. Finally, I am grateful to my mum, Arbe, who has always believed in me, and the value of education, in a society where culture precludes girls from schooling.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Women, media, and politics have continued to attract wide-ranging attention in the academic circles. Scholars have argued that women candidates do not receive as much coverage as their male counterparts (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Kahn, 1994, 1996; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Miller, 2001; Serini, Powers, & Johnson, 1998). Further, as Ross and Sreberny-Mohammadi (1997) explain, the relationship between politicians and the media is characterized by “mutual dependency and mutual loathing” hence the “the umbilicus which links each to the other must survive no matter what and the adversarial nature of political life ensures that there is always a ready store of controversy and bile to pep up flagging interest” (p.101). For political reasons, then, politicians find it hard to wish away the media viewing them as useful tools for enhancing their electability.

Despite apparent disparities in media coverage of female politicians, male candidates do not receive as much positive coverage as they would wish. However, it is clear that the discrepancy in media reporting could be a source of women’s poor performance in national politics (Kahn, 1994, 1996; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Kropf & Boiney, 2001).
For instance, Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) point that by covering male and female candidates differently; the media might hinder a woman's possibility of success in the political arena. They explained that gender differences in press attention are likely to have electoral consequences since "voters will be less familiar with women candidates and may be less willing to support them at the polls" (p. 46). Studies on political communication however, suggest that the effect of media on voters is limited owing to a host of factors that moderate the outcome of a given political campaign (McLeod, Kosicki, & McLeod, 2002).

Nonetheless, more recent studies depict a reducing gap in the media coverage accorded to male and female politicians during a campaign period (e.g., Aday & Devitt, 2001; Banwart, Bystrom, Robertson, & Miller, 2003; Smith, 1997; Stambough & O'Regan, 2003). These studies have demonstrated that media coverage is at par but for subtle differences in the quantity and quality of the coverage. The findings also indicated that the amount of coverage accorded to female politicians sometimes surpassed that of male candidates by the number of paragraphs dedicated to women (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Herrnson, Lay, & Stokes, 2003; Miller, 2001; Stambough & O'Regan, 2003), notably in the U.S. legislative and congressional elections where women have shown interest and have vied for offices. These studies, nevertheless, are insignificant in a field saturated with predictions of biased reporting during elections and follow-up research is necessary to give support to the existing literature and to bridge the existing gap created by the paucity of literature supporting the achieved parity in media coverage of political candidates.
It is worth noting that the amount of media coverage accorded to political candidates and especially female politicians does affect the political performance or outcome of a given political race. The media play a central role in informing society especially during political races. Davis (1994) aptly captured this role, explaining media saliency: “the media are salient players in the conduct of the campaign and affect the electoral process. This is so because no other entity possesses the ability to reach voters the way the media can” (p.177; also, McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In fact, modern society not only relies on the media for political reasons, but there is evidence of over-reliance resulting from phasing out of other more traditional channels and also changes in society's social structures caused by technological advancement (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). We can therefore deduce that there is a relationship between the role of the media and politics; hence, any analysis concerning a candidate's performance in a political race would not be complete without mentioning how the media functioned to portray that candidate.

Literature assessing media coverage of political candidates, mostly based on case studies of Western countries, is plentiful. Although political and gender analyses focusing on Kenyan situation abound, most of these studies have not certainly looked at the role of the media in politics. Utilizing Western literature as the base for this study does not mean that the Kenyan media or their objectives and organizational structure are similar to that of Western society; all media maintain that they are guided by fundamental journalistic principles. For instance, the principle of objectivity and fairness is one such code of ethics, which is
embedded in every media practice no matter the society the media represents. For example, stated clearly in the *Statement of Principles: Kenyan Union of Journalists*, is the accuracy and fairness clause, which outlines what the journalists are expected to do: “a journalist shall write, and the mass media shall publish, broadcast or fair, accurate and unbiased stories. All sides of the story shall be reported and comments from any person mentioned in an unfavorable context shall be obtained as appropriate” (World Free Press, ¶ 11). Besides these journalistic principles, the media owners also define their own purpose or guidelines. For instance, during the period just preceding 2002 Kenyan general election, one of the major media houses defined its role during the election thus:

> We are committed to responsible journalism—balanced, accurate and impartial reporting. Our group will not endorse any candidate or part, but will, in the true character of its editorial independence, promote good governance in its widest form and encourage informed debate on national issues (Daily Nation, 2002, ¶ 20).

More importantly, the recent changes in the Kenyan political scene, which has for the first time seen an opposition party winning over a long serving political party, offers ground for an interest in the Kenyan political situation and more so the role the media played in the general election. Kenyan political structure and media management may be different from that of the Western society in which most of the following literature is based, but that does not mean that the Kenyan media do not cover political campaigns as do the Western media. There might be differences in the style of coverage, objectivity, and
editorial policies. However, as mentioned before, all journalists are guided by the principles of objectivity and fairness, and all political candidates expect the same treatment. There is, therefore, a need to look at the Kenyan newspapers, their coverage of both male and female candidates, and the resultant effects, if any, of this coverage on female candidates' performances in an electoral process.

Newspaper portrayal of both male and female candidates, and the potential impact such framing might have on women's performance in an electoral situation remain the central focus of this study. The study will utilize the 2002 general election (Kenyan) as a case study, guided by already established scales in analyzing campaign messages and newspaper coverage of both the campaign process and analyses of the candidates. Further, the study will strive to compare how the conclusions from Kenyan newspapers contrast with findings based on Western countries in order to determine the veracity of the reported fairness in newspaper coverage of political candidates. This study, more importantly, will look at whether the newspapers concentrate on issues, viability, or personality agendas while covering female candidates, the political issues highlighted by newspapers, and the stereotypic overtones employed in representing women. How these issues hinder or contribute to women's political candidacy, also form part of the interest of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to offer insight into how Kenyan newspapers exercise fairness while covering candidates during elections. Research indicates
that the congressional seats in the U.S. races are competitively up for grabs in any given election and women have been more successful in winning these elections than senate races (Kahn, 1996). In the same way, the Kenyan parliamentary elections continue to receive eligible women who plunge themselves into politics with the hope of representing their people. However, many of these women have felt that the political field is impenetrable for women based not on their own inability but countenanced by a host of factors that are not in their favor. This study, although focusing on a society that is still traditionally inclined to believe that the place of a woman is the kitchen and hearth, may enable us to see the role of the media in disavowing or confirming the belief that women are not equal to men in an electoral situation.

Kenya is a newly emergent democracy and it is not clear to what extent media influence the perception and choice of voters in general elections. For instance, Nzomo (2003) explains that since Kenya's independence (40 years now), "women's performance in the area of parliamentary electoral politics has registered marginal but gradual increase in the number of women MPs [members of parliament] (p.5). She attributes some of the hindrances to women's political achievement to structural constraints such as violence, lukewarm acceptance of women in political leadership, and inadequate political socialization. These factors aside, we do not know the role of the media, which often times is seen as a desirable tool for educating the masses. The focus of this study will thus be the overall representation of the female candidates, be they incumbents, challengers, or those in open races vis-à-vis their male counterparts. More important to the
study is how women are portrayed; whether the media are focusing too much on women's personalities and viability or are giving them a fair play by portraying them for their stance on issues.

General Background

Media coverage of election should be unbiased, allowing the public to make informed decisions about their candidate's of choice. More often, this has not been the case as the media are biased in their portrayal of political candidates. The concept "media bias," which has been studied extensively, seems to be ambiguous even among researchers who have widely written about it. In their analysis of fairness and balance in newspaper stories on the 1996 presidential elections, Fico and Cote (1999) asked several questions of what fairness and balanced reporting entailed: "does it mean treating all candidates identically? Should coverage reflect political legitimacy, as some studies of advocacy groups have found? Can fairness apply to manifest fact or truth, or to differences in the credibility of the source?" (p. 124). They thus defined bias in reporting as "the systematic differential treatment of the quoted or paraphrased assertions of election campaign opponents in news stories" (p. 127). In this definition, although not wholesomely representative, the writers seem to suggest that bias means having more space allocated to one candidate whereas the opponent receives dismal or even at times no coverage at all. Moreover, media bias is not a new subject.
In Lippmann's (1922) proposition, he observed that the media perpetuated bias since before a story reaches the reader there are a "...whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have. There are no objective standards here ..." (p. 223). From this observation, it is clear that looking at fairness may entail examining the selection process even before a story reaches out to the readers. Knowing that the space allocated to candidates may have an impact on candidates' performance, it would be interesting to see how this difference especially affects women candidates. This study is interested in how equally candidates are treated or portrayed in terms of space allocation and the focus of the coverage. For instance, in fair and balanced reporting women should not always be seen in the context of their personalities but should receive as much coverage in terms of the space allocation and focus of the coverage; highlighting their achievements and agendas.

Kenya is a newly emergent democracy. Kenya held its first multi-party elections under supervision, in 1963. The seventh general election, in 1992, was the first multi-party election held in the independent Republic of Kenya. However, despite the numeric advantage of women in Kenya, Khasiani (2000) asserts that women “fail to access key developmental resources and are consequently poor” (p. 216). Looking at the political scenario, several factors influence the general participation of the population in elections. For instance, Khasiani (2000) notes that “women’s lack of involvement in professional political life in Kenya is perpetuated because few women are aware of their civic, social, and economic
rights," added to that is the vote buying syndrome, which as Khasiani explains make women "convenient targets for those who try to buy their vote during political campaigns" (pp. 216-217). However, Nzomo (1997) explains that in spite of these obstacles, and instead of bemoaning their marginalization, "women must face up to fact that Kenyan political machinery and society are still dominated by men who are not willing to share power with women (p. 246). Nzomo, a gender activist and a political science professor, acknowledges the existence of inequality and points out that Kenyan women politicians need to use whatever resources available to them in order to receive recognition in the political field; one such resource being the media.

Compounding the challenges facing female politicians in Kenya is the political stereotyping. Women in general and female leaders in particular are stereotyped in the society. Often times, women are first seen as homemakers, making politics an exclusive male domain. Mostly, women served the roles of supporters and cheerleaders for male politicians. Khasiani (2000) also notes that "structural imbalances in the Kenyan society discriminate against women and make their search for leadership difficult" (p. 219). In spite of these, however, in 1992, 18 women vied for parliamentary seats and six were elected. In the subsequent election, 1997, unfortunately, the number of women elected to parliament dropped to four but due to party nominations, an additional four women joined parliament. Albeit the disproportionate representation, 1997 elections saw a female candidate running for presidency. This was to be the first in the history of Kenyan politics. The year 2002 offered more promise to the
Kenyan women politicians as 44 women received their party nominations. But this was not to be as only nine of these women were elected to parliament. Seen in this light, Kenyan politics and women participation, therefore, is not only influenced by how these individuals actively participate but other cultural, economic, and structural factors play a significant role in determining whether a given candidate gets elected. However, what has not been reviewed is how the media complicates this conundrum further. This study is thus aimed at looking at how Kenyan newspapers portrayed these parliamentary contenders; how these 44 women candidates were portrayed in comparison to their male counterparts.

