Gendered Mediation

IDENTITY AND IMAGE MAKING
IN CANADIAN POLITICS

EDITED BY

ANGELIA WAGNER

AND

JOANNA EVERITT

UBCPress · Vancouver · Toronto

Contents

Introduction

Gendered Identities and Political Communication

ANGELIA WAGNER AND JOANNA EVERITT

The gendered identities of Canadian politicians continue to attract media and public attention despite decades of women's participation in politics and the growing number of LGBTQ individuals who are seeking and winning political office. Attention by the news media and discussions among pundits and elites about Nikki Ashton's campaign for the federal NDP leadership while pregnant with twins, Kathleen Wynne's or Wade McLauchlan's experiences as lesbian or gay premiers, or the implications of referring to federal environment minister Catherine McKenna as a "climate Barbie" all point to the role that heteronormative gender expectations continue to play in defining images and expectations of political elites. This tendency to define politicians by their gender identities is not limited to the case of women or LGBTQ individuals, as can be seen from media attention to Justin Trudeau's public persona and the efforts of Conservative Party opponents to raise questions about whether he was too young or "man enough" to be Canada's prime minister. While gender roles are fluid across time, social expectations do not change rapidly and can remain important constraints or resources to politicians attempting to create public images that appeal to the electorate or provide useful heuristic tools to the news media or voters who are striving to identify a politician's appropriateness for political office.

Political communication is the conduit through which politicians, journalists, and voters share information and perspectives on the pressing issues of the day. Divining the role that gender plays in political communication has preoccupied scholars for decades. American political scientist

Kim Fridkin Kahn's (1992, 1994) series of studies in the early 1990s based on content analysis of political reporting provided a benchmark against which other scholars continue to compare or contrast their own research results. Yet an important limitation of her work, and the work of many of those who followed her, is a singular focus on news coverage of women politicians with men treated as the control group. The fact that media depictions of men politicians can be gendered as well, and that gendered news coverage of all politicians can be further conditioned by other identities, such as whether a candidate is a racial or sexual minority, has only begun to receive international scholarly attention (Everitt and Camp 2009a, 2009b; Smith 2012; Conroy 2015; Tolley 2016).

Early Canadian researchers made important theoretical and empirical contributions to the international gender and political communication field despite sharing these shortcomings. Drawing upon work by British communication scholars Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Karen Ross (1996), Canadian political scientists Elisabeth Gidengil and Joanna Everitt developed a highly influential theory for understanding the role of gender in political reporting, which they termed the "gendered mediation thesis" (Gidengil and Everitt 1999, 2000). The thesis asserts that political reporting reflects an understanding of politics as primarily a masculine domain where women are not likely to "fit" in. While their work focused on white, middle-class professionals whose main difference from the usual politician was that they were women, their gendered mediation arguments can be expanded to address the discursive marginalization faced by homosexuals, non-whites, and those men who do not embody the ideal hegemonic political masculinity.

It is important to recognize, though, that political journalists are not the only ones who circulate gendered messages. Many politicians assert feminine and masculine traits and behaviours when constructing their own public images. Women have long been encouraged to play up their more "masculine" traits to counter stereotypical expectations so as to balance the more "feminine" traits they are assumed to have (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993), while some men have become particularly adept at using their status as fathers to portray themselves as tough *and* compassionate leaders. And whether politicians intend them to or not, their sexuality, race, age, and class also inform their gendered political identities.

Politicians make, or avoid making, these gendered appeals because gender stereotypes can influence voter support, though questions have been raised about the extent to which gender stereotypes actually apply to, or hurt, women politicians as a subgroup of women.

Yet the manner in which politicians use gender in the discursive construction of their public image and in which voters respond to such gendered appeals is still poorly understood. The gender and political communication field's traditional focus on media behaviour has only recently intensified its examination of the communicative choices made by politicians. Other limitations of the field include a preoccupation with the national political context, especially high-profile women politicians aspiring to become president or prime minister. Far less is known about the communication environment at the provincial and municipal levels, where most people seek political office. Scholars have also employed a limited range of research methods – with content analysis, discourse analysis, and experimental design being the most popular choices – to investigate the gendered dimensions of political communication. The lack of methodological pluralism, combined with a focus on national politics and women as a universal group, has limited our understanding of the myriad ways in which gender shapes the political discourses, communication behaviours, and reception of different types of actors and the degree to which it hurts or helps these individuals.

