

**BLACK AND WHITE OR SHADES OF GREY?  
RACIAL MEDIATION IN CANADIAN POLITICS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the media's coverage of candidates in Canadian politics. It looks, in particular, at the impact of race on reporting about candidates' socio-demographic backgrounds, viability and policy interests. The paper proposes a theory of racial mediation and tests this theory using a content analysis of the print media's coverage of White and visible minority candidates in the 2008 Canadian federal election. The paper finds that race structures the media's reporting on electoral candidates, positioning visible minorities in terms of their socio-demographics, novelty, and interest in more marginal policy issues. Moreover, unless visible minority candidates have proven themselves in the electoral arena, they are less likely than White candidates to be portrayed as politically viable. These findings are evident across political parties and are amplified by gender. Such portrayals reduce the quality of information that voters receive about candidates and are thus harmful to democracy.

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“I think as a Caucasian I have an advantage. When different community leaders such as a Sikh leader or a Muslim leader speaks, they really speak to their own people . . . As a Caucasian, I believe that I can speak to all the community.”

— Ron Leech, Candidate for Calgary-Greenway in the 2012 Alberta election

## INTRODUCTION

During the 2012 Alberta provincial election, controversy erupted when Ron Leech, a candidate for the upstart Wildrose Party suggested that he may have an advantage running in a diverse Calgary riding because he is White. Observers were quick to condemn the remarks and pointed to them as evidence of the party’s hidden and inherently racist agenda. In truth, Leech had hidden little. Rather, he articulated a sentiment held by many: that minority candidates speak for their own, while White candidates speak for everyone. As Leech put it “When a Punjabi leader speaks for the Punjabi, the Punjabi are listening but when a Caucasian speaks on their behalf, *everybody is listening*” (Gerein 2012, emphasis added; see also CBC News 2012). Although race is rarely made so explicit in Canadian politics (Thompson 2008; Winter 2011), Leech’s comments drew the division quite starkly and — indeed — in black and white. While the terms of Leech’s appeal may have been somewhat of an outlier, the sentiment is not. In what follows, I argue that race remains a relevant factor in Canadian politics.

The paper begins with a discussion of the news media with a focus on the factors that structure news coverage. It then looks briefly at minorities’ participation in electoral politics. With this as a backdrop, it proposes a theory of racial mediation and puts forward three news frames, which serve as the basis for examining the media’s coverage of visible minority and non-minority candidates in the 2008 Canadian federal election. Based on a content analysis of 980 print news articles, the paper argues that race structures the media’s reporting on electoral candidates, positioning visible minorities in terms of their socio-demographics, novelty and interest in more marginal policy issues. Moreover, unless visible minority candidates have proven themselves in the electoral arena, they are less likely than White candidates to be portrayed as politically viable. These findings are evident regardless of political party and are amplified for female candidates. As a result, the media offer only a partial picture of visible minority candidates, which reduces the quality of information that voters receive about candidates.

## THE ROLE OF THE NEWS MEDIA IN ELECTORAL POLITICS

The media play a central role in democratic politics because they are citizens’ primary source of information (Brody and Page 1975; Campbell 1995; Johnson-Cartee 2005; McCombs and Shaw 1972). The media have an impact on how citizens evaluate candidates and can affect voter preferences (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Jamieson 1992; Terkildsen and Damore 1999; Entman and Rojecki 2000). During election campaigns, the importance of the news media arguably increases with a greater proportion of coverage devoted to politics and citizens being more likely to consume that coverage, particularly if it is somewhat interesting, informative, or helps them identify the most pertinent issues and actors (Pickup et al. 2010). Because most voters have little first-hand experience with politics and are not likely to be personally acquainted with all of the candidates in their constituency, it is the media that provide them with the information they need to interpret the election, judge the players, and ultimately make political decisions. In this sense, the media act as a gatekeeper, determining which information citizens should receive, deciding how that information should be conveyed, and how prominent it should be (Shoemaker and Vos 2009).

To safeguard their objectivity, news organizations have put in place a number of standards related to fact-checking, reliance on diverse sources, the inclusion of opposing viewpoints, and the separation of reporters and editors. Gatekeeping theory posits, however, that other norms, values, and considerations may influence and override these choices. In particular, evaluations of newsworthiness, editorial preferences, commercial interests, and judgments about the appropriateness or appeal of a particular story or narrative may all affect the prominence, tone, and tenor of the news. Newsmakers are more likely to select stories that include elements of conflict, novelty, or sensationalism, as well as those that are geographically or temporally closer to the audience, more emotionally charged, anecdotal or replete with “vivid” information (Nisbett and Ross 1980, 45; Shoemaker and Vos 2009).

To create compelling stories – that is, those that are readable or watchable – newsmakers look for ways to simplify complex issues, events, and personalities. They do this, in part, by relying on heuristics, which are cognitive short-cuts that individuals use to help them sift through information (Popkin 1991). The literature on heuristics is based on the assumption that we are all essentially “cognitive misers” and thus seek out the most economical means of obtaining, storing, and evaluating information. We do this by extrapolating what we already know and by applying these cues, stereotypes, and schemas to new situations (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Lau and Redlawsk 2006). Information is not treated as an independent commodity but is “assimilated into pre-existing structures in the mind” (Nisbett and Ross 1980, 36). Ideas that are linked to or associated with information already stored in one’s memory are not only more likely to pass through the metaphorical gate, but be categorized in similar ways (Shoemaker and Vos 2009). For example, if a *potential* news story shares several characteristics with a *past* news story, it is likely to be cast in similar narratives. For this reason, what is judged to constitute an interesting story or a viable candidate will typically be based on the categorization of past stories or candidates (Shoemaker 1991; Shoemaker and Vos 2009).