It would be important to remember that each candidate in a political race stands the same chance of winning no matter his/her political ideologies. Of course, there are instances where the incumbent may have a leading edge over a newcomer in a political race but that does not rule out the possibility of the new runner winning in the elections. Gender differences aside, for the candidates to stand an equal chance at winning the elections, they must be accorded equal space or time in terms of media representation. Since media are some of the most important campaign resources, research shows that voters tend to increase their knowledge of a candidate by following the media stories. This means that if a candidate is not covered fairly, there is the likelihood of her/him not receiving voter attention especially among voters whose primary source of campaign information is the media.

Kenyan media, mostly claiming to be nonpartisan in their coverage of elections, have not shown any characteristics that differentiate them from other
media. Although there is no such study showing the dependence of the Kenyan voters on the media for information, this study will provide us with a preview of how the media played their role in exercising fairness in their reporting during the 2002 general elections. In fact, one of the media reviews during the period just before elections argued in a news analysis that the Kenyan media cannot be blameless. They asserted that “... no matter how independent the private media strive to look, according to a FAIR [Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting] report, there is subtle editorial slanting of the news across all the media in favour of certain political preferences” (KenyaNews, ¶5). The situation in Kenya, again, could be different as the numbers of women running for electoral offices are no match to the men. However, in the most recent election, many women showed political interest and as many as 385 women were competing for both the parliamentary and civic seats (Okello-Orlale, 2003). Rather, this is an indication that many women are interested in politics and that their chances of winning could probably be as high as that of their male counterparts if they received fair and balanced media coverage hence leading to reduction in the gap that presently exists.

**Scholarly Approaches**

The effect of the mass media on the electorate has been studied extensively (to be reviewed in detail in Chapter 2). In the analysis of elections and the role of the media, scholars have focused on the theoretical groundings such as the agenda-setting role of the media, and the focus of the media in
campaign coverage. Past research suggests that the media influence how voters think about issues, and how they think about the competing candidates by setting the agenda. Apart from setting the agenda, the media also influence voters' perceptions of which candidate merits consideration (Ramsden, 1996) and hence the need to worry about the media role since “they tell the voters what issues to think about, what bases to evaluate the candidates on, and which candidates are worth considering” (p. 69). Other studies also show that voters rely on the media for direction especially when they are unsure of a given candidate, or when the candidates are unknown. Although some of these scholarly approaches will be given further detail in the following chapter, the following is a preview of some of the important or central ideas that have guided scholars in their analysis of how media continue to portray candidates during elections.

Agenda setting. One of the most highly studied areas of mass media effects is the role of the media in setting the agenda. Scholars argue that the media not only inform the society but more importantly, they set the agenda by “their day-by-day selection and display of news stories ... influencing a community’s picture of itself” (McCombs, 1997, p. 442). The agenda-setting role of the media means that the media influence the saliency of issues in public agenda. The concept of agenda setting has its roots in Lippmann’s (1922) idea of the pictures in our heads and Cohen’s (1963) observation that “the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about [italics in the original] (p.13).
For instance, in a study of a sample of U.S. voters during the 1968 presidential campaign, McCombs and Shaw (1972) found that “the issues emphasized by the media are the issues which voters regarded as important” (p. 177). Although some researchers still worry about the exact impact of the media on the electoral choices of voters, Thompson (2001) emphasizes that the sheer “existence of the media has altered the electoral practices of candidates and political parties” (p. 178).

**Issue coverage of women versus male candidates.** Studies show that women and men do not receive equal coverage while campaigning. Research (Kahn, 1994, 1996; Kahn & Goldberg, 1991) shows that “newspapers not only stereotype female candidates by emphasizing “feminine characteristics” and “feminine issues,” but also questions their viability as candidates” (Kahn, 1996, p. 149). Later studies (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Miller, 2001; Serini et al., 1998) arrived at the same findings but have also established improvement in the way women are covered. For instance, Devitt (1999) found that although male and female candidates for governor received the same amount of coverage, women received less issue-related coverage than men did. Studies have therefore continued to show that there is a difference in the media coverage of female and male candidates, and in the amount and type of issues given prominence.

**Horse race coverage.** Horse race or game journalism involves highlighting the viability of candidates in a political race. Horse race has become synonymous with elections, often dominating front pages of newspapers. Many are the times when opinion polling makes the full story on several dailies, intensified, as voting...
approaches. However, the issue of horse race coverage has not been well received by the public and researchers feel that it often overshadows issue coverage hence not informing the voters (Fico & Cote, 1999; Gollin, 1980; Kahn, 1996; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Weimann, 1990). In a study of what American voters look for in the media during elections, Dautrich (2000) found that horse race stories were lowest on the list of those that achieved high voter interest. He explained that as many as 57% of the voters surveyed for the study felt that there was too much horse race coverage. For instance, Kahn (1994, 1996; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991) in an extensive study of horse race coverage among women candidates noted that not only was horse race coverage prevalent in races involving women but also was negative. These studies pointed out that horserace coverage does not inform voters on the issue stances of candidates, thereby limiting women’s chances of winning the elections.

*Trait/personality coverage.* Several researchers contend that the media give more prominence to women’s physical appearance than their issue stance (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Bystrom, et al., 2001; Kahn, 1996; Smith, 1997; Stambough, & O’Regan, 2003). In a research on gubernatorial races, Kahn (1996) found that “one-quarter (23%) of all articles written about women in competitive campaigns mentioned traits, while one-sixth (17%) of the articles about male competitive candidates touched on the candidate’s personal characteristics” (p.95). It is therefore evident that the media focus more on personality traits than is necessary and do not help voters make informed decisions. Additionally, Kahn (1996) acknowledged that “although women prefer
to discuss “male” traits in their political communications, reporters are much more likely to refer to “female” traits such as compassion and honesty when describing women candidates as compared to male candidates” (p. 53).

Earlier research on agenda setting also explained that the media do not only set the issue agenda but also the image agenda of the candidates. In a year-long study, McCombs, Einsiedel, and Weaver (1991) found that “the media play a major role in making some candidates and certain of their attributes more prominent than other” (p. 81). These researchers asserted that this form of coverage has more influence on the voters’ early perception of the campaigns and ultimately their final choices. Although according to these researchers, image agenda setting is just as important as the issue agenda setting, studies that are more recent indicate that image agenda setting is not favorable to female candidates (Aday & Devitt, 2001).

The agenda setting role of the media, candidates’ portrayal in terms of the space allocation, and the focus of the media are all important to the study on women’s performance in political races. How the media played their roles thereby becomes an important subject for scholars interested in this issue. Following from the above summary, Chapter 2 will provide an extensive literature review on the above-mentioned themes and the relevant political communication literature in the area. Not only will the chapter focus on some of the mentioned issues but it will also provide a justification for the choice of newspaper as the medium of examination in this study. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology that will be used to conduct the proposed study, presenting the various propositions that will
be answered in the study. Following methodology, Chapter 4 will report the findings for the study and reveal whether or not support was found for the postulations. Finally, Chapter 5 will offer discussions emanating from the study, detailing the significance of the study results, the strengths and limitations of the study, and suggest direction for future research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide seminal ideas that inform this study: the theoretical basis for the study and common themes that inform studies focusing on media's representation of women. More importantly, the chapter will expound some of the issues that the media highlight when covering female candidates, and how these concepts have strengthened or hindered women candidates' performances in political races.

The Agenda-Setting Role of the Media

The media remain the primary source of information about public matters. According to McCombs and Bell (1996) “the media daily reports alert us to the latest events and changes in the larger world beyond our reach ... our world is a second-hand reality created by the news organizations” (p. 93). The media inform the masses hence playing a fundamental role in the society. While playing this important role, the media set the news agenda. The agenda-setting function of the press, therefore, refers to the process by which the media determine which issues become salient thus meriting the attention of policy makers. In addition, as McCombs (1997) adds, “agenda-setting is about transmission of salience, not determination of opinions pro and con about particular issue” (p. 433).

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The media achieve this role by "day-to-day selection and display of the news, [in which] the editors ... and news directors ... exert a powerful influence on public attention to the issues, problems, and opportunities that confront each community" (McCombs, 1997, p. 433). The issues highlighted by the media come to be regarded as important by the public. Similarly, Lowery and DeFleur (1995) aptly summarize the agenda-setting role of the media: “agenda-setting implies a relationship between decisions about treatment of an issue or event in newspapers and TV and radio news, and the belief about its importance or significance on the part of individuals who make up the news audience” (p. 401). This does not necessarily mean that the media come up with their own stories but that the stories highlighted in the media command more public attention.

Apart from the general news, the media also play an important role in covering political campaigns. Some researchers contend that the media may introduce themes, which are separate from the events of the campaign trail, through investigative reporting and news analysis (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Since studies have shown that a majority of voters rely on the media to help determine who to vote for, it thus implies that these issues, which the media introduce, become part of the public agenda and hence the campaign agenda.

The agenda-setting role of the media, studied over time, does not aptly capture the direction of the agenda. Weaver (1987), for instance, explained that the media set the agenda “by making more salient certain issues, candidates, and characteristics of candidates ... construct[ing] a perceived reality that is relied on in making decisions about whether and for whom to vote” (p. 216).
Many times the news organizations present to the public issues that they consider important in an election campaign and these issues become the grounds in which political candidates are evaluated.

Although determining the consequences of agenda-setting and the direction of opinion change remains a challenge to researchers, other studies indicate that the public opinion differs from one subject to another. For example, Smith (1987), in a seven-year study in Louisville, Kentucky, found that "higher levels of newspaper coverage of community issues would be related to greater public concern about them [issues] and more negative evaluations of government services" (p. 388). Further, McCombs, Einsiedel, and Weaver (1991) observed the likelihood of increased issue salience resulting in more public knowledge and stronger public opinion, but less certainty about the direction of the opinion. The media thus are undoubtedly important in elections because of their role in agenda setting hence highlighting issues that are of public interest.

The agenda-setting role of the media is crucial especially during an election period considering the media's primary role of informing the masses. The major consumers of the media, and their agenda-setting function, are the voters who rely on the media to provide the information about a candidate that they may not have resources or time to know specifically. Yet, even as the media play a central role in this process, how they frame the political candidate may greatly affect how the voters perceive that candidate. Not only do the media determine the saliency of campaign issues, but they also determine the amount of coverage a candidate receives and the aspects about the candidate that will
receive more attention by setting the agenda of a candidate's image and character. This form of agenda setting involves, according to Weaver (1987), ranking of candidates in "terms of how much coverage they receive, and an agenda of characteristics of candidates, [where] some [are] emphasized more than others (p. 215; also Golan & Wanta, 2001). Image and character agenda setting have a more profound effect on the performance of women in politics and is central to the arguments of this thesis. Determining the worth of a political candidate, in terms of the amount of coverage a candidate should receive, encapsulates the overall feelings women politicians have expressed concerning how the media portray them. Actually, Weaver (1987) contended that this form of agenda setting "... probably has more influence on voters' early perception of the campaign and the final choices available at election time, than does issues agenda-setting" (p.215).