This book examines how three key groups involved in political communication – politicians, journalists, and voters – deploy intersecting notions of gender, sexuality, race, age, and class in politics at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. It makes a number of theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions to both Canadian and international research on gender and political communication. First, it offers a more sophisticated theory of how cultural notions about gender, race, sexuality, age, and class together shape the production of, and response to, political rhetoric and reporting. One way in which it accomplishes this task is through the employment by the different contributors of innovative theoretical frameworks to tease out the gendered nuances of self-presentation, mediation, and public response. Chapters by Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, Bailey Gerrits and Randy Besco, and Elise Maiolino, in particular, invite us to shift our intellectual gaze to see political communication from new

angles by proposing new theoretical frameworks, examining the cultural meanings attached to gendered discourses, or highlighting the perspectives of grassroots activists most affected by politicians' claims making and policy outcomes. Second, the book goes beyond an organizational or technological approach to political communication by attending to the variety of ways in which gender and other social identities together shape the competing narratives that politicians, journalists, and citizens construct about politics. Contributions from Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant, Erin Tolley, Karalena McLean, and Catherine Lemarier-Saulnier and Thierry Giasson illustrate the complexities of the communicative environment that non-traditional politicians encounter. Third, by examining the mediation of politics at not only the federal but also subnational levels, the book provides insights into possible variations and similarities in the mediation of politics across political contexts. Studies by Angelia Wagner, Bailey Gerrits and Randy Besco, Karalena McLean, Elise Maiolino, and Catherine Lemarier-Saulnier and Thierry Giasson reveal not only the resiliency of gender stereotypes but also the opportunities for political claims making at the subnational level. Fourth, contributors draw upon a range of quantitative and qualitative research methods, often within the same study, to identify the diversity of political messages created by and about political actors. This volume pushes the field beyond content and discourse analysis to also incorporate interviews, surveys, and experiments to understand the motivations behind and reactions to political communication. Finally, this cohesive collection of studies is the first in the international literature to take a comprehensive approach to understanding the role of gender, race, sexuality, age, and class in each stage of the mediation of politics: it explores efforts by politicians to establish their preferred public personas, competition from journalists in the construction of political narratives, and responses from citizens to the messages and behaviours of politicians and journalists. In doing so, it focuses attention on the hegemonic gendered and culturally normative assumptions still found within our society about the qualities and characteristics of strong politicians, the objectivity and neutrality of political reporting, and the implications these assumptions have for non-traditional political actors.

Canada provides an excellent opportunity to examine the intersectional nature of gendered political communication because of the increasing

number of women, LGBTQ individuals, and visible minorities seeking not only elected office but also political leadership positions at all three levels of government. And they have been successful. For example, Jagmeet Singh became the first non-white man to head a federal political party when he was elected leader of the New Democratic Party in October 2017, and in 2013 Kathleen Wynne became not only the first female premier of Ontario but also one of the first LGBT politicians worldwide to serve as head of a major government. Insights from this book will help politicians better craft communication strategies that address the potential strengths and pitfalls of stereotypes related to gender, race, sexuality, and class.

To explore each facet of the mediation process, each chapter is organized into three sections. The first section investigates politicians' gendered strategies for shaping their public image and, in some cases, those of their competitors. The second section explores the gendered characteristics of media coverage of women and men politicians at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. The third section delves into public reactions to these self-presentations and media depictions. Empirical chapters follow a three-part template to facilitate comparison across studies. The first section focuses on identifying the research problem and situating the study in the relevant literature, while the second section outlines the methodology and presents the results. The third section discusses the implications of the findings for the state of Canadian democracy and the international literature as a whole. The three theoretical chapters – this introduction, Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant on self-presentation strategies (Chapter 1), and Elisabeth Gidengil's concluding thoughts – employ a different structure based on the logic of their arguments. What all the chapters share is a commitment to examining how sexuality, race, age, and class intersect with gender to produce differing political identities and responses.