We may also infer traits and beliefs from a candidate’s demographic characteristics, including race, gender, occupation, religion, and sexual orientation and use these trait stereotypes as a short-hand to identify the policy preferences, issue priorities, and general competencies of candidates (Golebiowska 2001; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; McDermott 1997, 1998, 2005, 2009). As a result, visible minority candidates may be trait stereotyped as most qualified to address issues related to immigration, multiculturalism, poverty and other so-called minority issues (McDermott 1998), as singularly interested in the concerns of their particular ethnocultural communities (Larson 2006; Zilber and Niven 2000), or as politically ineffective, inexperienced outsiders (Haynie 2002; Zilber and Niven 2000). This has implications for minorities’ news coverage and can affect the kind of information that voters receive about candidates.

## **POLITICS AT THE MARGINS**

This paper focuses on visible minorities, by which I mean individuals who are not Aboriginal peoples and “who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Statistics Canada 2007). Visible minority groups include the Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Korean and Japanese populations. While the term “visible minority” is used in Canadian legislation, it has been criticized because it uses “whiteness” as the standard against which to judge other races (United Nations 2007). I acknowledge the limitations of the term, but use “visible minority” or “racial minority” to refer to those who would generally be thought of as non-white, while I use the terms “non-

minority” or “White” to describe those who are not visible minorities.<sup>1</sup> These are categories based on perceived racial identities; they do not necessarily imply fixed or homogeneous memberships. Moreover, even within the “non-minority” category, there may be individuals who, while not technically *racial* minorities, nonetheless experience marginalization or discrimination as a result of (perceived) ethnocultural characteristics, such as religion, accent, or region of origin. That being said, this paper focuses on race as a primary marker of identity. While scholars have largely rejected the claim that there is a scientific basis to racial classifications, racial differentiation is real and persistent. Recognizing that race is socially constructed does not, in other words, erase its salience in society. Race and racial discourse continue to structure institutions, perceptions and human interactions. As such, even while rejecting the notion of race as an objective concept, I argue that the experiences of those marked by racial marginalization merit attention.

Visible minorities remain numerically under-represented in Canadian politics, with their presence in elected bodies falling short of their presence in the population (Andrew et al. 2008). Following the 2011 election, visible minorities occupied 9.4% of seats in the House of Commons, an increase from 7% in 2008. However, according to the 2006 Census, visible minorities comprised 16.2% of the population, a proportion that is expected to rise when the most recent Census data are released. Given historical trends, that population growth is likely to far out-pace visible minorities’ gains in the electoral arena, and the gap in numerical representation will persist (Black 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2008a, 2008b, 2011; Black and Hicks 2006; Black and Lakhani 1997).

Existing research has tended to focus on the institutional factors that have contributed to this numerical under-representation, including the electoral system, financial barriers, and a lack of political networks among visible minorities. Less attention has been given to cognitive and affective explanations, such as attitudes and perceptions. Where these have been the focus, the emphasis has been on the effect of voter bias on electoral outcomes (Black and Erickson 2006; Tossutti and Najem 2002). We know comparatively little about how perceptions affect the supply of visible minority candidates, whether party elites are less likely to recruit visible minorities because they think they will be less likely to win, or whether visible minorities are less inclined to run because they are not sure they would be favourably received. More to the point, we know little about the information that citizens receive about visible minority candidates, about the patterns of coverage, and about the effect of race on visible minorities’ portrayal and experiences in electoral politics.

This is an important oversight given that the media are not only a conduit between citizens and candidates, but also an avenue through which we learn about people who are different from ourselves. Moreover, even as the visible minority population increases in Canada, and ethnocultural diversity has shot onto the political landscape as a salient marker of identity, analyses of the media’s portrayal of visible minorities in Canadian politics are largely absent. Two notable exceptions are an article by Abu-Laban and Trimble (2006), which looked at media coverage of Muslim voters in recent federal elections, and an older study by Saunders (1991), which examined the coverage of ethnic minority groups and issues in the 1988 federal election. While important, both studies looked at minorities as *electors* rather than electoral *candidates*. By contrast, there is a significant body of comparative work on media portrayals of minority politicians, particularly in the U.S., but this is a country whose history of

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<sup>1</sup> The labeling of individuals who are “not visible minorities” is also problematic. The Government of Canada appears to favour the expression “non-visible minorities.” This engenders confusion, however, with some believing the term refers to people who *are* minorities but just not *visible* minorities. While “non-minorities” is the label adopted here, I recognize that it too is imperfect.

immigration, colonialism, and race relations differs significantly from that in Canada. The existing literature is there insufficient, and there is a need to remedy this gap.

## **RACIAL MEDIATION**

Far from being a neutral reflector, the media have a hand in constructing political reality (Schudson 1989). Theories of gendered mediation are well-documented and developed in the literature on women and politics (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross 1996; Gidengil and Everitt 1999; 2000; 2003a; 2003b; Goodyear-Grant 2007, 2009). According to this body of work, the media “filter and shape our understanding of what is politically relevant” through the use of framing, stereotypes, encoded language, and symbols (Gidengil and Everitt 2003b, 197). The evidence confirms that the media focus on the demographic characteristics of female politicians more so than male politicians, with coverage tending to emphasize women’s appearance, wardrobe, femininity, family life, and “soft” policy interests, positioning them as novelties or political amateurs (Gidengil and Everitt 2000, 2003a; Heldman et al. 2009; Sampert and Trimble 2003). In other words, the media may focus explicitly on candidates’ gendered traits, or they may convey more implicit messages about their competence, qualifications, and suitability for office. This suggests that candidates’ electoral fortunes can only be understood within the context of their media coverage.

Consistent with this literature, I propose a theory of racial mediation that captures the ways in which the media frame and portray visible minority politicians. I posit that politics are covered in ways that reflect dominant cultural norms, ideologies that are embedded in social, political and economic institutions, and the assumption of “whiteness” as the standard. Racial mediation may be explicit, but is more likely implicit, manifesting itself in subtle ways through the selection of stories, sources and images, in language and slant, and in the practices and norms that structure the construction and production of news. Racial mediation draws attention to the ways in which race may influence news stories; this can vary from an explicit focus on a candidate’s socio-demographic characteristics, to more subtle and implicit framing based on stereotypical assumptions about what constitutes a credible, qualified, and legitimate candidate.