Additionally, McCombs et al. (1991) emphasized that "candidates who received the most coverage were likely to become the most well-known, and those characteristics of candidates that were most heavily emphasized on the news media were more likely to be cited in voters' description of the candidates" (p. 81). In focusing so much on women's dress code and physical appearance, the media may be serving to eliminate women candidates, as voters would not be swayed to vote based on these characteristics. When the media set the image and interest agendas, they focus on personalities and often portray women as novices in the field of politics. Finally, the voters who depend on the media for information only get to learn about personalities making it difficult for them to
make decisions based on issues. Moreover, when image and interest agendas
become the overriding factors, together with gender stereotyping, the political
arena becomes murky for women. This hurdle can only be overcome with
women's assumption of a tough stance in order to increase and sustain their
political outlook. The image and interest agendas are even more critical in areas
where there are no clearly defined campaign issue agendas.

Notably, avoiding the media when individuals have so many things to
catch up with is inevitable, thus the need to rely on the media to sort out some of
these issues. In a political situation, it is even more demanding for the electorate
who are bombarded with messages from political aspirants they have never
heard about. This challenge, a candidacy knowledge gap, is filled by following
the news and "only to its obtruding features, and thus being certain of acquiring
only that information placed at the top of the news again and again" (Patterson,
1994, p. 169). Because of its control over campaign information, the news media
can influence the significance of issues during election. Kahn (1994) pointed out
that the news' ability to shape political reality is "especially potent during electoral
campaigns where citizens rely almost exclusively on the media for their political
information" (p. 154).

Due to the perceived media centrality, women candidates have expressed
reservations about its fairness in covering elections. For instance, according to
Severin and Tankard (2001), the media play a gatekeeper role thus determining
what "information is passed along the chain and how faithfully it is reproduced"
(p. 55). More precisely, Kahn and Gordon's (1997) research attest to the role of
the media in a political situation, indicating that the "press does cover women candidates less favorably than male candidates" and that "news media spend less time talking about issues and more time talking about the viability of women candidates" (p. 73). The agenda set by the media does not seem to favor women political candidates.

In contrast, other findings indicated that media bias and gender influence can be a blessing, as illustrated in the media coverage of one Pauline Hanson (Deutchman & Ellison, 1999), in which the media were seen as having catapulted her from a backbencher to a star. Deutchman and Ellison (1999) explained that "the media's coverage of Hanson was shaped by her gender ... she was treated differently from comparable male politicians" (p. 47), with gender being viewed as having influenced media production biases. Although this case study has stereotypic overtones as some analysts contend, Deutchman and Ellison further explained that "the contradictions that Hanson embodies as a female politician articulating what is commonly thought to be a 'masculinist' political agenda" (p. 47) provided the media with the opportunity to address her issues more than any other Australian politician. Hanson's experience suggests that female politicians can also help set the agenda for the media by acting differently or embodying "masculine" issues.

From these diverse views on agenda setting, we can summarize that the voters depend on the media to determine their favorite candidates and that the way the media set the political agenda greatly influences political outcomes. This study is not about agenda-setting, but from these diverse views, we can say that
the media continue to shape the voters perception of candidates by focusing on either issues or using personality frames.

**Political Coverage and the Newspaper Agenda**

The media not only determine the issue salience of a given topic but they also provide direction to undecided voters by determining who among the candidates are likely to win and, therefore, deserve their votes. However, not any one medium specializes in setting the agenda; hence, the public utilizes whatever medium is within their reach to get information.

Furthermore, research indicates that the newspaper has the greatest impact on high and moderate interest voters. In addition, the newspaper audience is said to be larger than any other news medium as outlined by Nyhan (1999), detailing newspaper’s audiences who include: “the literate folk who make decisions, who think about things, who are curious about the world, the country, and the neighborhood” (p. 77). Moreover, these individuals serve as opinion leaders, playing a central role in elections and campaigns. Additionally, Patterson (1994) explains “… those who followed the newspaper frequently became substantially more aware of the candidates than those who paid infrequent attention to the newspaper” and that “the newspaper … contains enough information to have an independent effect” (p. 173; see also, Strate, Ford III, & Jankowski, 1994). This is especially evident in Kenya where in spite of a wider reach by other media, the populations still depend on newspapers for news analyses and other goings-on.
Other studies indicate that education correlates positively with agenda-setting (Wanta, 1997), meaning that the more educated individuals tend to use the newspapers for information. Additionally, newspapers are a more permanent source of information as they provide “readers with a source of news that is readily available for use at any time of day” (Wanta, 1997, p. 65). Similarly, research indicates that “people who describe themselves as television-reliant have been seen as less able to answer factual questions about politics than those who rely instead on newspapers and magazines (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1996, p. 421). Newspapers tend to be more informative than any other medium by providing insightful coverage, which is limited in television news. Thus, newspaper exposure is strongly linked to agenda setting effects—newspapers have a strong long-term effect (McClure & Patterson, 1976; Tipton, Haney, & Baseheart, 1975).

Chaffee and Kanihan (1996) further demonstrated that “the newspaper covers political content in greater depth, and is used more by those who are more involved in politics—including those who are temporarily stimulated to seek political information” (p. 427). For instance, in the 2002 Kenyan elections, different newspapers had added sections that were entirely devoted to political coverage. One such is the *East African Standard* that carried a magazine named *Uchaguzi* (Elections), where they profiled different candidates and included discussions about what was going on in the different constituencies. This was in addition to other election and campaign news that the newspaper continued to report.
Not only does newspaper readership depend on the level of education but research also indicates that those who read newspapers “tend to be much more knowledgeable about public affairs than those who don’t” (Strate et al., 1994, p.184). Sadly, women have been found to use less of print media to follow public affairs and accordingly becoming less involved in politics (Strate et al., 1994). Some researchers attribute the differences in male and female political interest to structural and situational factors. For instance, Bennett and Bennett (1989) found that political dispositions are more important predictors than these factors and “views about feminine sociopolitical roles” (p.117). Looking at the existing political gender gaps, however, is much more than the above attributes can tell and the media complicates the finer equilibrium even further.

Still, the newspaper is one medium that is readily available to the public. For instance, in Kenya, one does not even need to buy a newspaper but can access it at the workplace, from a neighbor, and in many offices where subscriptions traditionally exist. Most importantly, all three major Kenyan newspapers have embraced online publication thereby increasing accessibility for those who use the internet. A majority of the readers, therefore, do not have to encounter any financial outlay to obtain a copy of their favorite newspaper. Newspaper reading in Kenya is a well-established habit and far more people read than buy a copy. This has partly made newspapers one of the popular media in use in Kenya.

In a report about Kenya’s 2002 election, the major sources of information for the electorate was documented as “Radio (68.2%); newspapers (64.75%);
television (35.9%) whereas other sources such as political meetings, family and friends made minuscule contributions (Owiti, 2003, p. 117). From these studies, it is evident that majority of the electorate, in spite of the more technologically advanced media like television, still rely on the newspapers to follow politics. How then does the quantity and quality of newspapers' coverage of political candidates affect the performance these candidates?

*Gender Stereotyping in Candidate Evaluation: Feminizing Issues?*

Apart from the agenda-setting role of the newspaper, determining the saliency of a given issue and characteristics of particular candidates, political stereotyping is another harbinger to women's performance in politics. Political stereotyping entails attachment of certain frames to different groups or individuals, portraying them as different from the "mainstream" groups. By labeling political candidates, the media may heighten the sexual differences hence portraying political candidates as competent in some fields and not in others, based on the candidate's gender. Women have continued to be presented as competent on issues, which have been readily labeled "women's issues", whereas men are said to be competent at "men's issues." Issues like education, welfare programs, health, and environment, for instance are issues for which voters believe women are competent. Research shows that if women vied on the strength of these issues they are likely to perform well (Iyengar, Valentino, Ansolabehere, & Simon, 1997).
Research also indicates that voters have shown differing expectations about issues that members of each gender can handle competently, and it is upon the political contenders to focus on issues they are competent at by making their campaigns more persuasive. Bernstein (2000) for instance, notes, "campaign communication is most persuasive when it not only emphasizes issues of importance to voters, but also conforms to voters' previous dispositions" (p.161). These characteristics, female and male issues, have come to be accepted by the electorate hence becoming central to the political agenda. Moreover, political stereotyping is often perceived as negative. For instance, Iyengar et al. (1997) argued that "women who campaign on stereotypically "female" issues, like education, and men who campaign on stereotypically "male" issues, like crime, will enjoy significant electoral advantages" (p.78). It is evident that political stereotyping does play an important role during electoral campaigns hence the need for women to learn strategies for overcoming this challenge.

Additionally, Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes (2003) in their study on how women can run as "women" and win, contended that "voters also perceive women as more competent than males on certain types of issues and less competent on others" (p.245; see also Campbell, 2004). It is within these assigned competencies that female and male candidates strategize to focus on certain issues, which they believe the voters would associate with their abilities than advance agendas that might be viewed as external to their assigned competency. Although this reasoning may hold sway to women politicians, Kahn and Gordon (1997) cautioned that it would be wise to consider public priorities
when choosing among campaign themes rather than blindly following the stereotypic issue frames.

Other aspects of political stereotyping entail gendered mediation in which news reports are presented using "masculine narrative" (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003) when reporting about female politicians. Gidengil and Everitt explain that the media exaggerate women's combativeness, which may lead to women being perceived as "unfeminine." Naturally, aggressiveness and being feminine do not rhyme well with the expectations of the electorate hence limiting the chances of women in their election bid. Whether women voters, the main target of women politicians, do follow news at the same level as men, is not without controversy. But, contrary to some earlier research indicating that even at the level of talking about politics, women and men are different, Yum and Kendall (1995) established that "both male and female respondents described their political discussions as information sharing [emphasis authors'], rather than information-giving or information receiving" although men tend to "engage in more political discussion than do women" (p.137).

Similarly, List (1985), through a survey of two Philadelphia newspapers at the turn of the nineteenth century, established that women were always seen as objects that can be used to advance their husband's political agenda and were themselves apolitical. However, the same newspapers "encouraged women's political participation, not only through influencing men but in more direct ways on behalf of their own parties, and in doing so, they depicted women as political actors with parts to play" (p.162). Additionally, Patterson and Nishikawa (2002) in
discussing the Japanese women's interest in politics, call for understanding between gender and political interest. They argued that "gender and politics in Japan are related in ways that go beyond the traditional view that women are less interested in and more distant from the political process" since the differences are "purposive political decision" (p. 28).