THE GENDERING OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Gender has long shaped discourses about politics. Western political theory historically justified a sexual division of labour – with men responsible for public affairs and women for domestic concerns – by claiming that women were "less capable [than men] of clear and distinct reason" (Colebrook 2004, 20). Suppositions about essential differences between women and men continue to inform how Western societies view who can become a

political actor and whose concerns can become public policy. One consequence is that gender remains central to how politicians are evaluated throughout their career, since ideas about masculinity and femininity are thought to "carry important connotations about character, capabilities, and behaviour that have potentially important political significance" (Sapiro 1993, 145). Gendered political discourses have become more complex in recent decades, though, as individuals previously excluded from political office holding have become increasingly engaged in political activity. The presence in mainstream politics of women and men from more diverse social backgrounds has brought the already present racial, sexual, and class subtexts in these gendered discourses to the fore, necessitating an exploration of how race, sexuality, and class intersect with gender to influence the nature and outcome of political communication in a variety of political contexts.

The notion of gender itself is undergoing a transformation. Traditionally treated as a binary, gender has expanded beyond the categories of woman and man to include groupings such as transgendered; intersex; androgynous; third, fourth, or other sex; gender pluralism; and even non-gendered. Sexual identities have multiplied alongside gender identities. Alternative sexual orientations, such as asexual, omnisexual, pansexual, and tranny lover, are destabilizing the heterosexual/homosexual binary (Monro 2005, 12–15). But while some scholars and specific communities take a nuanced approach to understanding and enacting such identities, dualistic conceptualizations of gender and sexuality continue to have discursive power. With this tension between pluralism and dualism in mind, we view gender as falling along a continuum of attributes ranging from femininity to masculinity. We expect that "women are more likely than men to possess feminine attributes but such attributes do not belong exclusively to women" (Lovenduski 2005, 6). "Sexuality" refers to physical attraction and desire, or their absence. These definitions provide analytical flexibility in order to capture varying political expressions of gender and sexual identity.

As with gender and sexuality, race is a social construct produced and sustained by governmental, legal, economic, and social processes and, as such, can vary across time and place. Race is "inseparable from and simultaneously constituted by multiple aspects of social identity" (Meyers

2013, 4). Racial discourses have historically presumed essential differences between humans based on physical distinctions such as skin colour. Class also plays a structuring role in relations of power and is understood here "in a general sense to indicate the socio-economic status of the individual" (Deliovsky 2010, 9). Age has also been used by journalists and politicians alike to make claims regarding leadership qualities, though its gendered effects depend upon a person's life stage as well as the larger political and cultural context. Gender identities are therefore manifold as a result not only of the complex intertwining of gender and sexuality but also of race, class, and even age. Notions about gender, sexuality, race, age, and class work with and through one another in shaping political communication at different levels of government.

The potential for flexibility and transformation in political communication is limited by stereotypes, which are widely held beliefs about the nature and behaviour of different groups and their individual members. Gender stereotypes, for example, are the traits individuals are believed to possess by virtue of their specific gender. In some instances, they may involve positive qualities and strengths; in others they may be perceived more negatively. Their power to limit comes from the fact that they do not offer a fact-based account of how women and men actually are so much as outline the boundaries of accepted behaviour for each group. Deborah A. Prentice and Erica Carranza (2002, 269) argue that "gender stereotypes are highly prescriptive. The qualities they ascribe to women and men tend also to be ones that are required of women and men." Complicating matters further is the fact that gender stereotypes intersect with other social identities to produce a particular combination of ascribed and prescribed traits for different groups of women and men. Notions about women's and men's expected natures and behaviours are contingent upon the other identity groups to which they belong, with race, sexuality, class, and other factors shaping common (mis)understandings of appropriate roles and relations among individuals. Stereotypes are further complicated by political context: they differ not only from one country to the next but even from one region, province, or municipality to the next. The conscious or unconscious use of stereotypes in political communication perpetuates the notion that gender, sexuality, race, age, and class are

valid criteria when evaluating politicians, a problematic proposition in a democratic system that claims to value character, experience, and ideas over entitlement in its representatives.