While most media refrain from using explicitly racist framing, racial considerations may still affect the content, tenor, or direction of coverage and cause journalists to disproportionately emphasize the racial aspects of a story or to appeal to dominant narratives. I refer to this as racialized media coverage. Racialized media coverage may appear balanced or even positive, but it nonetheless positions candidates as a product of their race and not as neutral political beings. This operationalization is not about racism, per se, but rather about how race structures news reporting and serves to cue particular assumptions and assessments. Moreover, given that each one of us has an ascribed “race,” racialization is not confined to individuals with minority backgrounds. We may find it in the coverage of White candidates who run in diverse constituencies, for example.

When coupled with what we know about news production itself, the tendency toward racial mediation may be somewhat expected. For example, because there are incentives to produce stories in ways that will appeal to the widest audience, the news is not likely to challenge dominant racial narratives (Fleras and Kunz 2001; Norris 2000). The demographics of media outlets and their boards of directors – disproportionately White, male, educated and professional – may result in a lack of exposure to alternatives (Henry and Tator 2002; Miljan and Cooper 2003; Miller and Court 2004). In the context of space constraints and tight deadlines, reporters may also rely on impressions or short-cuts, categorizing candidates on the basis of the issues in which they believe they are most likely to be interested, with

subtle racial stereotypes confining visible minority candidates to a particular range of topics or behaviours (Niven and Zilber 2001). In addition, in an effort to deliver stories that are more easily understood, journalists may use metaphors and dominant narratives that can marginalize minority groups (Johnson-Cartee 2005).

## **NEWS FRAMING**

While we know much about the factors that influence the way that the news is reported, we actually know very little about how the coverage of visible minorities differs from that of non-minorities, particularly in political reporting. This paper uses framing theory to understand candidate coverage. Frames provide a narrative for understanding stories and signal who and what are important. By including or excluding particular words, phrases, imagery, facts, or judgments, frames tap information that a citizen has previously deemed to be significant thereby altering the weight and relevance accorded to that consideration (Entman 1993). In this way, framing can affect the interpretation of issues, events or actors. For example, elections may be framed as a contest between political actors (the so-called horserace) or, alternatively, as a venue for discussing policy alternatives. These varying interpretations can lead voters to think about the campaign as either a struggle between individuals or as a debate about ideas, and citizens will evaluate what they read and see accordingly.

Framing is particularly important in research on race in politics because the magnitude of framing effects is likely to be greatest when coverage relates to issues that are perceived as being important, but for which consumers have no first-hand knowledge (Johnson-Cartee 2005). Given that most citizens have limited personal experience with elected officials and minimal knowledge of racial groups apart from their own, framing effects may be stronger for stories about politicians of other races. Based on the existing literature (e.g. Jamieson 1992; Devitt 2002), I propose three frames that the media may use in their reporting on candidates. These are a socio-demographic frame, viability frame, and policy issues frame. These frames may be applied to both White and visible minority candidates and while the frames are presented as mutually exclusive, they do overlap, and stories may include more than a single frame.

### *Socio-demographic frame*

The socio-demographic frame highlights, as the name implies, a candidate's demographic background. This might be an explicit description of a candidate as Black, South Asian, Anglo-Saxon or visible minority, or it might be more implicit, such as a reference to a politician's country of origin or religious affiliation (Terkildsen and Damore 1999). The coverage may draw attention to candidates' support from particular ethnic communities or describe the racial composition of their constituency, thereby reinforcing the particular appeal of their candidacy (Terkildsen and Damore 1999; Zilber and Niven 2000). The inclusion of a candidate's photograph may further aid in the transmission of a race frame (Jeffries 2002; Schwartz 2011). Research suggests that the coverage of electoral contests with at least one minority candidate is more likely to draw attention to race than is the case when the candidates are all White, and it is the race of the minority candidate that is most often mentioned (Terkildsen and Damore 1999; Caliendo and McIlwain 2006).

### *Viability frame*

News coverage may frame particular candidates as being more or less viable by emphasizing their qualifications and experience, political connections, or suitability for office. Zilber and Niven (2000) have found that Black Congressmen were more likely than White Congressmen to be portrayed as "parochial outsiders," often by situating the coverage of Black members in their districts rather than in

Washington, or by discussing their lack of political experience. When there is a desire for change, this frame could work to the advantage of visible minority politicians, but they may have to overcome suspicions about their credentials or motives for entering politics. Coverage that positions candidates as outsiders may result in them being viewed as interlopers with less dedication to the party or politics (Sayers and Jetha 2002). The viability frame may also be conveyed by highlighting visible minority candidates' "novelty," "trail-blazing" or famous "firsts." As a result of this type of framing, candidates may be viewed as political anomalies who do not necessarily belong in electoral institutions (Braden 1996; Gidengil and Everitt 2003b; Heldman et al. 2009; Zilber and Niven 2000). Of course, this "novel" status may potentially advantage candidates by providing an angle for a story that would not otherwise be there (Schaffner and Gadson 2004) or by positioning them as "fresh faces," which could appeal to voters looking for a change. Regardless, novelty stories put the emphasis on candidates' differences rather than on their policy agenda or qualifications, which are characteristics that voters weigh when making electoral decisions. Given that dominant or "culturally mainstream" criteria are often used as the basis for judgments about a candidate's suitability for a position, viability framing may lead voters to believe that visible minorities simply lack the qualifications for political life (Eagly and Mladinic 1989; Esses et al. 2006; Zilber and Niven 2000).

#### *Policy issues frame*

Finally, issue frames focus on substantive policy matters, ideological positions, and candidates' issue priorities. The literature on women in politics finds, for example, that women are portrayed as most interested in "soft" policy issues like healthcare or poverty, while men are portrayed as most interested in economic and military issues, which are deemed by voters to be more important policy matters (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). With respect to minorities, Schaffner and Gadson (2004) found that while Black members of Congress received more local television news coverage than their White counterparts, the coverage suggested that minority politicians concentrated on a narrow set of minority issues. Although it is difficult to define precisely what constitutes a "minority issue," the American literature suggests that minorities are more likely to be linked to social welfare issues like poverty and social housing, to racially based issues like affirmative action and human rights, to immigration issues, and to crime (Gilens 1996; Sigelman et al. 1995; Zilber and Niven 2000). This framing suggests that minority politicians are self-interested or ill-equipped to deal with broader "mainstream" issues. Moreover, when minority politicians are stereotyped in positive ways, such as being more capable of handling social justice issues, the effects are usually off-set by perceptions of incompetence in other areas (Sigelman et al. 1995). Importantly, minority issue framing occurs even when minority politicians' publicly expressed areas of interest lie elsewhere (Zilber and Niven 2000).