Other researchers contended that "female-identified characteristics were consonant with providing a nurturing environment in the private sphere" (Robson, 2000, p. 207). On a more optimistic note, some of these stereotypes, if fully utilized by women, can enhance their candidacies. Robson (2000) additionally noted that although politicians need the gender stereotypes to advance their candidacies, because of the changing society (more educated, more informed, and convinced by well-thought ideas than in the past), they also need "communication, critical thinking, and problem solving skills necessary to develop effectively, articulate fully, and maintain their toughness ..." (p. 219). Although effective communication is an asset in political campaigns, it is still clear that in order to overcome political stereotyping, female politicians would have to learn the trick of the trade. Consequently, some researchers (Herrnson, Lay, & Stokes, 2003) proposed that women should run "as women" and "continue to mount campaigns that turn voters' dispositions toward gender into an asset rather than a liability" (p. 251). Herrnson et al. also explained that when "women capitalize on gender stereotypes by focusing on issues that are favorably associated with women candidates and targeting women or other social groups, they improve their prospects of electoral success" (p. 251).
Stereotypic frames are not always disadvantageous, however. The argument is that women can effectively utilize these gender stereotypes in order to identify with their main voters—women, thereby advancing their political agenda. From this insight, there is need to identify and fully accommodate political stereotyping if it does work positively for women political candidates. Since emphasis on stereotypic frames may work either way, it is important that the female political candidates utilize them with caution. On the other hand, Bernstein (2000) argued that although gender stereotypes exist and can be converted into opportunities rather than being disguised, female politicians can improve their competency ratings even within the "male" issues like crime if "they are explicit and specific in their policy stand" (p.168). The call for message explicitness and specificity is especially useful because an issue like crime, although stereotypically belonging to male policy area, is so recurrent that the political aspirants cannot afford to ignore it; it occupies the forefront of public expectation at all times. To remain afloat in politics, then, women need to espouse some of this stereotypically "male issues" in their campaigns.

Embracing "female issues" or taking up "male issues" is a very contentious subject with some researchers (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993) observing positive outcome from adoption of male roles, whereas others like Gindengil and Everitt (2003) offer a differing assessment of female politician when masculine attitudes are adopted. Again, every woman politician should be able to look beyond these demands and do her best to present herself as a serious political contender. A challenging remark from Ross and Sreberny-Mohammady (1997) is the need for
women to catch up with their male counterparts by “develop[ing] competencies and skills in precisely these serious (for which read 'male') areas if they are to make an impact on the media-led political arena and get reported for their minds and not bodies” (p.107).

What this body of research has shown is that female politicians can effectively utilize stereotypically feminine characteristics and campaign on “female” issues or try to set a balance by campaigning both on female and male issues. Most importantly, their campaign should be in line with the public agenda.

From these studies, we also know that the media do employ stereotypic frames in portraying women and that these frames may either thwart or facilitate women’s electoral performance. However, a majority of these studies have centered on the U.S. senatorial, gubernatorial, and legislative elections. This study will thus extend the findings to the Kenyan situation. Although Kenyan and American democracies may not be similar, but extending studies focusing on the U.S. election coverage would be important since it will point out any similarities in the press practices. Furthermore, women in both democracies continue to fight the patriarchal system in order to enjoy political representation. Do Kenyan newspapers utilize stereotypic frames to report about political contenders and how does this influence the electoral outcome?

**Fair Coverage: Is it Issue Coverage?**

Apart from setting the agenda and utilizing gender-specific frames, newspaper coverage accorded to political aspirants during campaigns favorably
lean toward male candidates. For instance, Kahn (1994) observed that female senate candidates continued to receive less coverage than male candidates regardless of their status as incumbents, challengers, or candidates in an open race. In spite of this observation, studies that are more recent have established that media coverage is no longer biased and that women tend to receive more coverage than men do. In an analysis of newspaper coverage of 1994 U.S. political campaigns, for example, Smith (1997) found that "newspaper reporters and editors are treating female candidates more like male candidates for political office, rather than focusing on novelty of a woman seeking higher office" (p. 79). This study, however, does not imply that the newspaper coverage is impartial. Smith (1997), however, observed differences in newspaper coverage along gender lines, but contends that those differences are subtle contrary to studies that have noted a wider gender gap. This observed parity is only at the surface level and there is much more to be analyzed in order to arrive at the conclusion that the media coverage is fair. Although media coverage of female candidates is said to be improving, it is yet to be seen whether this would translate into quality coverage. Further, a majority of researchers who have observed parity in newspaper coverage of candidates still reported their findings with caution: "this should not be interpreted as a reason to assume that gender has ceased to be an issue in the type of coverage a candidate for political office receives" (Smith, 1997, p. 79; also Bystrom et al., 2001).

*Issue coverage.* Issues as defined in the past literature embody the thematic focus of the candidates as they campaign for elections. Studies show
that the media focus on women's personalities and viability at the expense of their issue stance (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Kahn, 1994, 1996; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). For example, in their examination of how presidential hopeful Elizabeth Dole was portrayed, Aday and Devitt (2001) found that “only 17 percent of the paragraphs about Dole were issue-or policy-based, while between 22.5 percent and 40 percent of those discussing male candidates were issue- or policy-based” (p.61). Additionally, the study found that only a paltry 4 percent of the paragraphs in the USA Today adopted issue frames compared to 46 percent of the paragraphs in the Los Angeles Times that contained personal frames (Aday & Devitt, 2001).

Kahn (1996) also contended that the press pays less attention to the female candidates’ issue concerns. In her study of female gubernatorial candidates, Kahn found that overall “an average of 5.5 paragraphs a day are published about issue priorities of male candidates, while only about 4.7 issue paragraphs are published about female candidates each day” (p. 92). This kind of coverage can have devastating effects on female candidates since voters are likely to withhold their votes because of not having enough information about a female candidate’s issue agenda.

Traits: Personal information and gender traits. In assessing the fairness of the press, several issues such as the quality and quantity of coverage, amount of coverage dedicated to the horserace (whether the horserace is negative or positive), and the balance maintained between the candidate’s and the newspapers’ agendas, would help in illuminating impartiality in coverage. For
example, several researchers have evaluated the issue and personality focus of the newspapers (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Bystrom et al., 2001; Serini et al., 1998; Stambough & O'Regan, 2003) in order to verify whether the media treat women and men differently. In so doing, these researchers were able to discern much more than the quantity of coverage—measured in terms of the space allotted to the candidates, which may only be a superficial indicator for equity in coverage. Their studies established that media paid more attention to the personality traits of the female candidates than they did to male candidates. The quality of coverage (i.e., the focus), on the other hand, provides distinctive information that may help in pointing out otherwise subtle biases, which may be difficult to discern by looking merely at the number of paragraphs allotted a candidate.

Incidentally, newspapers and the media in general tend to focus on the familial aspects of a female politician whereas male candidates do not seem to be associated with these roles. Other times, traits such as the physical appearance of the female politicians become an overriding theme while a man's dress does not attract as much attention. This means that when the newspapers focus on such trivial issues, the real issues about a candidate's stand on policy receive secondary coverage, hence disadvantaging women.

The focus of the media, unfortunately, does not correspond to the way women politicians represent themselves. Apart from describing the female candidates in terms of their dress and physical appearance, reporters also use gender traits such as "female" and "male" traits in describing candidates. For instance, Kahn (1996) asserts that "reporters are more likely to refer to "female"
traits such as compassion and honesty when describing women candidates compared to male candidates "(p.53). Kahn thus defined “female” traits to include noncompetitiveness, dependence, passivity, gentleness, weak leadership, compassion and strong emotions. On the other hand, “male” traits include knowledge, objectivity, independence, competitive, strong leadership, aggressiveness, insensitivity, ambition, and toughness. Describing candidates using these traits alone would not raise any questions if the candidates emphasize the traits during their campaigns. However, research indicates that “journalists are not following the candidates’ lead when writing about the personal characteristics of women candidates” but are influenced by stereotypes (Kahn, 1996, p. 53). Further, as Kahn explains, “if voters are provided with information about a candidate’s personality characteristics, then voters are likely to consider this information when developing impressions of candidates” (p. 53).

Contrary to media portrayal, Niven and Zilber (2001) found that women do not represent themselves in these familial roles. However, the media continue to portray women as mothers first and politicians second. In this study, Niven and Zilber (2001) content analyzed congressional websites in order to establish if women’s portrayal of themselves was any different from the way the media portrayed them since they had an upper hand in determining what content goes into their websites. They did not find any support for this trend. Their study did not reveal women in Congress as having any predilection to involve their families as part of their political stories. Additionally, these researchers observed that although women place a higher priority on compassion and women’s issues “the
distinction is exaggerated by the media [and that] gender stereotype prevalent in
the media have no basis in women’s communication" (p. 402).

Further, Aday and Devitt (2001) offered an extensive description of
personality traits, which were the mainstay of the newspapers during Elizabeth
Dole’s U.S. presidential bid. They found that personality frames were “more likely
to be used in discussing the only female candidate in the presidential race” (p.
64). Aday and Devitt analyzed both the quantity and news frames employed to
represent Elizabeth Dole and found that the media favored male candidates
although Elizabeth Dole received more coverage, which mostly focused on her
personality. Their findings indicated that newspaper stories focused more on
Dole’s personal traits and less on issues. Retrospectively, personal coverage
does not offer information about how a candidate will govern, suggesting that
policy issues are not relevant to their candidacies. Additionally, although there
were no major biases found in their study on media coverage of women in the
103rd Congress, Carroll and Schreiber (1997) found articles that occasionally
mentioned women’s appearance and some that were relegated to the style
sections.

*Horse race coverage.* Another aspect of coverage that disadvantages
female politicians is the negative horserace coverage. Newspapers seem to be
placing more emphasis on polls than candidates’ agendas. Polls have become
ubiquitous in many politics today. Polls tell us where candidates “stand on the
issues of the day, gauge the public mood, record popularity and approval of
elected officials, and identify the electoral preferences of ‘likely voters’” (Medvic,
In a study of how polls were used in the 1976 presidential elections, Broh (1980) demonstrated the characteristics of horse race metaphor and what it entailed. He describes that:

A horse is judged not by its absolute speed or skill but in comparison to the speed of other horses, and especially by its wins and losses. Similarly, candidates are pushed to discuss other candidates; events are understood in a context of competition; and picking the winner becomes an important topic; the race—not the winner—is the story. The candidate's image, personality, staff relations, and strategy are the main foci of reporting (p. 515).

It is clear from the definition that horse race coverage purely focuses on the viability of a candidate. In many instances polling emphasizes that one candidate is either gaining or losing in strength.

Media research indicates that the voting behaviors suggest three types of campaign coverage: horserace, issue, and trait coverage. For example, Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) argued that the news media, by concentrating on the horserace, might make the candidates' viability more salient to the voters thereby influencing voters' attitudes toward the candidates. They also found that horserace coverage was prevalent for female candidates especially those running for senate races. There are implications for success of men and women candidates that come with emphasis on horse race. Kahn (1996) explains that by focusing on the horserace, "the news media will make the women candidates' viability more salient to voters, [and] secondly, the focus on candidates' viability
can produce negative assessments of the candidates if substance of the horse race coverage is negative” (pp. 48-49). Therefore, how the reporters interpret these viability or polls will have a great impact on the views of the voters.

Emphasis on horserace, as Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) explained, if exaggerated, may make the voters more concerned with the viability of the female candidate. This may then lead to negative evaluations of the female candidates if the horserace information about the female candidate was negative. Additionally, Kahn (1994) argued that newspapers not only stereotype female candidates by emphasizing “female traits” and “female issues” but they also question women’s viability as candidates. However, according to Kahn (1996), the horserace coverage among gubernatorial candidates is not as pervasive as that for those vying for senate seats. She claimed that “unlike their colleagues in senate races, both male and female candidates (in gubernatorial contest) are described as competitive” (p. 90). This is not without a rider though; Kahn observed that women candidates competing for open races were still viewed as less electable than their male counterparts.