The Gendering of Self-Presentation

Gender and political communication is an interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary field of study that exhibits a strong feminist theoretical orientation yet typically combines a narrow range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Scholars have long focused on the gendered characteristics of political reporting, highlighting explicit and implicit biases found in the news coverage of women politicians. However, they are increasingly examining the gendered dimensions of politicians' image making, recognizing that politicians actively try to shape perceptions of their character, leadership abilities, and policy preferences by carefully selecting which information they do, and do not, share about themselves with journalists and voters. The 2015 Canadian federal election is a case in point. In Chapter 2, Jerald Sabin and Kyle Kirkup note that Conservative leader Stephen Harper proclaimed himself to be an ordinary, hard-working father who offered a steady hand when it came to the economy but an iron fist when it came to threats to Canadian families. Harper's gendered self-presentation was designed to demonstrate to voters that he had the "strength, stoicism, and aggression" to be an effective political leader. Kathleen Wynne addressed the issue of her homosexuality during the 2013 Ontario Liberal leadership contest to confront, and allay, party fears that provincial voters would not elect an openly gay premier (see Chapter 8). Politicians' communicative agency is even more apparent at the municipal level in Canada, where a general absence of political parties – and centralized public relations machines – means that politicians are responsible for crafting their own political communication. In Chapter 4, Bailey Gerrits and Randy Besco describe how Toronto mayoral candidate Olivia Chow drew upon her experiences as a Chinese immigrant teenager to contest her exclusion from "the white, masculine political club of Canadian politics."

Politicians communicate particular understandings of gender, race, sexuality, age, and class through their rhetorical choices. Drawing upon Monica Schneider's (2014) typology of communicative approaches to

addressing gender stereotypes, Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant illustrates the difficulties that various types of politicians encounter when constructing a public persona that resonates with voters. She argues in Chapter 1 that, like women in general, racialized men and homosexual men cannot easily lay claim to possessing the masculine traits associated with political leadership because negative stereotypes of their respective groups position them as outside mainstream masculine norms. Some women politicians have addressed this challenge through what Goodyear-Grant calls a mixing strategy. American vice-presidential hopeful Sarah Palin promoted herself as a hockey mom and frontierswoman who believed in "individualism, toughness, direction and vision, hard work, and a clear moral compass" in order to appeal to white, working-class conservatives during the 2008 US federal election (Beail and Longworth 2013, 39–40). Palin's discursive combination of traditional femininity and rural masculinity was designed to create a political identity of her as a white, working-class, heterosexual Republican.

Complex gendered identities such as Palin's are not just constitutive but performative in nature. Politicians cannot establish their preferred political femininity or masculinity through words alone. They must continually enact these beliefs through communicative actions that range from personal behaviours such as grooming, comportment, body movement, and publicized interactions with family and friends to political activities such as staging photo opportunities, visiting specific locations, and meeting selected voters (Goodyear-Grant 2013). Even their self-presentation through campaign advertising or political websites can be highly gendered (Bystrom et al. 2004). Ideas about gender, race, sexuality, age, and class gain rhetorical force only through these repetitive actions. The performative aspects of political communication are particularly evident in American presidential campaigns, with male politicians offering varying interpretations of normative masculinity in a bid for voter support (Ducat 2004). Barack Obama told stories about events from his life to portray himself as embodying a complex but unthreatening biracial, heterosexual, upper-middle-class masculinity to assuage white American anxieties about a black man as president (Shaw and Watson 2011).