## **METHODS AND DATA**

To test my theory of racial mediation, this paper examines the coverage of candidates in the 40<sup>th</sup> Canadian general election. This election was called in the Fall of 2008, and the campaign was dominated by a focus on climate change (largely influenced by the Liberals' Green Shift platform), a discussion of provincial equalization payments (largely led by the provincial Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador), allegations of bribery against Conservative officials, and attacks on the leadership abilities of Liberal leader, Stéphane Dion (for an overview of the 2008 campaign, see Gidengil et al. 2012, xxii-xxiii). Although the campaign occurred during the same period as the U.S. election that brought Barack Obama to power, neither ethnic politics nor immigration, multiculturalism or any of the so-called "minority issues" figured prominently in this campaign. If anything, the media appeared more interested in the gender dimension, perhaps influenced by coverage of Sarah Palin and Hillary Rodham Clinton (see, for example, Payne 2008).

In line with my theorization of racial mediation, I expect that the print media's coverage of visible minority candidates will be qualitatively different than that of White candidates. I predict that the socio-demographic characteristics of visible minority candidates will be discussed more often than those of White candidates, and that the coverage will position these candidates more frequently as political outsiders who are more interested in so-called minority issues than in "mainstream" issues like the economy. Consistent with past research, however, I predict that candidates' political experience, presumed electoral prospects, and riding characteristics will condition their framing to some degree, and I expect variation on the basis of a number of factors including incumbency, electoral outcome, candidate gender and party affiliation.

The method used here is content analysis, which "entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter" (Krippendorff 2004, 3). Using clear, consistent, and replicable procedures, a content analyst infers meaning from textual material; done properly, the results of a content analysis should be both valid and reliable (Krippendorff 2004). For this reason, good content analysis is premised on careful codebook construction, proper training, and thorough pilot testing (Neuendorf 2002). The coding scheme was adapted from past research and was pilot-tested and revised several times. The final codebook contained 47 variables that probed various aspects of candidate coverage, article tone, framing, and candidate characteristics; a list of the variables can be found in Appendix A. Many of the variables asked coders to code for "mentions" of a particular phenomenon. A "mention" was defined as "a direct reference to or evidence of the item in question," and coders were instructed to code only on the basis of what was contained in the article itself. To improve reliability, coders were asked not to infer from the articles or to code on the basis of information that they might already possess (e.g. their own personal knowledge of the candidates).

The analysis was conducted on a sample of 980 articles that appeared in 18 English-language Canadian daily newspapers during the period from the dropping of the writ on September 7, 2008 until the day of the election on October 14, 2008.<sup>2</sup> The print media were selected in part because of the greater availability of full-text electronic records, but also because this is where local campaigns are likely to receive the most intensive coverage (Schwartz 2011). Television news tends to focus on the leaders' tour and debates with much less coverage given to local candidates. Moreover, in comparison to televised sources, print media outlets are able to offer more extensive news coverage because of less stringent space considerations. This provides an opportunity for them to engage more fully in the framing of news stories (Druckman 2005). For this reason, the print media offer an efficient means for studying news coverage because they provide more of it for any given story, candidate, or event.

In order to capture candidate-centred election coverage, I chose a sample of 34 visible minority and 34 White candidates who ran in ridings outside of Quebec.<sup>3</sup> Although establishing the "race" of candidates is inherently problematic, I relied on candidates' published biographies, media accounts, and photographs; the results are in line with those obtained by Black (2008b; 2011) and Bird (2008). The candidate sample was stratified so it would include visible minority candidates who had won and lost, as

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<sup>2</sup> The newspapers included were the Globe and Mail, National Post, Vancouver Sun, The Province, Times-Colonist, Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal, Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Regina Leader Post, Winnipeg Free Press, Toronto Star, Ottawa Citizen, Windsor Star, Montreal Gazette, Halifax Chronicle Herald / Sunday Herald, Saint John's Telegraph Journal, St. John's Telegram and the Charlottetown Guardian. This includes Canada's "paper of record," the Globe and Mail, as well as regional representation through a number of important dailies.

<sup>3</sup> Because only English-language newspapers are included in the analysis, candidates who ran in ridings in Quebec have been excluded.



well as White candidates who ran in ridings with varying levels of diversity. Within these categories, the sampling was random, and there is variation with respect to candidate gender, incumbency, and electoral outcome. While there is variation along party lines, the sample includes only those who ran for the Conservative, Liberal, and New Democratic parties and who were thus most likely to receive media coverage. Unlike a simple random sample, which may have resulted in too few visible minority candidates to even permit an analysis, this stratified strategy ensured sufficient variation along the main categories of interest. The characteristics of candidates included in the analysis are shown in Table 1. Using the names of these candidates and the dates of the writ period as the search parameters, full-text articles were retrieved from Canadian Newsstand and Eureka. All news stories were included, with the exception of letters to the editor or simple lists of riding candidates.

**[Table 1 about here]**

The bulk of the coding was carried out by three independent coders.<sup>4</sup> This is somewhat of a departure from the more common two-coder approach, or a strategy in which the principal investigator codes all or at least a portion of the materials and then checks reliability against a second, independent coder. The latter practice, in particular, can introduce bias into the findings given the researcher's familiarity with the study and its expected findings. For this reason, the principal investigator's involvement in the coding was limited.<sup>5</sup> Coders each received approximately 25 hours of training, which took place over a week-long period. The training included codebook discussion and revision, practice articles, pilot coding, and reliability checks. Coding on the actual article sample commenced only when acceptable levels of reliability were reached in the training session.

