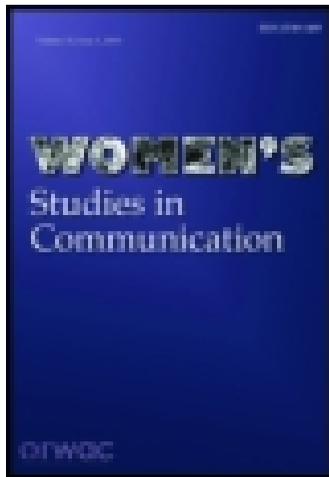


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Politicizing Bodies: Hegemonic Masculinity, Heteronormativity, and Racism in News Representations of Canadian Political Party Leadership Candidates

Linda Trimble^a, Daisy Raphael^b, Shannon Sampert^c, Angelia Wagner^d & Bailey Gerrits^e

^a Department of Political Science, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

^b Doctoral Student, Department of Political Science, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

^c Department of Political Science, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

^d Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Postdoctoral Fellow, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

^e Doctoral Student, Department of Political Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

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Politicizing Bodies: Hegemonic Masculinity, Heteronormativity, and Racism in News Representations of Canadian Political Party Leadership Candidates

LINDA TRIMBLE

Department of Political Science, University of Alberta, Edmonton,
Alberta, Canada

DAISY RAPHAEL

Doctoral Student, Department of Political Science, University of Alberta,
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

SHANNON SAMPERT

Department of Political Science, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg,
Manitoba, Canada

ANGELIA WAGNER

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
Postdoctoral Fellow, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

BAILEY GERRITS

Doctoral Student, Department of Political Studies, Queen's University,
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Based on the argument that bodies are politicized when their gendered, sexualized, and racialized features are woven into mediated political discourses, our study investigates newspaper coverage of candidates for the leadership of Canadian national political parties. A systematic intersectional analysis of reporting on 30 candidates who competed in 13 leadership contests found that only certain bodies are seen to embody and personify political leadership. High-profile women, a gay man, and a Black woman were noticed for their visual dissonance from the prototypical body of the political leader, as news coverage highlighted their physical characteristics in ways that marked them as aberrant and inauthentic in their desire for political power. Men with physiques incompatible with idealized masculinity were also presented as incapable of offering commanding performances on the political stage. We conclude that deeply held cultural norms, based on hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and racism, are expressed in news mediation of political leadership competitions.

Address correspondence to Linda Trimble, Department of Political Science, 10-16 HM Tory Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2H4, Canada. E-mail: ltrimble@ualberta.ca

Keywords bodies, Canada, gendered mediation, leadership, news, political candidates, racialization

Introduction

Quebec MPs said their constituents were calling up and saying, “We want *la blonde*,” without knowing anything about her, except media pictures. (Howard, 1993, p. A4)

You might want to give her a look, and decide for yourself if this is the new Canada, or simply the old Canada in a very nice dress. (Ibbitson, 2004, p. A17)

His “striking blue eyes and furrowed brow can make him look like a saint, especially when judiciously backlit by an enterprising photographer.” (McCarthy, 2003, p. F1)

He “is young, handsome, bright, serious and urbane—and Quebec voters are used to polished politicians.” (Gagnon, 2002, p. A13)

As these examples from newspaper coverage of Canadian political party leadership contests illustrate, bodies are both objects of the external gaze and subjects of political discourse (Leder, 1990, p. 6). Political leaders are expected to personify their nations and parties—to embody national myths, dreams, and values (Coulomb-Gully, 2009, p. 208). Put simply, bodies matter in political life. Feminist theories of the body argue that biological, medical, social, cultural, and political discourses inscribe male and female bodies with differences that are assumed to be essential and natural (Nicholson, 1994, p. 86). Contemporary medical and social understandings of sex differences regulate gender performances by forcing individuals into one of two sex/gender categories, thereby prompting repeated and naturalized—or performative—bodily practices, such as dressing and adorning oneself in a feminine manner (Butler, 1990/2008, p. 185). Because understandings of bodies are informed not only by biology but also by political, social, cultural, and historical discourses, they are present in everyday language. As such, newspaper reporting about candidates for political leadership roles evidences taken-for-granted assumptions about bodies, gender, and leadership.

To examine how the media interpret the visual and performative manifestations of bodies for the political messages they symbolize and communicate, our study analyzes news portrayals of Canadian national party leadership candidates. We perform a systematic analysis of newspaper articles about 30 candidates for 13 Canadian national party leadership contests held between 1975 and 2012, focusing on depictions of candidates’ bodies. By exploring the Canadian context over a lengthy time period and examining a large number of research subjects with mixed methods, we are able to go beyond answering the standard research question posed by the gendered mediation literature: Do reporters pay more attention to women candidates’ bodies than they do men’s? Our study poses two additional questions with the aim of understanding the politicization of bodies in news accounts of political leadership: Why are certain bodies regarded as significant to political discourses? And what ideas

about the performance of political leadership are communicated via descriptions and evaluations of politicians' bodies?