Many politicians emphasize the personal alongside the political in their gendered, racialized, sexualized, and classed performances. Heterosexual

male politicians, in particular, are comfortable using their families for political gain. Examining the behaviour of British prime ministers, Ana Inés Langer (2010, 66) argues that "details of a leader's family life, especially minor struggles with everyday life, highlight a leader's 'normality' and enable him or her to display a degree of vulnerability and emotional reflexivity, which are key to appearing personable and in touch." As an atypical American presidential candidate, Obama shared personal anecdotes about his wife and two daughters to convey that he was a responsible, reliable, and trustworthy everyman (Shaw and Watson 2011). Women politicians around the world are more prone to keep their families out of the public spotlight out of a desire to protect their loved ones' privacy and to avoid triggering traditional gender stereotypes that suggest they should prioritize domestic roles over political ones (Goodyear-Grant 2013). They want to project an image of competence and professionalism. One consequence of this strategy is that it reinforces traditional ideas of politics as "a separate sphere in which rational actors and representatives publicly deliberate and decide on the course of society" (van Zoonen 2006, 299).

Not all women politicians avoid discussing the personal in their political communication. As Angelia Wagner shows in Chapter 3, many women candidates are comfortable discussing their families during municipal campaigns because the part-time nature of local office and the proximity of their home to town hall put them at less risk of being seen as violating gender norms. At the national level, Dilma Rousseff sought to soften her reputation for harshness by appearing as a motherly figure during her successful bid for the Brazilian presidency in 2010 (dos Santos and Jalalzai 2014). Recent international research suggests that women politicians are increasingly using gendered, racialized, sexualized, and classed imagery to clear a symbolic and concrete space for themselves in politics at all levels of government. Irene Saez, a former Miss Universe and presidential candidate, carefully groomed her physical appearance and comportment to match the light-skinned, high-class image of the ideal Venezuelan woman to counter cultural resistance to women's involvement in politics (Nichols 2014). In the same way, Ontario premier Wynne presented herself as a mother and grandmother to counteract any stereotyping that she might face from being a lesbian.

The Gendering of Political News

While politicians are actively engaged in constructing their public personas, their power to do so is not uncontested. Journalists occupy a central role in political discourse because of the challenges of initiating and sustaining personal communication between politicians and citizens on a large scale, though this is not usually the case in small communities at the municipal level. Even with the advent of social media, the news media remain an important conduit through which citizens learn about politics and through which politicians learn about public opinion. But journalists are not impartial observers. They shape political news and influence political debates in ways that reflect their own commercial circumstances, professional needs, ideological commitments, and stereotypical attitudes (Strömbäck 2008). Journalists move from simply *slanting* the content of the news in favour of certain events, individuals, and information to *mediating* the meaning of the news whenever they inject analysis and evaluations into their stories. (Also called interpretive journalism, mediation comes in many forms; see Salgado and Strömbäck 2012.) This mediation is often based on hegemonic social and cultural norms in a particular country, province, or community and frequently serves to reinforce and reproduce traditional understandings of the world and individuals' place within it. This can be seen in Chapter 6, where Daisy Raphael highlights the importance of masculine identities in relation to Canadian nationalism.

At a basic level, mediation occurs when someone *speaks for* someone else, deciding what can be known and objectified, instead of allowing that person to make those determinations for herself or himself (Edson 1992). We define mediation as a process whereby one party uses stereotypes and common expectations about social groups or institutions to guide the selection and/or transmission of information about another party. In political communication, mediation occurs when third parties such as journalists or political opponents rely on stereotypes when conveying information and opinion about political actors or organizations to a specified audience. This mediation becomes gendered, racialized, sexualized, and classed when these interpretations are based upon gender, racial, sexual, or class-based stereotypes. Two further points need to be made. First, more than one group can act as a mediator between politicians and citizens at any one

time, and the stereotypes on which each one bases its political narratives will not necessarily be the same. Along with journalists, other potential mediators include competitors, who might use stereotypes when trying to influence how their opponents are perceived by journalists and/or voters. Second, politicians do not engage in mediation when they use stereotypes to construct their *own* personas. They do so only when they use stereotypes to try to shape public perceptions of *other* political actors.