In a study on whether the media focus on horse race or policy issues, Serini et al. (1998) observed that “Netsch (the female candidate in their study) was mentioned in the largest number of horse race stories (86.5%)" compared to the male candidates (Phelan 75% and Burris 71.2%) (p.198). Serini et al. (1998) also noted that “female candidate received less policy issue coverage than the Caucasian male candidate, even when his ratings in the polls dropped" (p.202). Other researchers (Rausch, Rozell, & Wilson, 1999) whose study targeted two
female candidates, observed that “horserace coverage constituted the largest share of Terry’s (one of the candidate) negative coverage” (p. 12). It is notable that although the two candidates were female, the media still employed viability guide in differentiating the candidates hence giving one an edge over the other depending on how the polls are cast.

Smith (1997) clarified that although the amount of coverage between male and female candidates is at par, the focus on horserace while reporting about women is disadvantageous to women’s performance (see also Kahn, 1994). Smith also noted that on days when female candidates received more coverage, attention was on “horserace” coverage whereas when male candidates received more coverage it was issue based.

Contrary to the preceding literature, Stambough and O’Regan (2003) in a study of newspaper coverage of North Dakota gubernatorial campaign, found that “Heitkamp (the female candidate) did not receive significantly less favorable coverage than Hoeven (the male candidate) ... the coverage was relatively balanced between the two candidates, with a slight edge to Hoeven” (p. 211). But this is just one research out of the many that have found out the incessant horse race coverage that most often focuses on the viability of female candidates.

From these studies, it is evident that horse race coverage is pervasive in newspaper coverage of female candidates. Moreover, information conveyed by the newspaper could have a significant effect on the perception and decision making of the voters. Furthermore, as Kahn explains, horse race influences voting decision and hence voters’ choices; if horserace is more negative for

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women candidates than male candidates, voters may develop negative impressions of female candidates.

A good look at both the amount of coverage and the focus of the coverage will thus enable us to gauge whether the newspaper reporting of women politicians focuses on personality traits, issues, or use stereotypic overtones or gender traits that promulgate double standards.

Summary

The preceding literature has tackled several important aspects that are central to political communication research and specifically research interest in women candidacy. Overall, the role of the media in setting the political agenda seems to be the focus of most political communication research. From the overview, agenda-setting is explained to occur at two levels: issue agenda setting and trait/character agenda setting. Whereas both forms of agenda setting have a great impact on the electorate, Weaver (1987) contended that trait agenda setting has more influence on voters' early perception of candidates and therefore the choices available during elections. This is not to say that issue agenda setting is not as important. Issue agenda setting actually influences candidates' choices, making voters follow themes highlighted by the media.

Research also differentiates the impact of different media in the agenda-setting role. Although all media forms are useful and there is quite a shift to more modern media, research nevertheless indicates that newspapers still have a great impact on the electorate. Newspaper audiences have been found to be
opinion leaders thereby playing an important role in the elections. Studies also show that newspapers offer a more in-depth analysis especially on political topics therefore offering useful information to those seeking political news. Furthermore, newspapers offer a more permanent form of information, allowing for referencing hence useful for future studies and investigations.

Apart from the role of the newspapers in agenda setting and its significant role in this study, the preceding literature also examined how female candidates struggle with the stereotypic feminization of issues. Studies have showed that women may either focus on issues stereotypically identified as “women” issues in order to reach out to their target audience—primarily women—or adopt more representative issue themes in which “male” and “female” issues are balanced. Although research in this area does not provide a clear guideline on voters' expectations of female politicians, going either way may have its own strengths and weaknesses.

Further, the effects of focusing on certain aspects of the candidates have yielded interesting results. Research has continued to show that depending on the media’s focus on certain aspects of the campaign, the candidates are likely to experience different electoral outcomes. Researchers (Aday & Devitt, 2001, Kahn, 1994, 1996; Serini et al., 1998) have argued that female candidates are more often discussed in terms of their personalities with little emphasis given to their issue stance. Although research that is more recent points at subtle differences in coverage, there is general agreement that the gap in the quantity of coverage is reducing. However, most of the researchers argued that the media
still play to the viability or the potential of the female candidates, which is often negative.

Finally, the role of the media has been discussed throughout the chapter. Research has consistently found that there is no equal coverage between female and male candidates. This is not to say that women are locked out of the electoral process, but that in portraying them as novices, the media limit the chances of women ascending to electoral victory.

From this body of literature, we know how the media play an important role to establish the credibility of an electoral candidate. However, what we do not know is whether the most recent Kenyan elections and media coverage thereof, is consistent with these studies. Although the political systems and the media practices may be dissimilar, the women candidacy may have some universality and that is what we do not know having only seen media representation from a Western perspective.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Several researchers interested in media portrayal of both male and female politicians during elections have utilized content analyses (Aday & Devitt, 2001; Bystrom et al., 2001; Kahn, 1994, 1996; Kahn & Goldberg, 1991; Miller, 2001; Serini et al., 1998; Smith, 1997). Just like these researchers, this study is concerned with how newspapers portray female candidates during election campaigns. The study seeks to extend the work done by these researchers (mostly focusing on U.S. legislative, gubernatorial, and senate races) by applying it to a new and uncharted area, Kenya, which is a developing democracy.

This study is thus concerned with the newspaper coverage of Kenyan women politicians during the 2002 general elections. The study employed content analysis to explore how the mainstream Kenyan newspapers (i.e., the Daily Nation, the East African Standard, and the Kenya Times), which have large circulations, covered campaign politics and portrayed women politicians in comparison with their male counterparts. These newspapers were chosen because they are the major dailies that cover national politics. Furthermore, many Kenyans rely on these newspapers to follow election campaigns and most times to make decisions on the candidate of their choice. Many urban dwellers especially depend on the print media whose stories are often taken to be true.
The study analyzed newspaper coverage of 44 Kenyan female parliamentary aspirants and their male contenders from October 28, 2002 (the day parliament went on recess and campaigns officially began) and December 26, 2002 (Eve of election). The study explores possible differences between newspaper coverage of the female candidates and their male opponents. Since the period within which the study is conducted may not generate enough news articles, the study included all types of newspaper content including opinion columns, editorials, features, and special election sections. Although some of these articles are personal opinions and hence not guided by the principal of objectivity, readers may use the same information to vote for candidates, especially if there is a dearth of information.

Central to this study is the coverage of women politicians and how they are framed in the coverage. What type of coverage do women politicians receive? Are the stories characterized by horserace coverage (e.g., who is ahead or behind in the polls, who has a stronger campaign organization); and what types of issue frames are used to describe women in comparison with male candidates? Since assessments of a candidate's issue positions, traits, and viability all influence voting decisions, horseracing may not be advantageous to women politicians, hence the need to analyze the substance of campaign news.

Hypotheses

Although the 2002 election was not exemplary for Kenyan women (with only nine women elected to parliament in a house of 210 elected members), it is
progress, nevertheless, considering previous elections where the numbers of women candidates were dismal. Accordingly, the major issues during the 2002 election were as diverse as the number of political parties, but a few documented issues include: "constitutional review, teachers' salaries, free and affordable primary education, eradication of corruption, meritocracy in government, collapse of infrastructure, dynasty politics, and the 'young' versus 'old' in leadership" (Owiti, 2003, p.76). Again, these were the issues mainly for presidential contenders and the parliamentary aspirants may have had their own constituency-unique issues such as job creation for the constituents, HIV/AIDS, etc.

This study will content analyze these newspapers with every story during the campaign period being studied for the amount of coverage; represented by the number of paragraphs devoted to a candidate, placement of the articles, the focus of the coverage, and the amount of horserace stories dedicated to each candidate. The primary focus will be parliamentary elections but only for those constituencies in which there were female candidates vying for a parliamentary seat.

For this study, every issue of the selected newspapers published daily between October 28 (when parliament went on recess and campaigns began officially) and December 26 (eve of election) will be analyzed, and every story that mentions at least one of the candidates during that period assessed using techniques of content analysis.
Several hypotheses were posited for this study. Since many more women vied for the electoral post but only nine of them won the election, this study looked at the representation of the 44 female aspirants in relation to their male opponents during the electoral campaigns. The hypotheses posited for this study are informed by those analyzed by Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) and by Aday and Devitt's (2001) study on Elizabeth Dole's presidential bid (2000 U.S. presidential candidate). Therefore, this study posed the following hypotheses:

H\(_1\)(a): Newspapers devote less overall coverage to female candidates than they do to male candidates. This hypothesis compares the average number of paragraphs allocated to female candidates to those of male candidates.

H\(_1\)(b): Stories about female candidates will not receive comparable front-page placement as often as male candidates. This hypothesis compares the placement of the stories in the front-page section and other sections of the newspapers since stories deemed important usually receive front-page placement.

H\(_2\): Issue coverage will differ between female and male candidates. Newspapers will provide less coverage of female candidates' position and record on issues than they will to male candidates.

H\(_3\): Coverage of personality traits will differ between female and male candidates. Newspapers will give more coverage to female politician’s personal information such as dress/clothing, marital status, children, educational background, and age than they will to male candidates. Newspapers will also focus on gender traits rather than issue agendas for female political candidates.
H₄. Coverage of horserace issues will differ between female and male candidates. Newspapers will give more horserace coverage to female candidates than they will to male candidates.

Procedure

Content analysis. This study utilized content analysis. Content analysis as defined by Baxter and Babbie (2004) is a "technique for the systematic, replicable, and quantitative description for the manifest or latent features of communication texts" (p. 240) therefore providing reliable data. This research method, according to Wimmer and Dominick (1987), provides researchers with an "efficient way to investigate the content of the media ..." (p.165). Wimmer and Dominick further explained that content analysis aims for systematic evaluation given that "only one set of guidelines for evaluation is used throughout the study" (p. 166). Additionally, content analysis reinforces objectivity as researchers provide operational definitions and rules for classification of variables, which allow replication of studies. Content analysis is also quantitative, enabling researchers to summarize and report results with precision.

Sampling. This study considered newspaper content in the Daily Nation, East African Standard, and Kenya Times. Each story type (i.e., news, features, editorials, opinion columns, and election special sections) published between October 28, 2002 (when parliament went on recess and campaigns officially began) and December 26 (eve of elections) were included in the study. This period was selected because it was the official time within which election
campaigns could formally be conducted. Although campaigns do take place days and even months before the official campaign time, incumbents cannot engage in legally recognized campaigns while the parliament is in session. However, party nominations took place much later, in this case on November 23/24, 2002, just a month before the general election. This means that between when parliament went on recess and when party nominations were conducted, candidates were campaigning without party endorsement.