We argue that analyzing how bodies are interpreted as sites of leadership requires an intersectional account of the ways in which women's and men's sexualized and racialized bodies are seen to embody political power and authority. Discourses about bodies work to gender both women and men by, for instance, exalting hegemonic masculinity and "othering" men who do not conform to masculine norms (Anderson, 2002, p. 117; Duerst-Lahti, 2007, p. 87; Fahey, 2007, p. 139). But media representations of gender cannot be disentangled from narratives about sexuality or race (Hancock, 2007). As our findings show, deeply held cultural norms reflecting hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and racism are expressed consistently in news mediation of Canadian party leadership competitions, sometimes overtly—through explicit value judgments about a politician's sex, gender, or skin color—and sometimes via silences and omissions, such as the failure to acknowledge that race, racism, and racialization are significant in Canadian politics.

Our intersectional research is designed to address significant gaps in the gendered mediation literature, which tends to focus on the United States, analyze single-actor case studies or individual elections, and quantify the amount of media attention to the physical appearances of female and male politicians. Most studies adopt a narrow definition of "looks" by focusing on the adornment of bodies via hairstyle, makeup, and wardrobe. Often unobserved are manifest characteristics that bring men's bodies into view, such as physique, stature, and deportment. While qualitative analysis is valuable in examining how media attention to physical appearance trivializes women's political ambitions, few studies account for the ways in which some men are valorized and other men delegitimized by references to the way they look. Finally, sexualizing and racializing representations of bodies are usually examined separately from gendered representations.

Politicians' Bodies and the Gendered Mediation Literature

As several Canadian and American studies have found, the news media pay more attention to female candidates' physical appearances than they do those of male candidates (Bystrom, Banwart, Kaid, & Robertson, 2004, pp. 178–179; Devitt, 1999, p. 17; Falk, 2010, p. 184; Miller, Peake, & Boulton, 2010, p. 177; Trimble, 2007, pp. 984–985; Trimble & Everitt, 2010, p. 65). That reporters give undue attention to female politicians' hairstyles, wardrobes, and makeup—yet rarely comment on such inconsequential matters for male politicians—is now accepted as conventional wisdom (Campus, 2013, pp. 82–83; Ross, 2002, p. 89; Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1997, p. 103). However, research on news coverage of political elites challenges this assertion. For example, high-profile female presidential and prime ministerial candidates in the United States, Germany, New Zealand, and Canada have been accorded no more scrutiny of their looks than the men against whom they competed in national elections (Bystrom, Robertson, & Banwart, 2001, p. 2010; Falk, 2010, p. 184; Lawrence & Rose, 2010, pp. 165, 167; Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007, p. 166; Trimble & Treiberg, 2010, p. 124; Trimble, Treiberg, & Girard, 2010, p. 36).

These seemingly contradictory findings likely reflect methodological differences and a lack of attention to features that tend to bring men's bodies into the analysis. Most studies measure the percentage of news stories making overt references to the ways in which bodies are clothed, groomed, and adorned (e.g., Bystrom et al.,

2004; Devitt, 1999; Miller et al., 2010; Trimble, 2007). With the notable exception of Falk (2010), researchers do not include allusions to other important physical attributes, such as size, demeanor, and skin color. Differences in measurement likely account for the fact that while one study found Hillary Clinton's clothing and appearance were mentioned at a significantly higher rate than were Barack Obama's in news coverage of the 2008 U.S. Democratic primary (Miller et al., 2010, p. 177), other researchers discovered equivalent levels of attention to these candidates' looks (Falk, 2010, p. 184; Lawrence & Rose, 2010, pp. 165, 167). By including references to hair, skin color, attire, attractiveness, age, stature, facial expressions, and strength in the broad category of "appearance," Falk (2010, p. 88) determined that Obama's appearance was as frequently mentioned as Clinton's. Whereas reporters scrutinized Obama's skin color, youth, and slight physique, media coverage of Clinton focused on her gendered body and attire (p. 158).

Based on qualitative analysis, scholars argue that while media attention to men's bodies may be increasingly common (Campus, 2013, pp. 74–75; van Zoonen, 2006, p. 297), descriptions of women's bodies are more politically significant because they convey negative evaluations of women's fitness for political office (Mandziuk, 2008, p. 314; Ross and Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997, p. 104). The "lipstick watch"—a persistent media interest in women's appearances (Heith, 2003, p. 126)—presents female politicians as novelties in the political realm and challenges the legitimacy of their political ambitions (Duerst-Lahti, 2006, p. 37). When situated within a male-dominated context such as elite politics, "the female body is often defined almost exclusively by its 'feminine' characteristics, and thus becomes a sign of otherness" (Holland, 2006, p. 30). The overt sexualization of Canadian leadership hopeful Belinda Stronach and U.S. presidential and vice-presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin illustrate how a woman's capacity to lead is often assessed based on her conformity with patriarchal and heteronormative expectations (Anderson, 2011, pp. 337, 341; Lawrence & Rose, 2010, p. 200; Wasburn and Wasburn, 2011, p. 1038; Trimble and Everitt, 2010, p. 64). As a result, men's bodies are understood as emulating leadership while women's bodies are presented as metaphors for inauthenticity in the performance of leadership.