Extensive empirical research indicates that the news media hold fast to traditional notions of politics as a male domain, reflected in part through their word choices. Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Karen Ross (1996, 112) argue that "the imagery and language of mediated politics is heavily gendered, supporting male as norm and regarding women politicians as novelties." Building upon this idea, Elisabeth Gidengil and Joanna Everitt use the term "gendered mediation" to describe the masculine narrative they observed in television coverage of political party leaders' debates and other campaign reporting during successive Canadian federal elections in the 1990s:

> The notion of gendered mediation implies that voters will be presented with a more filtered picture of women politicians and that the filter itself will be gendered. This filtering means, first, that the behavior of women politicians will be subject to more analysis than their male counterparts' and, second, that the women's coverage will reflect traditional masculine conceptions of politics. (Gidengil and Everitt 2000, 105–6)

American scholar Laurie Edson's (1992, 20) alternative label "gendered narrative gaze" could also be used to describe this understanding of how journalists view politics and politicians. One consequence of a masculine gaze is that journalists tend to downplay the aggressive behaviours of men politicians and exaggerate those of women politicians, as only the women in this case are violating the traditional norms of their gender (Gidengil and Everitt 2000). However, it should be noted that men who fail to embody a heteronormative masculinity also run the risk of media censure (Edwards 2009; Trimble et al. 2015; Conroy 2015; Chapter 6).

The racialized nature of gender stereotypes becomes apparent when the news media use different frames or imagery when covering visible

minority politicians. Erin Tolley demonstrates in Chapter 5 that references to visible minority women's *perceived* physical exoticness, wifely submissiveness, political impotence, and interest in allegedly non-mainstream issues raise questions about not only their electoral viability but also their place in and commitment to Canada. In the United States, news coverage of black women politicians as subservient mammies, inadequate matriarchs, or dangerously seductive jezebels attempts to rein in women who do not embody that country's preferred forms of racialized femininity (Alexander-Floyd 2008). Not surprisingly, non-white male politicians are also subjected to racialized gendered mediation. The American media undermined Jesse Jackson's presidential aspirations in the 1980s by suggesting that he was a gifted performer "who is meant to be enjoyed and admired but not invested with significant political power" (Achter 2009, 119). Whiteness is the assumption in political journalism (Tolley 2015).

Heterosexuality is another standard against which non-traditional politicians are judged. Politicians who do not conform to the heterosexist norms of politics are typically subjected to greater mediation of their sexuality. Karalena McLean outlines in Chapter 7 how Kathleen Wynne's gender and sexuality were highlighted in news coverage during her ultimately successful bid for the Ontario Liberal leadership in 2013. The news media pointed to Wynne's sexuality to raise questions about her electoral viability. But their interest in the trailblazing aspects of her candidacy faded over time. McLean found that sexualized mediation of Wynne was less pronounced during the 2014 Ontario provincial election, providing empirical evidence that news coverage of politicians does not remain static over time. The novelty of LGBTQ candidates, especially for leadership positions, means that their initial coverage will likely remain sexualized until journalists become accustomed to seeing them in politics. For example, the British media's prurient interest in sexuality has created a complicated and shifting media terrain for that country's homosexual politicians (Smith 2012), although the Icelandic media appeared more interested in former prime minister Johanna Sigurdardottir's gender than her sexual orientation (Mundy 2013).

While scholars are beginning to examine the racial and sexual dimensions of gendered mediation, the role of class in shaping gendered portrayals of politicians has received little attention. This is surprising in the

Canadian context considering the political careers of wealthy individuals such as Belinda Stronach (Trimble and Everitt 2010) and Paul Martin. Class is certainly implicated in general news coverage of African Americans (Meyers 2013). Research presented in this volume demonstrates the importance of examining class. Deploying Rita Kaur Dhamoon's (2011) innovative framework of differentiation, Bailey Gerrits and Randy Besco note in Chapter 4 that class was a key marker in news coverage of the leading white male candidates in the 2014 Toronto mayoral election. Media discussions of the men's wealthy family backgrounds served to position them as "natural – and legitimate – players in Canadian politics," while Chow's immigrant status positioned her as an outsider. But while the news media treated the wealthy men as serious candidates, discussion of their respective physical appearances and sartorial choices subtly communicated the media's approval or disapproval, emphasizing how important it is to take an intersectional approach to understanding the implications of political communication.