Each coder coded approximately 455 randomly assigned articles. In each coder's set were approximately 260 unique articles as well as 195 articles that were the same for all three coders; this set of common articles comprised 20% of the total article sample and was used to check reliability. The common articles were incorporated into the main data set after the reliability check; if there were disagreements among the coders on these common articles, a majority rule was imposed to determine which code would be included in the main data set. The use of three coders in this fashion provides an acceptable basis for measuring reliability (Krippendorff 2004; Neuendorf 2002) while ensuring coders have a manageable number of units to code. Although the coders worked at different speeds, most articles took less than 10 minutes to code, and a total of 275 person hours were spent coding the articles in the sample.

All variables coded by the coders were checked for reliability using PRAM, a Program for Reliability Assessment with Multiple Coders (Neuendorf 2002). Average pairwise agreement across the 30 coded variables was 98%, with a range of 82.9% to 100%. PRAM also calculates Fleiss' kappa (K), which is a measure of intercoder agreement that can be used with nominal data, is suitable for multicoder situations, and assumes that coders did not necessarily all code the same items (Fleiss 1971). Although

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<sup>4</sup> Coders were hired through Carleton University's career centre. A job poster yielded nearly 100 applications, mostly from graduate students. The three successful applicants were all Master's students; one in political science, one in international relations, and one in journalism and communications.

<sup>5</sup> Thirty of the variables were coded by three independent coders, while 17 variables were coded by the principal investigator. The latter group included the more "administrative" variables (e.g. publication date, page number, word count, and author) as well as candidate characteristics like riding, gender, party, race and incumbency. This was done for two reasons. First, administrative variables typically achieve high levels of intercoder reliability (Krippendorff 2004), so they pose less of a concern than other more subjective variables. Second, having the main coders code information about the candidates under study might influence their reading of the texts. For example, coders who code a candidate's racial background may be more conscious of racialized coverage.

there is no agreed upon definition of “acceptable” intercoder reliability, Landis and Koch (1977) suggest that a kappa statistic ranging from 0.41 to 0.60 indicates moderate agreement, 0.61 to 0.80 substantial agreement, and 0.81 to 1.00 almost perfect agreement. In my study, Fleiss’ kappa averaged 0.87, with a range of 0.50 to 1.00. Average intercoder reliability is thus near perfect. Nonetheless, some variables did achieve more moderate levels of agreement. Unsurprisingly, these are the more subjective variables, which are open to interpretation and thus more difficult to code reliably. They include mentions of a candidate’s novelty (K=0.50) and quality (K=0.67), as well as the presence of a game frame (K=0.65) and the overall tone of the candidate’s coverage (K=0.58). Although inter-coder reliability for these variables is below the average and some caution should be exercised when interpreting the results, the range still falls within acceptable levels and, overall, coders did achieve high levels of reliability. We can thus use these data with some confidence and assume that the results are replicable and were not achieved simply by chance. In what follows, I present the results of the content analysis, relying principally on descriptive statistics and bivariate tabular analyses with appropriate tests of statistical significance.<sup>6</sup>

## FINDINGS

Stories averaged 674 words in length; there is no variation in article length according to candidate race. Of the 980 stories included in the sample, 53.3% mention White candidates, compared to 46.3% for visible minority candidates. White candidates thus receive slightly more coverage than visible minority candidates. The bulk of the stories (83.2%) are news articles, while 14.9% were columns and just 1.9% were editorials. White candidates are mentioned more frequently than visible minority candidates in all three categories, with the largest difference occurring in the editorial category, where 57.9% of editorials mention White candidates compared to 42.1% for visible minority candidates. This is interesting, given that it is in editorials that newspapers typically offer their endorsement of particular candidates. Nonetheless, while amount of coverage is one consideration when assessing media coverage, arguably the *content* of that coverage is more important than its *quantity*. This paper is thus primarily concerned with the portrayal of candidates’ socio-demographic characteristics, political viability, and policy interests.

### Candidates’ socio-demographic coverage

Candidates’ socio-demographic coverage is assessed using seven variables. The first five relate to a candidate’s personal characteristics, including mentions of a candidate’s race (either White or non-White), birthplace (either Canadian- or foreign-born), religion (either Judeo-Christian or non-Judeo-Christian), language (either majority or minority), and the birthplace of a candidate’s parents (either Canadian- or foreign-born). Two additional variables relate to characteristics of the candidate’s riding or supporters and include mentions of the constituency’s demographic composition or that of a candidate’s supporters (either minority or “mainstream”). Mentions of candidate religion, language, and parents’ birthplace turned out to be relatively rare (occurring in 12 cases or less). It is not clear why this is the case, but it could be because attributes like candidate birthplace or race are taken as “stand-ins” or proxies for other characteristics like religion or language, and the latter thus need not be discussed. Alternatively, journalists may simply feel less comfortable discussing candidates’ religion, for example,

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<sup>6</sup> To test the difference between the observed and hypothesized proportions for each variable, Pearson’s Chi-square test was used in most cases. The only exception was when 50% or more cells had expected frequencies of less than 5; in such cases, Fisher’s exact test was used (Hogg and Tanis 2001). If the Chi-square is significant, Phi is also reported to indicate the strength of association between the two variables; Phi is the appropriate measure of association for 2x2 tables.

or it may be more difficult for them to determine a candidate's religion or parents' place of birth. Regardless of the reason, coverage of these attributes is quite rare, and these results are not discussed in detail here. Instead, I focus on mentions of candidate race and birthplace, as well as mentions of riding composition and community support. The results are shown in Figure 1.