Yet the gendered mediation literature says very little about the meanings imparted by representations of men's bodies. That men who do not conform to prototypical forms of masculinity may be feminized and/or delegitimized by accounts of their bodies is illustrated by news reporting of the 2004 U.S. presidential election, which focused on John Kerry's looks, gender, and sexuality, and cast him as too "French" and "feminine" to be president (Fahey, 2007, p. 139). As Kerry's example shows, not all men are presented as embodying and personifying political leadership. We argue that adopting a comprehensive approach to reading media representations of physical appearance is crucial to understanding how politicians' bodies are politicized through discourses about leadership contenders. Gendered, sexualized, and racialized descriptions of political actors are likely to intersect in consequential ways. For example, reporters and pundits were more likely to question Obama's electability alongside discussions of his racial identity, and descriptions of the color of Obama's skin served to delegitimize his candidacy (Miller et al., 2010, p. 179). As the news coverage of Obama indicates, by explicitly denoting the racial identities of non-White candidates for political office, whiteness is normalized and racialized individuals are positioned as "others" (Alemán, 2010, p. 9; Major & Coleman, 2008, p. 324).

The Canadian Case, Texts, and Methods

Canada's multiparty system offers a wealth of research subjects when investigating the ways in which cultural norms about gender, sexuality, and race intersect in news accounts of political leadership. Since 1921, between three and five parties have won seats in Canada's national legislature, offering more opportunities to seek leadership positions in competitive national parties than is the case in the United States. Women have presented themselves as viable candidates for Canadian leadership roles since 1975. While most leadership candidates are White and heterosexual, a gay man and a Black woman competed to lead one of Canada's political parties during the time period under study, allowing us to examine representations of gender, sexuality, and race in media portrayals of aspiring political leaders. In addition, the 13 leadership competitions in our sample feature six different national parties, some governing at the time of the leadership race, some performing the role of the official opposition in the national legislature, and others serving as third, fourth, or even fifth parties in the House of Commons. Because the campaigns we examine traverse a long period of time and feature several distinct parties boasting different levels of competitiveness, we are able to identify patterns in media representations that exist apart from idiosyncratic cases or particular contexts.

Canadian party leadership candidates are the focus of this study because they are engaged in a uniquely democratic process and enjoy a high media profile during the campaign. Moreover, the corporeal personas of front-running or novel contenders are frequently mediated by news discourses (Van Aelst, Sheafer, & Staney, 2012, p. 206; van Zoonen, 2006, p. 29). While they do not display the expansive methods of leadership election typical of U.S. presidential primaries, Canadian leadership contests often feature lengthy and highly publicized campaigns for support from party members across the country (Courtney 1995, pp. 85–87). These competitions certainly engage and rejuvenate party members. The extra-parliamentary party has long played a significant role in leadership selection and, since the 1990s, all national parties have included the party grassroots in the process and most have adopted one-member-one-vote systems (Cross & Blais, 2012, pp. 129, 133). Media attention is therefore crucial to candidates seeking to win votes and attract public support in anticipation of a general election.

Because many Canadian leadership contenders are not well-known across the country before they seek the role of party leader, the contest presents an invaluable opportunity to establish a national profile. News commentary on leadership candidates' personas shapes how they come to be known by the general public, creating first impressions that may resonate throughout their political careers (Courtney, 1995, pp. 76–93; Harp, Loke, & Bachmann, 2010, pp. 292–293). These first impressions matter because of the significant political power exercised by party leaders. In Canada's Westminster-style parliamentary system, leaders command the party both inside and outside the legislature and as such are a locus of power in the party and in the electorate. Moreover, newly selected party leaders immediately assume their parliamentary responsibilities as first minister or opposition leaders in the House of Commons. For instance, the chosen candidate for the leadership of the governing party is sworn in as prime minister within days of his or her selection. As a result, party leaders are the focus of branding and communication by the party to the electorate (Delacourt, 2013, pp. 197–221).