The Gendering of Responses

Politicians' gendered performances are intended to demonstrate that they have the requisite qualities and abilities to become, or remain, elected representatives. But these performances are not always convincing and certainly do not go uncontested by their competitors, journalists, or voters. As Linda Beail and Rhonda Kinney Longworth (2013, 16) note, "candidates are not completely in control of the messages and images of themselves that voters receive and react to. Frames presented by candidates are not merely accepted at face value." Indeed, as Elise Maiolino reveals in Chapter 8, which draws upon semi-structured interviews, actors in the LGBTQ and feminist movements evaluated Kathleen Wynne's success as an allied politician based specifically on her political actions, not her political rhetoric. What she did matters more than what she said.

Political communication is ultimately a competitive process between different political actors. This competition is commonly viewed as occurring between politicians and journalists. But politicians also compete with one another to influence commonplace understandings of politics and society. Like journalists, a politician's opponents routinely offer their interpretation of her or his character, abilities, and priorities, and their mediation

is equally likely to be influenced by stereotypes. For example, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's public persona has been the site of gendered contestation since he emerged on the federal scene. The Conservative Party was among the first to attempt to construct a gendered identity of Trudeau that would conflict with typical expectations of party leaders by quickly producing a political ad featuring a clip of Trudeau suggestively stripping off his shirt at a charity fundraiser. By depicting him as a lothario rather than a statesman, the governing Tories suggested that he was a political lightweight who did not exhibit the dignity expected of a prime minister. The Tories continued feminizing Trudeau in their political ads before the start of the 2015 federal election. One set of ads, which suggested that Trudeau did not have the necessary experience for the country's top political post, ended with a flippant comment about his hair. Trudeau responded with humour. In the final days of the election, the Liberals released an animated video titled "Different Hair, Same Platform!" that showed a cartoon Trudeau sporting a dizzying array of hairstyles but only one set of policies, while it depicted his NDP and Tory opponents as interchangeable in every way. Trudeau's skillful communicative performances on the campaign trail were one reason why he was able to lead the Liberals to an unexpected victory in 2015.

A key impetus behind the multifaceted gendering of political identities and of news coverage is the belief that voters can be swayed by such gendered appeals because of assumptions that certain gendered identities are related to certain qualities and competencies. A growing body of literature examines what effect these stereotypes actually have on voter evaluations of politicians. One drawback of this research, though, is that it tends to focus on gender, race, and sexuality in isolation from one another rather than determining how they work with and through one another to influence public assessments of real or hypothetical politicians. While some researchers have gone so far as to argue that gender stereotypes appear to play little or no part in voter reactions today (Brooks 2013), in part because of the wealth of other information that voters have at hand on which to base their evaluations of candidates, experimental studies still show that gender-based stereotyping remains an important factor in political assessments in low-information environments. However, scholars typically investigate how stereotypes are used to judge women and men politicians from

different political parties (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009) instead of from different racial, sexual, and class backgrounds. Examinations of voter responses to homosexual candidates provide an important example of how the general lack of an intersectional approach potentially obscures or overlooks variations in voter support for different groups of women and men (Golebiowska and Thomsen 1999). Voters view homosexual candidates as less economically viable than their heterosexual counterparts, but this assessment varies according to the characteristics of the voter as well as the gender and (non-)stereotypical traits of the homosexual candidate (Herrick and Thomas 1999, 2002; Golebiowska and Thomsen 1999).

Intersectional variations aside, evidence suggests that voters will judge women and men candidates based on the qualities they possess rather than those associated with their gender when those details are readily available (McDermott 1998). This finding illustrates the importance not only of political reporting (or lack of it) but also of understanding the electoral consequences of its gendered, racialized, sexualized, and classed mediation. Experimental research reveals that biased news coverage has real implications for women seeking different types of elected office. Kahn (1992) found that US Senate candidates who received typically male news coverage were expected to be more likely to win their seats than those who received typically female news coverage. Nathan A. Heflick and Jamie L. Goldenberg (2009) discovered that media attention to Sarah Palin's appearance depressed voter support for the Republican ticket in 2008. Likewise, Melissa K. Miller and Jeffrey S. Peake (2013) determined that public perceptions of Palin's readiness to be president declined as press mentions of her appearance, gender, and parental status increased. Even subtle differences such as the use of more negative or affect-laden verbs of reported speech in a national woman politician's coverage can lead to more critical and aggressive assessments, particularly since this portrays women as breaking with traditional expectations of stereotypical female behaviour, an issue that has no impact on a male politician's assessment (Gidengil and Everitt 2003).