**[Figure 1 about here]**

Candidate race is mentioned in 3.2% of all articles. Tellingly, of these, *all* mentions (31 in total) were made in relation to visible minority candidates. In none of the coverage of White candidates is there ever any mention of candidate race. In terms of magnitude, 6.8% of visible minority candidate coverage makes a reference to candidate race. The relationship is significant, although the association is relatively weak (Chi-square = 37.090;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = 0.195$ ). Meanwhile, 20 articles mention a candidate's birthplace (2.0% of all stories). Of these, the majority (80%) are in reference to visible minority candidates. When visible minority candidates' birthplace is mentioned, it is nearly always to denote a foreign birthplace; in only one instance is there mention of a visible minority candidate's Canadian birthplace. The relationship is significant, although the association is quite weak (Chi-square = 17.649;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = 0.134$ ). In only four cases is the birthplace of White candidates mentioned (generally to signal whether the candidate was born in the riding or not), and the relationship is not significant.

The demographic composition of a candidate's riding is mentioned in 79 articles (8.1% of all stories). Two-thirds of these mentions appear in articles about visible minority candidates. Taken together, 10.6% of articles about visible minority candidates mention the demographic composition of their ridings, compared to only 5.9% of articles about White candidates. The relationship between candidate race and riding composition mentions is significant (Chi-square = 7.242;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $\Phi = 0.086$ ). Among visible minority candidates, nearly all mentions of riding composition (96%) emphasized minority socio-demographics, including the proportion of immigrants, ethnocultural minorities, and non-Judeo-Christian religions. Meanwhile, 75% of mentions of White candidates' riding composition referred to minority socio-demographics; many of these were situated within a context of "ethnic targeting" (e.g. Martin 2008b; Moloney 2008; Ward and Lai 2008).

Mentions of candidate support within particular communities were relatively rare, occurring in just 1.1% of articles. Of those articles mentioning any type of community support, 63.6% are about visible minority candidates, while 36.4% are about White candidates. Most mentions of community support (72.7%) pertained to support from minority communities and, of these, 87.5% were made in reference to visible minority candidates, while the remainder (12.5%) referred to White candidates' support from minority communities (Fisher's exact test = 0.028). In other words, visible minority candidates receive more mentions of community support than do White candidates, and these mentions are primarily in relation to their support from "their own" communities. Meanwhile, mentions of mainstream community support are very rare, occurring in just 0.3% of all stories, in no case are these mentions connected to visible minority candidates; all are linked to White candidates' support from mainstream or majority communities.

If we combine all socio-demographic variables – that is, all those related to candidate characteristics, riding composition, and community support – we find that 3.2% of White candidate stories mention their majority or mainstream status. By contrast, 15.6% of stories about visible minority candidates mention their minority status (Chi-square = 34.034;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = 0.186$ ). These data suggest that when socio-demographic coverage is employed, it is firmly targeted toward visible minority candidates. Racial references are far more common in the coverage of visible minority candidates than in the

coverage of White candidates, and when candidate birthplace is mentioned, it is nearly always in relation to visible minority candidates, with the emphasis on the candidate's foreign birth. Moreover, discussions of riding composition tend to reinforce visible minority candidates' minority status, while the coverage of White candidates emphasizes their ability to appeal to voters unlike themselves. This echoes the sentiment expressed by Ron Leech, the Wildrose candidate, at the outset of the paper, namely that minorities speak for minorities while non-minorities speak to everyone. It is also reinforced by discussions of community support which, although relatively rare, position visible minority candidates as somewhat parochial, with limited ties to so-called mainstream or majority populations.

Taken together, socio-demographic coverage pigeon-holes visible minority candidates as narrow and potentially inward-looking with White candidates portrayed as cross-culturally appealing. While some variables – including candidate religion, language and parents' birthplace – were not found to be significant, the other socio-demographic characteristics – notably candidate race, birthplace, riding composition and community support – emerge as important. This suggests that racial characteristics are one factor that journalists use to distinguish visible minority candidates from other candidates. Of course, in reviewing the data, some may argue that socio-demographic coverage comprises just a fraction of all media reporting. What this misses, however, is the potentially damaging and long-lasting effects that such coverage can have. As Everitt and Camp (2009, 133) note, "Research about stereotyping suggests impressions based on categorical information [like race, gender or sexual orientation] are quickly and easily formed; once in place, they are difficult to change" (see also Fiske et al. 1987).

### **Candidates' viability coverage**

There are three variables that pertain to candidate viability. These are insider status (e.g. mentions of a candidate's incumbency, previous electoral office, involvement in the party as a strategist or long-time supporter, and support from the party machinery or party elites), candidate quality (e.g. mentions of a candidate's high-profile, prominence or service to the community), and novelty (e.g. mentions of a candidate being the "first" to accomplish something or of his/her distinctive occupational status or personal accomplishments).<sup>7</sup>

Nearly two-thirds of all coverage (62.6%) includes some mention of candidates' insider status. Although the difference is not sizeable, visible minority candidates receive slightly more insider mentions than White candidates. Specifically, 65.0% of visible minority candidate coverage includes an insider mention compared to 60.5% for White candidates (Chi-square = 2.127;  $p < 0.10$ ;  $df = 1$ ). Mentions of candidate quality are far less common than mentions of insider status, with the latter appearing in just 6.4% of all stories. Such mentions appear in 7.0% of stories about White candidates, compared to 4.9% for visible minority candidates, but the relationship is not statistically significant (Chi-square = 2.038;  $p = 0.153$ ;  $df = 1$ ). Mentions of candidate novelty appear in 0.4% of all stories, but all of these mentions pertain to visible minority candidates, and the relationship is significant (Fisher's exact test = 0.046).

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<sup>7</sup> Initially, coders were asked to look for additional markers of candidate quality, including professional background and educational credentials. However, in coder training, it became evident that it would be difficult to achieve high rates of inter-coder reliability on these dimensions because the definition of what constitutes a "quality" profession or education is highly subjective. By narrowing the focus to attributes like prominence, profile, and length of residence in the community, it was possible to achieve more acceptable levels of inter-coder reliability. In other words, while the measure of quality may be somewhat narrow, it is more reliable than would have been the case had a broader definition been employed.