With research indicating that electorates rely on the news media to make informed decisions especially when they are undecided, this study found it valuable to examine these sources in order to ascertain the kind of information they distribute to the masses. The three newspapers selected have the widest circulation in the nation and are the main source of print information in Kenya. The three dailies are all privately owned and run as independent business ventures or as party sponsored mouthpieces. In fact, a report on the Kenyan media status shows that due to their private ownership “Kenyan press is vibrant, dynamic, and economically sound” (Moggi & Tessier, 2001, p. 8). The report also confirms the circulation of these dailies indicating that the Daily Nation has a circulation of about 200,000; the East African standard, 54,000; and Kenya Times, 30,000 (Moggi & Tessier, 2001). The Daily Nation has the largest circulation and is independent, publishing articles critical of the government views. The Nation Group, a major media house running both the print and broadcast media, is also one of the successful business ventures on the African continent, according to this report. Business people who have close relationships
with the previous government, on the other hand, control the *East African Standard*, although it does not explicitly support the government (Moggi & Tessie, 2001). Furthermore, *Kenya Times* is a party newspaper.

**Coding.** The principal coder trained a colleague in coding a sample of stories from the selected newspapers. Coder training and reliability testing was conducted once all issues of newspapers were collected for the sample period. Ten percent of the total sample was selected at random and used for coder training and testing. The principal coder and associate reviewed the coding scheme and proceeded to code the randomly selected test sample independently. Since the unit of analysis for the study was a paragraph, coders scored individual paragraphs for the variables: story placement, campaign issues, candidate description, gender traits, and horserace issue. Inter-coder reliability measures were used to test the agreement between the two coders and any differences resolved. The inter-coder reliability was measured by using Cohen's Kappa. For coding on amount of coverage and placement of stories, kappa was .91; for coding on candidate description Cohen’s Kappa was .77; on gender traits .83 Cohen’s Kappa was attained. Additionally, the coders’ agreement for candidates’ issue position was .93 Cohen’s Kappa; and finally coders’ achieved a Cohen’s Kappa of 1.00 for horserace issues.

**Measures.** The three newspapers will be coded as (1) *Daily Nation*, (2) *East African Standard*, and (3) *Kenya Times*. The unit of analysis was the paragraph. Consequently, if a female candidate was mentioned, the paragraph was coded as (1) and (2) for paragraphs dedicated to male candidates. If both
the male and female candidates were mentioned on the same paragraph, the paragraph was coded as (3). Therefore, if any of the candidates were mentioned in a story, it was included; as a result, all stories that mentioned any or all the candidates were included, and physically counted. Placement of the story entailed whether a story appeared on the front-page, other sections of the newspaper, or election special sections. Placement was thus coded as (1) front page, (2) other sections (i.e., editorial, back page, etc.), and (3) election special section. If women politicians receive a front-page coverage, it may signal that women are significantly important, but if their stories are relegated to style sections, readers may get the picture that the women politicians are unimportant.

The second category of measures included three separate codes: the focus of the coverage in terms of candidate's position on national issues (issue frame); focus on person information and gender traits (trait frame); and a horserace frame (horserace/viability frame). From the existent Kenyan literature, there were no across the board issues for parliamentary candidates who primarily focus on issues unique to their constituents. The possible issues included in the study were thus, constitution review, HIV/AIDS, education—free primary education and teachers' salaries, corruption, infrastructure, and meritocracy/leadership. For this study, therefore, if any of the candidate was portrayed as discussing a given issue, the paragraph was coded as (1) female(s) associated with issue, (2) male(s) associated with issue, and (3) both female(s) and male(s) associated with issue.
Personality frame, on the other hand, measures both mention of personal information and gender traits associated with candidates. Accordingly, personality traits were coded when candidate’s personal information was presented (e.g., candidate’s dressing/clothing, age, marital status, children, or educational background mentioned). Paragraphs focusing on personal information will thus be coded as (1) female(s) associated with personal information, (2) male(s) associated with personal information, and (3) both male(s) and female(s) associated with personal information. Additionally, gender traits will be coded if there is association of candidates with either “male” or “female” gender trait. “Female” traits as defined by Kahn (1996) include descriptions such as “dependence, noncompetitiveness, passivity, gentleness, strong emotions, weak leadership, and compassion; while “Male” traits include such descriptions as “independence, knowledge, objectivity, competitive, strong leadership, insensitivity, aggressiveness, lack of emotion, ambition, and toughness” (p. 53). Gender traits, therefore, will be coded as (1) female(s) associated with “female” traits, (2) female(s) associated with “male” traits, (3) male(s) associated with “male” traits, (4) male(s) associated with “female” traits, (5) both male(s) and female(s) associated with “female” traits, and finally (6) both male(s) and female(s) associated with “male” traits.

Horserace issues, as defined by Kahn and Goldenberg (1991), includes “any discussion of a candidate’s chance of winning, including comparisons of the two candidates’ organization, discussion of poll results, and discussion of the candidate’s performance in campaign debates” (p.188). In this case, any article
that mentioned a given candidate in terms of his/her viability, and their chances of winning, was coded as containing horserace information. For horserace issues therefore, paragraphs were coded as (1) female(s) associated with horserace issues, (2) male(s) associated with horserace issues, and (3) both male(s) and female(s) associated with horserace.

Finally, since the parliamentary winners are already known, the paragraphs were coded for the gender of the winning candidate (i.e., which candidate won the race, the male candidate or the female candidate). Thus if it is the female candidate, the paragraph will be coded as (1) female, and (2) male if it is the male candidate. The coding instrument for this content analysis can be found in the Appendix.

Analysis plan. The analysis began with the generation of simple frequencies and relevant measures of tendency and dispersion to describe general trend data. As the unit of analysis represents ratio data, hypotheses were examined by utilizing chi-square. The first hypothesis, comparing overall coverage of female and male candidates, utilized chi-square to determine outcome. Hypotheses examining specific issues, personality, and horserace coverage were tested using chi-square. Chi-square, as Reinard (1998) explains, allows a researcher to “use categories and determine if there are differences between the number of data that fall into each category” (p. 339). Frequency tables showing various aspects of newspaper coverage of the candidates were generated to illustrate the differences in coverage accorded to both male and female candidates. To illustrate the findings, Summary tables and graphs were
generated and included in Chapter 4. Findings from this study will be included in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

For this study, a total of 1,346 paragraphs that included news coverage of the campaigns, news analyses, opinion and editorial articles, letters to the editor and constituency profiles or other campaign related coverage that were carried in special editions of the newspapers were coded. For the period selected for this study, at least one election related story ran in one of the papers every day, apart from November 29, 2002 when terrorists attacked a town in Kenya, therefore affecting the normal flow of news and campaign stories. For the total number of relevant election paragraphs within the period of study, the Daily Nation had 537 (39.9%) paragraphs, the East African Standard had 556 (41.3%) paragraphs, and Kenya Times had 253 (18.8%) paragraphs. In terms of the placement of this election stories, 4.1% received front-page placement whereas 79.4% of the paragraphs were found on other pages (national news, provincial news, opinions, etc.). Additionally, sections that were entirely dedicated to election and campaign stories such as Uchaguzi (which ran every Sunday from November 10 through to December 22), hotspot, constituency profiles, constituted 16.5% election campaign paragraphs.

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In terms of the gender of the reporters, the study revealed that female reporters wrote 80 (5.9%) paragraphs while male reporters wrote 868 (64.5%) paragraphs. Other paragraphs were written by male and female reporters (16, 1.2%), whereas staff, correspondents, or team, a category that did not acknowledge individual reporters accounted for 382 (28.4%) of the total paragraphs coded for this analysis.

The data also showed that 397 paragraphs (29.5%) were about female candidates. Male candidates received 848 (63%) paragraph mentions; whereas 101, (7.5%) paragraphs highlighted issues about male and female candidates within these paragraphs.

Issue coverage was the dominant subject covered by the newspapers with 523 (38.8%) paragraphs in total. Horserace came second with 371 (27.5%) paragraphs, whereas 325 (24.1%) paragraphs contained gender traits. Candidates’ personal information such as academic credentials, clothing, marital status, number of children, etc. received 215 (16.0%) paragraph mentions. Furthermore, 69% of the paragraphs portrayed male candidates in terms of their issue stance whereas 28.5% of the paragraphs analyzed associated female candidates with an issue. Still, 2.5% of the paragraphs associated both male and female candidates with an issue.

Horserace coverage also received considerable reporting (371 paragraphs). In terms of the general frequency for the horserace variable, 21.8% of the paragraphs associated female candidates with horserace, while 62.3%
associated male candidates with horserace, and 15.9% paragraphs associated both male and female candidates with a horserace frame.

Personality traits such as the description of the candidates' profession, marital status, attire or reference to candidates' family also received comparable coverage. Two hundred and fifteen paragraphs associated candidates with personality traits. Of these paragraphs, 35.8% associated female candidates with personality trait whereas 60.9% associated male candidates with personality traits. A few paragraphs (3.3%) associated both male and female candidates with personality traits.

Furthermore, gender traits such as description of candidates' competitiveness, and traits associated with either male or female were found to be prevalent in election campaign coverage. Three hundred and twenty-five (325) paragraphs were coded as containing gender trait information. Of these, 9.5% of the paragraphs showed that female candidates were associated with a female trait, and 33.8% indicated female candidate as being associated with a male trait. Additionally, 46.2% of the coded sample showed male candidates being associated with a male trait. Another 7.7% paragraphs associated male candidates with a female trait. A few paragraphs, 2.8%, featured male gender traits that were associated with both male and female candidates.

Prior to further analysis, a test of difference was run to examine any bias by individual newspapers. A significant difference was found between the newspapers in relation to their coverage of candidates, $\chi^2(4, N=1346) = 17.58, p < .001$. This analysis was based on the idea that newspaper coverage of
candidates will be proportional to the papers in the overall sample. For instance, the *Daily Nation* made up 537 paragraphs of all sample coded; hence, one would expect that the same paper would provide 50% of the 537-paragraph coverage to female candidates as well as male candidates. The analysis showed this was not the case. See figure 1. The *Daily Nation* had 537 paragraphs, of which 132 were about female, 350 about male and 55 paragraphs about male and female candidates. The *East African Standard* had 556 paragraphs, of which 184 were about female candidates while 338 were about male. *Kenya Times* had 253 paragraphs in total with 81 paragraphs about female and 160 paragraphs containing information about male candidates. The total coverage between the male and female candidates indicates that female candidates received 29.5% of total coverage whereas male candidates received 63.0%.

![Candidates Coverage by Newspapers](image)

*Figure 1. Candidates Coverage by Newspapers*
The first hypothesis \( (H_1(a)) \) was designed to assess whether newspaper coverage between female and male candidates were equal. The hypothesis predicted that newspapers devoted less overall coverage to female candidates than they did to male candidates. There was significant support for this hypothesis. From the data analyzed for this study, 1245 paragraphs were devoted distinctly to male or female candidates. Of this, male candidates received 848 (68.1%) paragraph coverage (higher than the expected value) while female candidates received 397 (31.8%) paragraphs (lower than the expected value), \( \chi^2(1, N = 1245) = 163.38, p < .001 \). Therefore, as shown by the chi-square analysis, more paragraphs than were expected were devoted to male candidates than to female candidates.