We examined all of the Canadian national party leadership races contested by competitive women candidates, defined as those who mounted nationwide, well-resourced campaigns and finished above last place on the first ballot.¹ For each of these 13 leadership competitions, news reporting about the female candidate and her closest male competitor was analyzed, along with coverage of the winner, if neither the woman competitor nor the most similarly situated man prevailed. So, our study includes 30 leadership candidates—19 men and 11 women—who sought party leadership roles between 1975 and 2012 (see the appendix). Canada's leading national newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*, was chosen for analysis because of its prominence, political importance, and agenda-setting role within the Canadian news media (Taras, 1999, p. 18). The substantive and often fulsome coverage the *Globe and Mail* offered of these party leadership competitions was an additional advantage of focusing on its reports. In all, we analyzed 2,463 published news articles.²

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used, though our emphasis here is on the discursive features of the coverage. Content analysis, a quantitative approach to systematically accounting for the message characteristics in a text (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1), determined the percentage of the news stories mentioning female and male candidates' looks.³ However, this form of counting cannot gauge the extensiveness of the discussion, nor can it analyze the latent meanings of the references. For instance, one candidate's blue tie may be mentioned in passing, while another contender's physique is elaborated and evaluated for its legitimacy. To offer a systematic analysis of the political meanings communicated by descriptions of candidates' bodies, we compiled an inventory of all words or phrases examining the following: age, physical features, size, shape, and demeanor; manifest characteristics such as hair or eye color; adornment with clothing, accessories, hairstyles, and makeup; and physical attractiveness, sexual desirability, and sexual orientation.⁴ Silences about race and the overt racialization of bodies were noted as well. Analyzing this inventory required feminist discourse analysis, a qualitative methodology designed to explore the ways in which "gender ideology and gendered relations of power" are reproduced in texts (Lazar, 2005, p. 11). An intersectional lens revealed how gender regulations, heteronormativity, and racism are concurrently embedded in discourses about bodies.

Findings

Results from quantitative and qualitative analyses demonstrate a clear but surprisingly inconsistent media interest in the physical appearances of both female and male leadership candidates between 1975 and 2012. Overall, the *Globe and Mail* remarked on candidate looks in 5.8% of stories, with female leadership hopefuls receiving significantly more such mentions in their coverage (8.8%) than their male competitors did in theirs (4.3%). However, these data mask considerable variation in the treatment of candidates, as not all female candidates saw features of their bodies profiled, and some of the male candidates were *more* likely to have their appearances observed. Substantial detail was offered about the hair color, physique, and attractiveness of Kim Campbell, the front-runner in the 1993 Progressive Conservative (PC) leadership contest to determine who would become prime minister of Canada. Similarly, the novelty of Belinda Stronach's candidacy for the leadership of the opposition Conservative Party in 2004 inspired the *Globe* to lavish attention to her blonde good looks and designer wardrobe. In contrast, reporters said more about the attire and

grooming of the male winner of the 2003 New Democratic Party (NDP) leadership, Jack Layton, than they did about second-tier female candidates in other contests. Indeed, age was the *only* physical characteristic noted for Peggy Nash, the fourth-place finisher in the 2012 NDP competition.

Globe and Mail reporters and columnists were more likely to scrutinize a female candidate's body when the woman in question was more competitive and therefore closer to power, suggesting discomfort or anxiety about women in influential positions. But bodies came to matter not just because of their importance to political outcomes. Certain leadership candidates were noticed because of their compliance with, or more frequently because of their visual difference from, norms associated with the idealized White, heterosexual man. Because media discourses have the potential to both reinforce and disrupt regulations governing the presentation and performance of bodies (Butler, 2004, pp. 52, 55), we anticipated that representations of candidates' bodies would reveal a complex process of gendering. Our findings, however, underscore the extent to which potentially transgressive performances by women and racialized and sexualized "others" who seek the putatively masculine role of political leader "are often recuperated back into a two-sex/gender schema for the purpose of 'making sense' of these performances" (Holland, 2006, p. 27).

Male candidates who literally embodied the hegemonic ideal of political leadership received subtle yet significant discursive support for their leadership aspirations. The *Globe's* tendency to equate men's physical prowess with political ability left no doubt that men's bodies are viewed as authentic and legitimate sites of political leadership. For instance, one relatively minor male contender, described as "tall, imposing without being overbearing, poised, with white hair, yet youthful," was said to look "like a prime minister" (Stevens, 1976, p. 6). Repeated references to the size and physique of leadership candidates reveal the understanding that political leaders inhabit the hegemonic masculine form. Journalists evaluated men's heights and weights as if they were determining whether the men had the necessary physical bulk and gravitas to be considered solid leadership material. The use of descriptors such as "big" (Ibbitson, 2002, p. A21), "tall" (King, 1976, p. 1), "burly" (Lunman, 2003, p. A7), and "barrel-chested" (Lorinc, 2003, p. F5) to describe male candidates renders the masculine body as a site of both physical and political power and, as Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) point out, the "perception of power grants an individual an advantage in being accepted as a leader" (p. 30).