Of course, viability coverage is undoubtedly influenced, at least in part, by a candidate's *actual* viability, that is, by the skills, experience, and qualifications that they have. The literature suggests that visible minorities do bring superior qualifications to the electoral arena. For example, Black's research (2000a, 2003, 2008a) finds that minority candidates tend to have higher levels of education and more professional backgrounds than those of White candidates. This is particularly the case for "double minorities," such as minority women, who may overcome their demographic disadvantage by bringing other attributes to the table. Similarly, in their study of elected officials in Ottawa, Biles and Tolley (2008, 123) found that foreign-born councilors, legislators and Members of Parliament had lived in the community for an average of 30 years, much longer than Canadian-born officials; they argue that these deeper roots "are a political resource that may 'compensate' for their immigrant status." If visible minority candidates do bring more substantial electoral assets to the table, we should reasonably expect them to receive significantly more viability coverage than White candidates. Is this the case? Table 2 provides a preliminary exploration of the impact of incumbency and electoral outcome — two markers of viability — on candidates' coverage.

Here we see that White challengers (i.e. non-incumbents) receive significantly more viability coverage than visible minority challengers. The results for electoral outcome suggest that defeated visible minority candidates are less likely to be portrayed as quality candidates than are White candidates, although successful visible minority candidates are more likely to be portrayed as political insiders. The most dramatic difference pertains to candidates' insider coverage, with 27.1% of White challengers' coverage mentioning their insider ties, compared to just 5.0% for visible minority challengers. White challengers also receive slightly more quality coverage than visible minority incumbents (7.6% of all White candidate stories, compared to 2.5% of all visible minority candidate stories). In other words, White challengers receive significantly more insider and quality coverage than visible minority challengers, but incumbency washes away those differences. This suggests that once visible minorities have, in effect, proven themselves, they are just as likely as White candidates to receive positive viability coverage. When they are not "known commodities," however, visible minority candidates appear not to be given the benefit of doubt and are instead portrayed as political outsiders of questionable quality.

**[Table 2 about here]**

Of course, measures of viability extend beyond incumbency and electoral outcome and include factors like a candidates' electoral experience, margin of victory, money raised, and educational and professional credentials. The next stage of the research comprises a compilation of these measures. In the aggregate, these will allow me to compare relatively objective indicators of candidate viability against actual viability coverage. If racial mediation is not occurring, then we should see the most objectively viable candidates receiving the most favourable viability coverage, regardless of their race.

At this stage, however, we can make two important observations. First, visible minority candidates with a reasonable chance of winning seem to be accorded somewhat more viability coverage than White candidates. This is particularly true with respect to their insider coverage. Second, visible minority candidates' viability coverage suffers considerably when they are not incumbents. In particular, they are much less likely than White candidates to be portrayed as political insiders. These findings suggest that a candidate's non-racial characteristics, including viability, are important to candidates' coverage, but race may mediate the effect of these factors. In other words, if you want to be portrayed as a qualified insider, being an incumbent with a reasonable chance of winning does matter, but it matters *most* for visible minority candidates.

## Candidates' issue coverage

The content analysis also assessed the extent to which candidates were connected to policy issues. Coders looked for references to the candidate's interest in, support for or involvement in particular policy issues. Such mentions are fairly common in candidates' coverage, with 39.7% of all articles connecting candidates to policy issues in some way. There is no statistically significant difference in terms of the propensity of coverage to link candidates to policy issues; 41.4% of all stories about White candidates include a policy mention compared to 37.7% for visible minority candidates. Visible minority candidates are, however, somewhat more likely than White candidates to be connected to *specific* kinds of issues, although the results were not exactly in line with expectations. In particular, although visible minority candidates were more likely than White candidates to be connected to crime issues as the American literature predicts, they were no less likely to be connected to social welfare or immigration and multiculturalism issues.<sup>8</sup>

With respect to crime, 12.3% of stories about visible minority candidates linked them to these policy issues, compared to 7.4% of stories about White candidates; the relationship is significant (Chi-square = 6.739;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = 0.083$ ). On immigration and multiculturalism, 7.7% of stories connected visible minority candidates to these issues, compared to 5.9% of White candidates' stories, but the relationship is not statistically significant. Similarly, although there are more stories connecting White candidates to social welfare issues (3.2% of White coverage) than there are stories connecting visible minority candidates to these issues (2% of visible minority coverage), the difference is not statistically significant. In other words, in contrast to conclusions reached in studies of the media in the United States (e.g. Entman 1992; Gilens 1996; Zilber and Niven 2000), it does not appear that visible minorities are any more likely to be linked to immigration, multiculturalism or social welfare issues, like poverty and social housing, than are White candidates. Meanwhile, we find that White candidates are more likely than visible minority candidates to be linked to other kinds of issues, including those related to health and the economy. These types of policy mentions appear in 35.2% of White candidates' coverage, compared to 28% of visible minority candidates' coverage. The relationship is statistically significant (Chi-square = 5.817;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = -0.077$ ).

We can draw a few conclusions from these data. First, it would appear that the link between race and so-called minority issues, which is prevalent in the American research, is somewhat less applicable in Canada. On matters of social welfare, the lack of racial variation could be a result of Canadians' comparatively more positive orientation toward social welfare issues, which could depress negative associations between visible minorities and perceptions of dependency. On immigration and multiculturalism issues, the lack of racial variation in candidate mentions could be a function of the sampling strategy, which targeted White candidates who ran in highly diverse ridings. These are constituencies where such issues are presumably salient, and candidates – regardless of race – may be more likely to discuss them. Second, although we do not find differences on social welfare, immigration or multiculturalism policy mentions, visible minority candidates are more likely than White candidates to be connected to crime issues.

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the sample of White candidates included Jason Kenney, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. Given his portfolio, a large number of his stories connected him to immigration and multiculturalism issues. Indeed, 28% of immigration and multiculturalism mentions, alone, were in stories about Mr. Kenney. The inclusion of Mr. Kenney in the candidate sample is, of course, one of the perils of random selection.