Significant support was found for \( H_1(b) \). Overall, paragraphs about female parliamentary candidates did not receive comparable front-page coverage as often as paragraphs about the male contenders. Chi-square test showed that the number of paragraphs about male candidates that received front-page placement, \( n = 35 \) (63.6%), was significantly greater than paragraphs about female candidates that received front-page placement, \( n = 20 \) (36.4%), \( \chi^2(4, N = 55) = 41.912, p < .001 \). Consequently, as seen in these data, campaign stories about male candidates were more likely, than expected, to receive front-page placement than those about female candidates. The hypothesis postulated that stories deemed important received front-page coverage. This finding indicates otherwise. Stories about female candidates may not have been considered important enough to merit front-page placement.
H₂ predicted that issue coverage will differ between female and male candidates and that there will be less coverage about female candidates' position on issues. This hypothesis was supported. Of the 1346 paragraphs analyzed, 37.8% of them were coded as containing an issue frame. Of these, 70.1% associated male candidates with issue, higher than the expected value, whereas 28.9% associated female candidates with issue, lower than the expected value. As shown in Table 1, female candidates received less issue coverage, than expected, than did their male counterparts (28.9% vs. 70.1%). The difference in issue coverage was found to be statistically significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 509) = 485.19$, $p < .001$.

H₃ predicted that coverage of personality trait will differ between female and male candidates. Results of chi-square analysis indicated that female candidates were associated with personality traits 34.9% of the times higher than the expected value, while 61.5% of the paragraphs about male candidates focused on personality traits, lower than the expected value, $\chi^2 (1, N = 195) = 166.21$, $p < 0.001$.

Finally, H₄ predicted that newspapers would give more horserace coverage to female candidates than they would to male candidates. This hypothesis was supported. Overall, 22.5% of the total paragraphs coded had a horserace frame. Of these, 24.8% associated female candidates with horserace, higher than the expected value, whereas 72.6% associated male candidates with horserace frame, lower than the expected value, $\chi^2 (1, N = 303) = 263.23$, $p < 0.001$. 

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Again, the horserace frame continued to be prevalent in the campaign stories, with candidates depicted as being in a race of winners and losers. However, because of the number of horserace paragraphs, one would expect that female candidates will receive less of horserace coverage but as the findings indicate, even with less coverage, horserace issues continued to be prevalent in paragraphs about female candidates.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Female Candidates</th>
<th>Male Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expected/Actual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>43.9/147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>26.2/68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horserace</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>20.6/75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chi-square), p < .001

Although differences did appear in the number of paragraphs containing personality and horserace frames, the amount of coverage bearing these frames was not substantive, 215 and 303 paragraphs, respectively. More coverage was therefore issue oriented. Notably, some candidates also received more coverage than other candidates because of their roles in their political parties (i.e., Charity Ngilu, a female candidate, was one of the leaders of the National Rainbow
Coalition (NARC), hence being at the forefront of party presidential campaigns and receiving ample media exposure. Some candidates, both male and female, also received more coverage than their challengers because of incumbency and their positions in their party leadership.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study analyzed newspaper coverage of both female and male parliamentary contenders during the Kenyan 2002 elections. As reviewed in Chapter 2, several researchers have studied this area in different contexts and several findings, showing the differences in the way media cover men and women, have been documented. This chapter will therefore explore the findings for this study, beginning with a discussion of the results of this study, strengths, and limitations and any suggestions for future research.

The analysis of newspaper coverage of parliamentary races that included 44 female candidates and more than double male contenders reveals evidence of a qualitative and quantitative bias, despite the fact that these candidates are allegedly competing on an equal footing besides gender and cultural biases. Overall, newspapers paid more attention to female candidates’ personal characteristics (compared to what was expected), such as age, personality, and attire. By contrast, female candidates received less coverage, than expected, outlining their issue position concerning public policy issues such as education, health, infrastructure, and poverty. However, both male and female candidates received more issue coverage than personality or horserace coverage.
These results have many similarities with previous research on how women and men are framed while on the campaign trail (Aday & Devitt, 1999; Devitt, 2002; Kahn, 1996; Kahn & Goldberg, 1991). Often, as shown by this study and previous research, male and female candidates receive different kinds of coverage. Given these gender differences in media coverage, one would expect voters' recognition of male candidates to exceed that of female candidates. From this analysis we would also expect female candidates' evaluation to be closely tied to their perceived viability.

In describing female candidates, the reporters play to horserace frame and viability of female candidates. This was depicted clearly in one of the stories, which had the following title: *A Window of Opportunity: Widows seek to Capture Seats previously held by their Husbands* (East African Standard, November 10). As is evident from this story title, the writer does not focus his/her attention on the strengths of these women but their position is pegged on their husbands who in this case are assumed to have paved the way for these seats. This kind of description is most characteristic of stories about female candidates. Therefore, the present data is congruent with most studies on gender and political representation. As hypothesized, female candidates received less issue coverage, but more personality and horserace traits, than was expected.

Besides these kinds of descriptions, what is clear from this study is that there are differences in the way male and female candidates are portrayed by the media. Although it is every candidate's wish to reach out to as many of his/her constituents during elections, the results of this study suggest that if women were
to rely on media entirely, their voters may not be issue-informed. Less issue
coverage for female candidates may mean that individuals depending on this
medium to make their voting decisions about a female candidate may not get the
chance to evaluate their candidates on policy issues but personality.

It may be difficult to point at why there is this difference in coverage by
merely looking at figures from this sample, but a good understanding of the
media operations, such as the role of the gatekeeper may provide some
explanation. Research examining association between the gender of the reporter
and news content has found some interaction between gender of the reporter
and how the candidates are portrayed. For instance, Aday and Devitt (2001)
found that male reporters emphasized Elizabeth Dole's personal traits, while
female reporters highlighted Dole's issues and utilized less of personality traits.
To ascertain whether reporter's gender was a factor in this study, further analysis
was conducted using Chi-square analysis but no significant interaction was found
($\chi^2 (1, N = 391) = 1.201, p < .18$). Indeed, it seems that reporters covered both
male and female candidates equitably in terms of issue, personality, and
horserace traits.

Further, one of the observations was that although gender may not have
played a role in influencing the kind of frame used in describing the candidates,
incumbency and party affiliation may have contributed toward the type of
coverage (quality and quantity) a candidate received. For instance, one of the
female contestants for the Tetu parliamentary seat, Professor Wangari Maathai,
is a renowned environmentalist whose achievement can be recounted by many.
To her advantage therefore, she seemed a media favorite, and stories highlighting her achievements and suitability for the seat featured prominently in at least two of the papers analyzed for this study. This might have given her an edge over other contestants. Other female contestants who seem to have enjoyed media prominence are Charity Ngilu, Martha Karua, and Beth Mugo, who defended their seats in addition to running on popular party tickets.

Additionally, the difference in coverage between male and female candidates may be explained by newspaper ownership and editorial policies of these newspapers. What we do not know is whether media ownership is a factor in determining how male or female candidates are portrayed. For instance, fewer women are in the decision-making positions in the Kenyan media houses and we might speculate this to influence the amount of coverage received by female candidates. For instance, Mills (1997) discusses how women journalists have shaped newspaper's political coverage, and the political climate thereof by “helping bring women as candidates into the mainstream of coverage” (p. 50).

Further, as Mills explains, women editors have had tremendous input in shaping the editorial pages. Consequently, if there are fewer or no women in the decision-making positions, the biases might reflect on the quality and quantity of that newspaper's coverage of candidates. The reporter may have played his/her role effectively, but the decision as to what to include and what to leave out rest with the editors or the managers. Mills argues that “with so few women in decision making positions, there still is often no one to raise a red flag when egregious
sexism appears in news stories" (p. 54). This is the situation in Kenya presently; fewer women than men are in decision-making positions.

Notably different, and not common among Kenyan newspapers, is the practice of opinion polling that is transcendent in the western media during the electoral campaigns. In the three newspapers studied, only one opinion poll was discussed but in relation to the presidential race. Additionally, the newspapers sometimes reported verbatim what the candidates said, and much of the reporting appeared in quotations, suggesting that the candidates were speaking for themselves. Kenyan media, from this analysis can be said to be less biased in terms of their emphasis on the candidates’ words (at least in news stories), giving credibility to their reporting.

Between October 28 and November 24, plenty of coverage was given to presidential contenders who at this time were clearly known to the public. Party nominations for the parliamentary candidates were finalized on November 24 providing the aspirants with the opportunity to formally launch their campaigns. In essence, therefore, the parliamentary aspirants had only one month of campaigns before the elections. Again, it is also important to remember that the parliamentary elections do not have as much national outlook as do presidential races. Therefore, some of the stories about parliamentary aspirants may have been overlooked for an important presidential campaign story. Other times, some parliamentary aspirants were extensively campaigning for their party presidential aspirants that their own campaigns became secondary hence not spelling out their agendas but those of their parties.
This said, however, the total number of paragraphs from each of the newspapers showed that *East African Standard* had the highest number of paragraphs (556) with the *Daily Nation* carrying 537 paragraphs and *Kenya Times*, 253 paragraphs. This could be explained by the amount of emphasis each of these papers placed on the elections and how much of their resources they had dedicated to the process. For instance, the *East African Standard*, during the week of November 10 to December 22, had a special weekly section that was entirely dedicated to the election process. In this section, they offered election insights, and candidates' profiles thereby increasing the number of stories about candidates' campaigns. The *Daily Nation* also had a section that covered candidates running for each constituency, although this process was began even before the candidates received their party nomination. Therefore, some of the candidates covered in the *Constituency Profile* did not get their party nomination, whereas others did not receive the profile coverage but won their party nominations and elections thereafter.

At the political level, therefore, women remain marginalized although they constitute the majority of voters. The problems that face Kenyan female political aspirants are diverse and complex and the solutions require a concerted effort in terms of need assessment and educating the public about their capabilities. Apart from the media, the cultural hindrances also limit women's political opportunities. Kenya is still a deeply patriarchal society and women seeking leadership roles have to contend with asserting themselves in an exclusively male domain.
Strengths

There are several major strengths for this study. One, the methodology used in this study is based on previous research by several prominent scholars in the field of political communication and gender studies. The coding scheme used in this study was modeled on these previous studies therefore ensuring reliability. In addition to coding, qualification of stories to be coded was reviewed carefully and with a lot of detail and attention. In addition, as the size of the sample indicates (1346 paragraphs) no campaign story was left out during the period of focus for this study.

Secondly, the findings for this research authenticate the purpose of the study. With previous research indicating the differences in coverage of both male and female candidates, Kenyan media as this study indicates are no different from other media. The study adds to the growing number of studies that demonstrate media bias in political coverage. These findings may be a resourceful tool for media scholars and more so media practitioners. The findings may be used to map out future programs in order to avoid these biases. If men and women are all running for political office, it would only be right to give them equal coverage rather than offer analysis that build on gender and other stereotypic suggestions. Moreover, if journalists are guided by the principle of objectivity, there should not be a reason why female candidates should be viewed in terms of their viability for a political post or their stories being juxtaposed with familial issues rather than policy issues.
Limitations

Although everything possible was done to have a reliable coding scheme, it was noted that the process was not apparent. For instance, in the 10% sample that was independently coded by the two coders, some descriptions such as the profession of the candidate, were at times overlooked. For instance, one of the coders indicated existence of personal information when the statement read, "lawyer Martha Karua" while the other coder overlooked this title as not representing personal information. This was however clarified before the whole sample was coded but might have caused some observed differences.