But not all male candidates benefited from gender privilege. Men who failed to meet media expectations of the ideal political physique were routinely dismissed as lacking viability in political leadership roles. Liberal contender and soon-to-be prime minister Paul Martin was criticized for being overweight and out of shape. A reporter asked, "[D]oes he have the stamina required to run the nation?" (McIlroy, 2003, p. F4). Martin's girth also prompted negative evaluations of his capacity to represent the common person. "Not an ounce of empathy and not a hint of humour emanate from Mr. Martin's well-fed, prosperous frame on television," opined a columnist. "Put him in a TV drama and he'd be the businessman who needs his heart broken in order to connect with the experiences of ordinary people" (Doyle, 2003, p. A8). Corpulence, then, is seen as an indicator of class privilege and perhaps even weakness of character. Indeed, the front-runner in the Canadian Alliance leadership race, Stephen Harper, was praised for a 25-pound weight loss: "He seemed to have lost diffidence and gained stature" (Hunter, 2002, p. A19). It is noteworthy that losing fat, which is associated with femininity (Chrisler, 2012), correlates with an increase

in status or standing in Harper's case. That is, as Harper's body became leaner and more masculine, he was assumed to look more like a leader. The concepts of masculinity, power, and leadership are so entangled that to be perceived as a "strong" leader requires a particular corporeal performance of masculinity (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly, 1995, p. 19).

By contrast, the *Globe* regularly used descriptions of women's bodies, clothing, and deportment as metaphors for their supposed inability to enact appropriate political leadership. The newspaper's association of one woman's small body with weakness illustrates some of the gendered assumptions guiding news representations of political leadership. Campbell, the only woman in Canadian history to win the leadership of a governing party and become prime minister as a result, was consistently labeled "small" and "diminutive" in the *Globe's* coverage (e.g., Couture, 1993, p. A23; Winsor, 1993, p. A1). For instance, "when her diminutive self appeared, she was swallowed up by the cameras and microphones" (Simpson, 1993, p. A16). Another representation suggested Campbell struggled valiantly to overcome her small stature and feminine physique with a display of bravado: "With her clearly defined features and perky style the diminutive justice minister came over as a defiant Joan of Arc confronting the microphone lances of the television crew" (Delacourt, 1993, p. A1). Campbell's body size was interpreted as rendering her performance of leadership inconsequential and ineffective unless she offered a rhetorical stance and bearing that defied her size and body shape.

Similarly, female candidates could not seem to escape the gendered meanings conveyed by media discussion of clothing. The *Globe* evaluated women's attire as part of larger efforts to determine whether the women conformed to societal standards of feminine beauty, but treated men's attire as symbolic of their seriousness as political candidates. For example, Audrey McLaughlin, who won the 1989 NDP leadership contest, was depicted as a "trim, attractive woman, [who] looked as if she would be as comfortable in the pages of *Vogue* as in the pages of *Hansard*" (Winsor, 1989, p. A3). In contrast, McLaughlin's primary opponent, Dave Barrett, was said to "tromp into the Brandon East End Community Centre wearing a raincoat and a crimson and navy striped wool scarf . . . He sheds his jacket and rolls up his sleeves to castigate Progressive Conservatives" (Howard, 1989, p. A8). While McLaughlin's clothing is read as ornamentation, in compliance with supposed norms of femininity, Barrett's wardrobe is regarded much more positively as a political prop used to express his ideological commitments and combative approach to leadership. The description of his informality (tromping, rolling up his sleeves) underscores Barrett's working-class persona (Coulomb-Gully, 2009, p. 210), while the evaluation of McLaughlin's wardrobe as suitable for an upper-class women's magazine sets her apart from the social democratic voters she sought to represent.

Along with descriptions of their size and clothing, women's bodily movements were read as symbolizing their political insignificance. Male candidates, on the other hand, were described as using their bodies to personify ideas, claim physical space, and display active modes of representation. Gendered evaluations of gestures and body language were especially evident during the 1993 PC leadership contest. "Removing his jacket and strolling across the stage in his shirt sleeves, gesturing and pointing and telling jokes, Jean Charest gave an impressive performance yesterday" (York, 1993, p. A2). The columnist went further, arguing, "Mr. Charest's animated performance was in sharp contrast to his chief rival, Kim Campbell, who sometimes seemed stiff and wooden as she remained behind her podium" (p. A2).

Charest's body is seen as impressive because of its freedom of movement, while Campbell's is judged inauthentic because of its self-imposed restraint, illustrating that the media do not "objectively" describe how candidates appear. Fashion and body movements are therefore interpreted as the visual language communicating identity, authenticity, and legitimacy. Journalists presented women candidates as distant, passive, and restrained by their bodies and their overtly feminine attire.