Even more important is the fact that voter evaluations of women and men politicians are not uniform. In a rare intersectional analysis of media effects for women politicians, Sarah Allen Gershon (2013) discovered that African American candidates garnered the same level of voter support as

Anglo women despite differences in their news coverage, while Latina candidates experienced lower voter intentions. Gershon's study indicates that the challenges of political communication are not the same for all women and men politicians. Any exploration of the mediation and presentation of gendered identities in Canadian politics therefore requires attending to the myriad ways in which gender stereotypes combine with those pertaining to race, sexuality, age, and class to produce different media environments and communicative opportunities and obstacles for politicians at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.

The final three studies in this book contribute to this literature by assessing how candidates' gendered self-presentation and their mediated coverage affect voter responses. While each chapter in this part (except for Elise Maiolino's project noted above) focuses on white, middle-aged politicians, their findings provide a sounder base for more intersectional analyses. Using an experimental study designed around media coverage of the 2014 Quebec election, Catherine Lemarier-Saulnier and Thierry Giasson demonstrate in Chapter 9 that the framing of female and male politicians along a femininity/masculinity continuum results in different assessments of their traits, behaviours, and values – assessments that were frequently aligned, particularly for female politicians, with the gendered mediated coverage that they received. Joanna Everitt, Lisa Best, and Derek Gaudet also use an experimental approach to test the impact of the recent media trend of relying on short video clips as background for journalists' voice-overs and the tendency for media to select visuals that highlight female politicians engaging in more assertive behaviour (Chapter 11). They examine public reactions to video clips of 2013 federal Liberal leadership debates and discover that non-verbal cues can enhance or reduce the likelihood that viewers use gender stereotypes when evaluating candidates. The authors determine that male candidates are not automatically assumed to be more agentic, or women less so, when information about them is limited. However, both women and men are penalized if their behaviour does not conform to hegemonic gender norms. Elisabeth Gidengil, Delia Dumitrescu, and Dietlind Stolle see a similar pattern in viewer responses to videos of actors-as-politicians giving speeches during their experiment (Chapter 10). However, their experiment highlights how longer and more detailed amounts of information about the politicians

can minimize some of the more gender-based stereotypes of viewers, and demonstrates that confidence is key to a woman's successful performance of competent assertiveness.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions of the studies presented in this volume help to illuminate the continuing challenges that the mediation of gendered identities presents to politicians whose gender, sexuality, race, class, or age mean they do not fit with traditional expectations of the usual politician. This is highlighted in the concluding chapter, where Elisabeth Gidengil identifies several themes found throughout the book: gendered mediation is a factor in men's news coverage, especially when they do not embody the ideal political masculinity; gendered mediation varies in content based on a politician's racial and sexual identity; politicians' communicative choices influence the nature of gendered mediation; gendered self-presentations and mediation might not have the influence we expect; and multiple methodological approaches are useful to understanding the complexities of gendered mediation.

In summary, this book offers a more sophisticated exploration of how cultural notions about gender, race, sexuality, age, and class together shape the production of, and response to, political rhetoric and news coverage. By examining the mediation of politics at not only the federal but also provincial and municipal levels in Canada, it provides theoretical and empirical insights into possible variations and similarities in the mediation of politics across political contexts. It also offers potential analytical arguments and approaches for studying the mediation of gendered identities in other political cultures and systems around the world.

REFERENCES

Achter, Paul. 2009. Racing Jesse Jackson: Leadership, masculinity, and the black presidency. In J. Edwards, ed., *Gender and Political Communication in America: Rhetoric, Representation, and Display,* 107–27. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Alexander-Floyd, Nikol G. 2008. Framing Condi(licious): Condoleezza Rice and the storyline of "closeness" in US national community formation. *Politics and Gender* 4(3): 427–49.