Another limitation observed in this study was in using the paragraph as a unit of analysis. Although this unit has been used in previous studies, it was more challenging because of the format or style of the Kenyan newspapers. Most of the stories in the three newspapers had paragraphs that did not contain complete thoughts. For instance, one paragraph introduces the content that is to follow, but then have a quotation from the candidate on the same issue standing on its own. Therefore, we may have two separate paragraphs that contain the same information, leading to duplication or coding twice for details that are repetitive. To avoid this limitation, we tried as much as possible to read through the stories and number the paragraphs such that those containing the same information were coded as being one paragraph and not independent units.

Additionally, Kenyan political scene may be described as unique. Although party selection and the campaign process begin as the election date nears, it is not uncommon to find candidates campaigning even a year or two before the
general election. To compensate for this period, it would be worthy to consider a sample of stories during this off-campaign seasons. Also, newspapers began campaign analyses offering profiles about aspirants even before these candidates received party nominations. In order to reduce omitting some of these campaign stories and candidate profiles, a stretched sample would be more representative rather than limit the study to two months of campaign coverage.

Finally, a limitation of this study is because of using content analysis. Flaws with content analysis as discussed by Wimmer and Dominick (1987) include not being able to make statements about the effect of content on an audience. For instance, by using content analysis we assume that voters entirely depend on mass media to make decisions about their preferred candidate. But as the two-step flow studies indicate, opinion leaders, family members, and friends sometimes shape our voting habits. This is what content analysis cannot possibly indicate. Therefore, although data were gathered from this study, it would not be possible to determine how the bias affected the readers and hence their voting.

**Future Research**

Further research on parliamentary elections should be conducted with special emphasis on policy issues important to each candidate. Although this study was modeled upon congressional and gubernatorial election studies in the U.S., it provides a model for study in Kenya and other democracies with similar political environments. To have a better examination of how the media frames
male and female candidates, research should be limited to fewer candidates rather than a bigger population as was studied for this analysis. To better capture diversity, the period of study must be extended beyond the two months covered in this study.

Fairness, in this study, was defined by Western standards, with the hopes that it represents the same thing to the Kenyan population. Future research may redefine fairness from a Kenyan perspective. For instance, considering fairness from cultural and political standards unique to Kenya may make future studies more representative.

Incorporating surveys and other channels of communication may also yield improved results. Future research may combine content analysis and surveys to establish other mediating factors in voter’s choice of candidates for political office. Further, a survey of the electorate may also point out the voting behaviors of Kenyan voters. Other than newspapers, other media channels may also be studied for comparative purposes. For instance, in the Kenyan situation, those living in the rural areas are likely to use more radio than newspapers. Future research should therefore look at other channels beyond the newspapers.
CODING INSTRUCTIONS

1. The focus of this study is to examine newspaper coverage of both female and male candidates in the 2002 Kenyan parliamentary elections. Specifically, the study looks at portrayal of female and male candidates—the 44 women nominees and their challengers.

2. As a coder, you need to look through the three newspapers and specific dates randomly assigned to you. You will be looking for all stories located in any part of the newspapers that discuss at least one of the candidates—see Appendix B for the names of the various candidates. All sections of the newspapers should be assessed, including letters to the editor and special election sections such as “Uchaguzi” (Elections), Constituency Profiles, and Elections 2002, which were some of the special sections during the countdown to the 2002 Kenyan general elections.

3. You will need to pay close attention to all stories in order to identify those that focus on our candidates of interest. Note that even if the headline is about a candidate we are not interested in, sometimes there are additional paragraphs or appendages focusing on candidates listed in the appendix B. It is, therefore, important to look at each election story with a particular attention.

4. If a story meets the above criterion, take out a code sheet and begin to code the articles. Fill in the code sheet completely; writing down your coder initials, the date of the article/story, the newspaper that carried the story, the location of the article in the newspaper, and the reporter/author of the story.

5. Once all these details are written down, look at the article, paragraph by paragraph, and make note of when a candidate is mentioned and what it is about (i.e. horserace, personality trait, issue). For each relevant paragraph that mentions a candidate and an issue, determine which candidate is discussed (e.g. Martha Karua), and the content of the paragraph (issue, trait, horserace). Then code this information on the coding instrument. Paragraphs can be scored more than once, if the two candidates are mentioned, or if more than one issue is mentioned. If there are paragraphs in an article that do not mention the candidate or an issue, do not code them.

6. Continue to repeat step five (5) until you have read the entire article. Then move on and continue to scan the rest of the stories. Use a new code sheet for each paragraph in relevant stories.

7. When you have finished scanning all the sections of the paper and issue dates you were assigned, move on to your next assignment until all are completed.

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**Coding Instrument for Content Analysis**

**Coder Initials**: ________

**Date**: Month/Date/Year ____ / ____ / ____

**Newspaper**: ________

1 = Daily Nation  
2 = East African Standard  
3 = Kenya Times

**Gender of the reporter**: ________________

1 = Female(s)  
2 = Male(s)  
3 = Both Male(s) and Female(s)  
4 = Staff/Correspondent/______

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Story Placement**       | 1 = front page  
                            | 2 = other pages  
                            | 3 = election special section |
| **Candidate(s) Sex**      | 1 = female(s)  
                            | 2 = male(s)  
                            | 3 = both male(s) and female(s) |
| **Paragraph Issue**       | 1 = female(s) associated with issue  
                            | 2 = male(s) associated with issue  
                            | 3 = both male(s) and female(s) associated with issue |
| **Horserace Issue**       | 1 = female(s) associated with horserace  
                            | 2 = male(s) associated with horserace  
                            | 3 = both male(s) and female(s) associated with horserace |
| **Traits**                | **a. Personal Information**  |
|                           | 1 = female(s) associated with personal information  
                            | 2 = male(s) candidate associated with personal information  
                            | 3 = both male(s) and female(s) associated with personal information |
|                           | **b. Gender Traits**         |
|                           | 1 = female(s) associated with “female” traits  
                            | 2 = female(s) associated with “male” traits  
                            | 3 = male(s) associated with “male” traits  
                            | 4 = male(s) associated with “female” traits  
                            | 5 = both male(s) and female(s) associated with “female” traits  
                            | 6 = both male(s) and female(s) candidate associated with “male” traits |
| **Gender of Winning Candidate** | 1 = female  
                                    | 2 = male |

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How to code a paragraph issue

* Since parliamentary candidates do not have major issues, the following issues should be scored if present in the paragraph: constitutional review, teachers' salaries and primary education, meritocracy/leadership, health, democracy, and collapse of infrastructure.

* Horserace: all discussions about the ongoing campaign, including polls, debates, endorsements, etc., showing the viability of a candidate—(e.g., “s/he is ahead,” “likely winner,” “front runner”).

* Candidate traits will be scored for the presence or absence of the following:
  - **Personal information:** Candidate’s dress—(e.g. “dressed in a flowery sweater/jacket,” “shoes,” etc); marital status—(“married,” “widowed,” “divorced” “separated”); candidate’s children—(e.g., “s/he has three teenagers,” “two girls”); educational background (e.g., “a graduate of ...,” “a lawyer”); and candidate’s age (e.g., “born during the Kenyan independence,” “40 years old”);
  - **Gender traits:** These traits go beyond physical description and highlight a candidate’s strength or lack of certain characteristics. “Male” traits include: independence, knowledge, objectivity, competitiveness, strong leadership, aggressiveness, insensitivity, lack of emotions, ambition, and toughness. “Female” traits include dependence, noncompetitiveness, passivity, gentleness, strong emotions, weak leadership, and compassion.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female candidate</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Male contenders</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.(a) Yvonne Khamati</td>
<td>Makadara</td>
<td>1. Waithaka Machua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Karen Magara</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Lawrence Kariuki</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>3. Reuben Ndolo</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Simon Gakuya</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Jonathan Katiku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mary Kaara</td>
<td>Starehe</td>
<td>1. Maina Kamanda</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. Macharia Muraya</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. Joe Kanguchi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>4. Joseph Mwangi</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Beth Mugo</td>
<td>Dagoretti</td>
<td>1. Kange'the Gitu</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Chului Nyoike</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Orie Manduli</td>
<td>Kasarani</td>
<td>1. William Omondi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2. Adolf Muchiri</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. Job Ruhangi</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4. Stephen Gacheru</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. (a) Mary Okumu</td>
<td>Embakasi</td>
<td>1. David Mwenje</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Jacinta Mwangi</td>
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<td>2. Dick Waweru</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. Symon Wanderi</td>
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<td>4. Michael Mungai</td>
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<td>6. Mwarere wa Mwachai</td>
<td>Msambweni</td>
<td>1. Yusuf Mubwana</td>
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<td>2. Abdala Ngozi</td>
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<td>3. Kassim Mwamadazi</td>
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<td>7. Naomi Shaaban</td>
<td>Taveta</td>
<td>1. Jackson Mwalulu</td>
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<td>2. Stephen Odiaga</td>
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<td>8. Joyce Mwangoji</td>
<td>Mwatate</td>
<td>1. Masden Madoka</td>
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<td>2. Jeremiah Kiwoi</td>
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<td>3. Khamis Abdi</td>
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<td>10. Lydia Kimani</td>
<td>Manyatta</td>
<td>1. Njeru Ndewigga</td>
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<td>12. Nyiva Mwendwa</td>
<td>Kitui West</td>
<td>1. Francis Nyenze</td>
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<td>2. Festus King‘ee</td>
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<td>13. Charity Ngilu</td>
<td>Kitui Central</td>
<td>1. George Ndotto</td>
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<td>14. Rahab Muia</td>
<td>Yatta</td>
<td>1. James Mutiso</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. Francis Wambua</td>
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<td>15. (a) Rebecca Kitana</td>
<td>Kangundo</td>
<td>1. Wambua Mulusya</td>
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<td>(b) Susan Musau</td>
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<td>2. Ikusya Kaloki</td>
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<td>3. Richard Mkuvasi</td>
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<td>4. Simon Mbevi</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Constituency</th>
<th>Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Tabitha Sei Kinyo South</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. G.G. Kariuki, 2. Robert Mureithi</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Alicen Chelaite Rongai</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Luca Kigen, 2. William Komen</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>Lorna Chepkemoi Sotik</td>
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<td>1. Anthony Kimetto, 2. Joel Sang</td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>(a) Gloria Akhayalu Butula</td>
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<td>1. Francis Masakhailia, 2. Clement Odhiambo</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>38. Catherine Nyamato</th>
<th>West</th>
<th>Mugirango</th>
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<tr>
<th>39. Jillo Konso</th>
<th>Isiolo South</th>
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<tr>
<td>4. Jaldesa Dida</td>
<td>5. Abdinoor Jillo</td>
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<tr>
<th>40. Bathroba Kemoli</th>
<th>Westlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Tom Otuto</td>
<td>5. Amin Walji</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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REFERENCES


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Kenyatta University

Thesis Title: Gender parity in political coverage: A content analysis of major Kenyan newspapers

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Committee Member, Dr. Jennifer Bevan, Ph. D.
Committee member, Dr. Lawrence Mullen, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Dolores Tanno, Ph. D.