Depictions of candidates' physical beauty further reinforced this pattern of representing the body as a liability for women and an asset for men. Journalists, we found, rarely judged male contenders handsome or good-looking; when they did, these features were presented as a valuable electoral resource (e.g., Gagnon, 2002, p. A13). However, the *Globe's* coverage frequently labeled certain female competitors attractive, pretty, or beautiful, and their attractiveness was often interpreted as sexual allure, not political legitimacy. This was particularly the case for two high-profile female candidates with blonde hair. "La blonde," as Campbell was identified in the province of Quebec (Howard, 1993, p. A4), was compared favorably to Hollywood star Kim Novak (Lacey, 1993, p. A7). A reporter declared that Campbell would become Canada's "first certified pin-up prime minister" if she won the 1993 PC leadership contest (Canadian Press, 1993, p. A1). Similarly, when she sought the leadership of the Conservative Party in 2004, Stronach was called a "blonde bombshell" (Wente, 2004, p. A17), and her bloneness was woven gratuitously into descriptions of her campaign. Further, Stronach's physical appeal was emphasized with such words and phrases as "strikingly attractive," "elegant," and "photogenic" (McGregor, 2004b, p. A2; *Globe and Mail*, 2004, p. A14). Equating female candidates with celebrities like Marilyn Monroe reinforces the belief that the female body ought to be mediatized for the pleasure of the male spectator (Trimble and Everitt, 2010, p. 60; van Zoonen 2006, p. 56). Moreover, beauty-queen metaphors, like those used to describe Campbell and Stronach, present women as the objects rather than as the subjects of political discourse, thereby undermining women's agency and legitimacy (Sheeler, 2010, p. 22). Attention to female bodies as sexual objects illustrates the extent to which certain bodies are regarded as unseemly, foreign, and unwanted in political spaces, except as a focus of male desire.

The sexual persona is dangerous discursive territory for female politicians because they risk being labeled "frivolous, coquettish and—worst of all—loose" (van Zoonen, 2006, p. 292). But it is equally problematic for men who fall outside of the two-sex/gender binary (Butler, 1993, pp. 30–32). The sexual orientation of the lone gay candidate in our sample, Svend Robinson, was discussed in a staggering 31% of the stories that mentioned him. In addition to labeling the front-runner for the leadership of the NDP in 1995 an "open homosexual" and "openly gay," commentators presented his sexual orientation as, quite literally, a liability (*Globe and Mail*, 1995b, p. A1) because "he might be unacceptable to labour" (Howard, 1995, p. A1) or to those members of the party seeking to represent traditional "family values" (Winsor, 1995b, p. A2). While an editorial writer praised Robinson for his "courage in declaring his sexuality" (*Globe and Mail*, 1995a, p. A24), another said that, as the party's "first openly gay MP," Robinson's candidacy for the leadership was "testing the party's reputation for tolerance" (Winsor, 1995a, p. D1). As these examples illustrate, "gay men occupy a problematic place within a binary system of gender where both masculinity and femininity are constructed through heterosexual desire" (Hole, 2003, p. 325).

The *Globe's* virtual silence on the topic of racialized bodies illustrates that the unusual or unexpected body is noticed and explicitly marked, while the prototypical

body is assumed and often ignored. Only nine references explicitly labeled the race of a leadership candidate, and five of these were about the lone non-White candidate in our sample, Rosemary Brown. Brown was the first woman to contest the leadership of a national political party in Canada when she sought the NDP leadership in 1975. Despite Brown's strong second-place showing in the competition, journalists highlighted her status as an outsider in elite Canadian politics by labeling her a "black female" or "black woman" (Canadian Press, 1975, p. 9; Stevens, 1975b, p. 6). Fully one-fifth of the articles mentioning Brown explicitly identified her racialized body in this fashion, and an additional news report did so implicitly by describing her hair as a "frizzled Afro" (Newman, 1975, p. 1). By noting that Brown did not fit "the conventional mold of being white and male," a columnist acknowledged an overt "othering" of non-White politicians (Gray, 1975, p. W4). Brown's allegedly unconventional physical persona was cast as a barrier to her political success: "Mrs. Brown suffers, even in a party that prides itself on its open-mindedness, from the dual disadvantages of being both a woman and a black," pronounced an opinion writer (Stevens, 1975a, p. 6). Importantly, Brown attempted to present a counternarrative, speaking directly to the issue of racism and refusing to accept that her campaign lacked credibility because of her gender and racialized persona (Gray, 1975, p. W4; Stevens, 1975a, p. 6). Her campaign slogan, "Brown is Beautiful," was designed to foreground the issue of racialization, mirroring the "Black Is Beautiful" movement that emerged in the United States in the 1960s. Yet news coverage marked Brown as unnatural in the realm of Canadian party leadership, marginalized by race and gender.

The fact that the racial identities of most White candidates went unnoticed reflected the prevalent but grossly inaccurate idea that Canada is a "colour-blind" society with no "race problem" (Smith, 2003, p. 108) and the resultant taken-for-granted nature of whiteness as the norm in elite Canadian politics. The dominance of the White majority in Canadian politics not only went unchallenged by journalists but was also exalted in the case of Harper, the front-runner in the Canadian Alliance leadership race. According to the *Globe's* writers, the party needed "a white knight" to revitalize its electoral fortunes: "If the party has any hope for a future, it will be in the form of a white knight who can unite factions and restore some credibility" (McCarthy, 2001, p. A11). A columnist declared: "Only a white knight . . . can save the party. The horse is ready. The white knight's armour glistens" (Simpson, 2001, p. A13). Harper's successful performance of heroic leadership thus rested on his hegemonic racialized identity. Whiteness and masculinity were valorized in the form of a heroic figure, identified as Harper, who was literally deemed the "Great White Hope" for the new party (Greenspon, 2001, p. A1). This characterization resonated with norms of warrior masculinity and with issues of race, racialization, and racism (Smith, 2003, pp. 110–115).

Yet as with gender, not all White male candidates benefited from their race due to the presence of other undesired bodily characteristics, such as advanced age. While Harper was cast as the savior of the ideological right because of his normalized performance of (White) warrior masculinity, the Liberals' Martin was seen as a poor choice for a party in need of symbolic and systemic revitalization, in part because of his racial identity. As a "white, male senior citizen" Martin would find it difficult to convince voters that he represented the "forces of change and renewal," argued a columnist (Ibbitson, 2003, p. A17). Here the body is interpreted as a visual representation of political performance, as Martin's aging, White visage is presented as an indicator of both uniformity and political stagnation.

Age was seen as a political resource only for the young, though it too combined with other physical attributes to advantage some men and disparage most women in media discourses about political leadership. For example, the metaphor of the “fresh face” was used to characterize some candidates as change agents because of their youth or gendered identity. Charest stood out because of his youth: “Mr. Charest, 34, is a fresh face from Quebec” (Sallot, 1993, p. A13). Campbell, who defeated Charest, was seen as a “fresh face” because she was a woman from the province of British Columbia (e.g., Simpson, 1993, p. A16).⁵ Similarly, Stronach was said to present a “fresh, smart, young new face” for the Conservative Party because of her youth, gender, physical attractiveness, and glamorous lifestyle (McGregor, 2004a, p. A2). The trope of the “fresh face” equates the youthful and/or womanly body with newness, difference, and change, illustrating the importance of the material self to understandings about political representation. Yet we do not see it as a counter-hegemonic representation of bodies. As we have shown, while their gendered bodies were presented as a symbol of newness for Campbell and Stronach, the sexualization of their physical identities worked to denigrate their political ambitions. In contrast, Charest’s physical persona was equated with an authentic and commanding performance of political leadership. His gender, heterosexuality, and whiteness afforded him a comforting visual display of sameness.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study answered three questions. First, do the media invariably accord more attention to the bodies of women than to the bodies of men who compete for the leadership of Canadian national political parties? Surprisingly, the answer is no. While overall the *Globe and Mail’s* reporting was more likely to mention women’s appearances than men’s, this was not the case for all women. The physical attractiveness of a few female candidates was elaborated, often in considerable detail, while other women’s looks were considered of little or no importance. Similarly, physical stature and wardrobe choices were highlighted for particular male candidates. Some of the men in our sample had their bodies described and interpreted for their leadership potential more frequently than some of the women. Clearly, some bodies matter more than others in media accounts of political leadership.

This leads to the second question: Why are certain bodies seen to matter and in what circumstances are they regarded as significant to discourses about politics? Unfortunately, our analysis confirms the dominance of idealized masculinity in Canadian media representations of political leadership. We found that media attention to party leadership candidates highlights the unusualness of certain (gendered, sexualized, racialized) bodies as sites of political authority. A few particularly high-profile female candidates, a gay man, and a Black woman were noticed for their visual dissonance from the prototypical body of the political leader. Their physical and sexual characteristics were foregrounded in ways that marked them as aberrant and inauthentic in their desire for political power. Yet men’s bodies were also observed and evaluated in ways that emphasized their relative levels of compliance with norms relating to White, male, heterosexual bodies.

As we discovered, bodies are not merely described. They are evaluated for their conformity with norms of political leadership. This finding emphasized the importance of our third research question: What sorts of understandings about political leadership are communicated through descriptions and evaluations of politicians’

bodies? Attention to physique, wardrobe, and bodily movement communicated comfort with White, heterosexual men's authoritative demeanor by casting these elements of their physical personas as political attributes. Equating larger, more muscular bodies with strength and smaller bodies with weakness rendered the female form unsuitable for the performance of political leadership on a national stage. Descriptions of certain high-profile female candidates celebrated and reinforced exaggerated versions of femininity, in effect naturalizing binary notions of gender and treating women's performances of political leadership as unnatural. Discussion of women's bodies also reflected popular myths of femininity as sexuality and as a bodily practice (van Zoonen, 2006, p. 291). Sexualizing women presents them as passive objects of male sexual desire rather than as active subjects, reinforcing essentialist gender regulations and situating women as outsiders to political life.

Men's bodies were identified as sites of power and judged based on whether or not they were physically commanding—sufficiently firm, fit, and robust to enjoy legitimacy in leadership roles. But men with physiques incompatible with forms of idealized masculinity were presented as incapable of offering commanding performances on the political stage. Those candidates who were seen to fall outside the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity because of their age, physical stature, or sexual orientation were depicted as less capable of attracting support from the public or claiming legitimacy as political leaders. A Black woman's race was singled out as a marker of difference, while reporters associated a White man's racial identity with valor, thereby linking masterful leadership with both whiteness and masculinity. In short, certain bodies were simultaneously othered and rendered inauthentic by discourses about political leadership.

Our study gave serious consideration to the ways in which both women and men are gendered and politicized by depictions of bodies in mediated accounts of political leadership. In a methodological departure from much of the literature, we went beyond descriptors of hair and hemlines to include features such as size, physique, and deportment, and used qualitative analysis to notice both observations and silences about sexualized and racialized personal attributes. By systematically analyzing representations of bodies across time and through cases of 30 different candidates competing for 13 leadership positions, we observed a clear pattern. Canadian newspaper reports about leadership candidates' bodies reiterate and reinforce hegemonic gender norms, such as "ideal dimorphism, heterosexual complementarity of bodies, ideals and rules of proper and improper masculinity and femininity, many of which are underwritten by racial codes" (Butler, 1990/2008, pp. xxiv–xxv). These findings are especially consequential in an increasingly mediatized and personalized public sphere fixating on celebrity and intimacy. At a time when individual leaders are the focus of public and media attention, the body of the political actor is ever more frequently interpreted and evaluated for its (perceived) capacity to reflect norms and ideals of political leadership (Stanyer, 2013, pp. 14–15). In this context, our findings are both disconcerting and discouraging to potential candidates whose bodies are likely to be noticed for their difference from the leadership prototype. Women—particularly racialized women—continue to be underrepresented in formal politics in Canada, where, as is the case in other Western democracies, White men are the overwhelming majority in legislatures. Challenging sexist, heteronormative, and racist news media portrayals of politicians is a key step in removing barriers to a more egalitarian political landscape.

Notes

1. Our study includes 13 of the 15 national party leadership contests held between 1975 and 2012. The two contests we chose not to analyze were the 1983 Progressive Conservative contest, an all-male race, and the 2006 Liberal Party contest, whose lone female competitor finished in last place on the first ballot and thus did not meet our criteria as a competitive candidate.
2. Stories mentioning the leadership race in passing were excluded. Because the goal of the study was to analyze journalists' representations, we did not include letters to the editor and opinion pieces written by the candidates. We defined the beginning of the campaign period as the day after the resignation or death of the former party leader and collected news articles published until one week after the leadership convention was held to select the new leader.
3. A detailed coding framework is available from the lead author. The authors completed all content coding for this study. An intercoder reliability test on two random samples of the news texts revealed almost perfect agreement on the appearance variable, with Cohen's kappa scores ranging from 0.929 to 0.961.
4. Age was measured separately from physical appearance because it is often listed as a fact about candidates rather than a description of their physicality. However, any notation of age that was linked to a description or evaluation of a candidate's body was included in the qualitative analysis.
5. We used a three-stage qualitative coding process (Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2012, p. 259). First, we carefully read through the list of descriptions several times to get a sense of the ways in which bodies were discussed in the articles. Second, we used the technique of open coding to categorize the references based on their gendered, sexualized, and racialized meanings and differential applications to female and male candidates. The qualitative data were reexamined in the third stage to ensure that the analytical categories were comprehensive and any discrepancies were noted and explained.
6. Place of residence is an important consideration in the selection of Canadian political leaders because diverse regional subcultures seek representation in the national government.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Leadership contests and candidates

Date of vote	Political party	Candidates included in study (Winners in bold)	Number of news stories
July 7, 1975	New Democratic	Ed Broadbent Rosemary Brown	51
Feb. 22, 1976	Progressive Conservative	Joe Clark Paul Hellyer Flora MacDonald	310
June 16, 1984	Liberal	John Turner Jean Chrétien	521
Dec. 2, 1989	New Democratic	Audrey McLaughlin Dave Barrett	115
June 23, 1990	Liberal	Jean Chrétien Sheila Copps Tom Wappel	206
June 11, 1993	Progressive Conservative	Kim Campbell Jean Charest	344
Oct. 14, 1995	New Democratic	Alexa McDonough Svend Robinson	38
March 20, 2002	Canadian Alliance	Stephen Harper Diane Ablonczy Grant Hill	111
Jan. 26, 2003	New Democratic	Jack Layton Bill Blaikie	50
Nov. 14, 2003	Liberal	Paul Martin Sheila Copps	507
Mar. 20, 2004	Conservative	Stephen Harper Belinda Stronach	138
Aug. 26, 2006	Green	Elizabeth May David Chernushenko	11
March 24, 2012	New Democratic	Thomas Mulcair Nathan Cullen Peggy Nash	61
Total <i>N</i>			2,463