Finally, it is significant that when visible minorities receive policy issue coverage, it is much less likely to be on “mainstream” issues like health or the economy, which consistently rank among voters’ top policy priorities (Environics Institute 2010). In other words, visible minority candidates figure less prominently than White candidates in discussions about the “issues that matter.” This may leave voters with the impression that visible minority candidates are not tuned into the key policy issues, that they have a narrow focus, or that they will be less able to respond to their concerns. Of course, this finding must be verified against candidates’ stated policy priorities; it could be the case that visible minority candidates *are* more interested in so-called minority issues, in which case, such coverage is not a function of mediation, but merely a reflection of reality. Additional research is needed so that candidates’ self-presentation can be examined alongside their media portrayals (for an assessment in the women in politics literature, see Goodyear-Grant 2009).

### **Party effects**

Beginning in the 2008 election, more attention was paid to so-called “ethnic targeting” strategies, which observers suggest the Conservative Party are, in particular, increasingly employing (Flanagan 2011). On this basis, we might expect party affiliation to affect socio-demographic coverage, particularly with respect to reporting on candidates’ race, riding composition, and potential support from minority communities. Surprisingly, partisanship appears to have little effect on socio-demographic coverage, with candidates of all parties receiving about the same amount of socio-demographic coverage. Mentions of a riding’s minority demographic composition is slightly more common for Liberal candidates than for Conservative candidates, with this type of coverage occurring in 9% of Liberal stories compared to 7.3% of Conservative stories; the relationship is significant (Chi-square = 7.343;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $\Phi = 0.087$ ). Although the Conservatives were arguably more strongly associated with ethnic targeting strategies, the Liberals nonetheless fielded more high-profile candidates in diverse ridings, particularly in the so-called “ethnic battlegrounds” surrounding the Greater Toronto Area; given their profile, Liberals were thus more likely than Conservatives to receive coverage in these ridings. As such, it is not surprising that Liberal candidates would receive more mentions of minority riding composition than would Conservative candidates.

### **Gender effects**

Given the research on gendered mediation, I also examined the effect of gender on candidate coverage. Somewhat surprisingly, socio-demographic coverage – that is mention of a candidate’s race, religion, language, and birthplace – is more common for male candidates than for female candidates; 6.8% of stories about male candidates include at least one socio-demographic mention, compared to 2.8% of stories about female candidates (Chi-square = 7.268;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = -0.086$ ). When we zero in specifically on the minority socio-demographic mentions (e.g. visible minority, non-Judeo-Christian religion, minority language, and foreign birthplace), this relationship holds with 5.5% of stories about male candidates including a minority socio-demographic mention, compared to 2.2% for stories about female candidates (Chi-square = 5.959;  $p < 0.05$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = -0.078$ ). Although purely speculative, one wonders if the race / gender combination embodied by visible minority women heightens journalists’ sensitivities about demographic descriptors and, as a result, sub-consciously depresses their reporting on such factors. Alternatively, it is possible that, for women candidates, gender is viewed as the key socio-demographic variable and thus, socio-demographic mentions focus here, rather than on racial characteristics.

Male candidates also receive more viability coverage than female candidates; 68.5% of male candidates' stories include at least one viability mention, compared to 57.2% of stories about female candidates (Chi-square = 12.615;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = -0.114$ ). Men are much more likely to be portrayed as political insiders than are women (67.3% of male candidates' stories, compared to 54.4% for female candidates), while women are more likely to be portrayed as novelties (1.1% of female candidates' stories, compared to none for male candidates). While both of these relationships are statistically significant, there is no statistically significant difference between candidate gender and quality mentions. This could be because the media are hesitant to impose specific evaluations of candidate quality, given the subjective nature of such assessments. By contrast, mentions of insider / outsider status or candidate novelty could be justified as ostensibly factual given a candidate's limited electoral experience or recruitment from outside of politics. Bolstering this conjecture are the data on policy mentions, where we see that male candidates receive the most policy issue coverage; 43.2% of their stories contain such mentions, compared to 33.6% for female candidates (Chi-square = 8.795;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = -0.095$ ). Again, unlike subjective assessments of quality, the linking of a candidate to a particular policy issue *appears* neutral, which makes the narrative safer and thus potentially more appealing to journalists.

Candidates' viability coverage is also characterized by the intersectional effects of race and gender. As we might expect, White males receive the most viability coverage (73.7% of their stories include at least one such mention). This is followed closely by visible minority females (71.0%). Visible minority males are next with 63.5% of their stories including at least one viability mention, while White females receive the least viability coverage of all candidates (just 48.6% of their stories include a viability mention). In light of Black's (2008a) observation that "double minority" candidates simply have to be more qualified than other candidates, the viability coverage that visible minority women receive may in fact be a reflection of reality. Not only are female candidates more likely than men to be portrayed as novelties (Everitt and Camp 2009), race appears to amplify this tendency. Indeed, visible minority females are the only candidates to receive such coverage, with novelty mentions occurring in 2.9% of all stories about visible minority females; the relationship is statistically significant (Chi-square = 9.421;  $p < 0.01$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $\Phi = 0.143$ ). It would seem that the presence of visible minority women in politics offers the media an irresistible "novelty" angle, with stories highlighting candidates' sexuality, including past appearances in Bollywood films or their appearance on Maxim's list of the World's Hottest Politicians (Martin 2008a). This suggests that just as politics is not gender-blind, nor is it race-blind, with the intersection of these identities appearing to amplify rather than mute experiences of marginalization.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the print media's coverage of candidates in the 2008 federal election, but it is just one step in the analysis. Additional research is needed to investigate the impact of other factors on candidate coverage, including story type and length, as well as differences across media markets. The results are also being triangulated using an automated dictionary-based approach to text analysis (Tolley 2011a, 2011b), which will help resolve questions around the most suitable method for analyzing media data. Although automated approaches to content analysis do raise questions about concept validity (e.g. Are computers as adept as human at recognizing racism?), they are highly reliable and can overcome concerns related to coder bias. A preliminary comparison of the results achieved by the hand-coded and automated approaches suggests that the contours of coverage are relatively similar regardless of the method used. Finally, although a candidate's coverage is important in and of itself, we cannot overlook the fact that media portrayals are in part a function of the subject's self-presentation. Through their words, actions, communications, and electoral strategies, candidates can themselves contribute to the



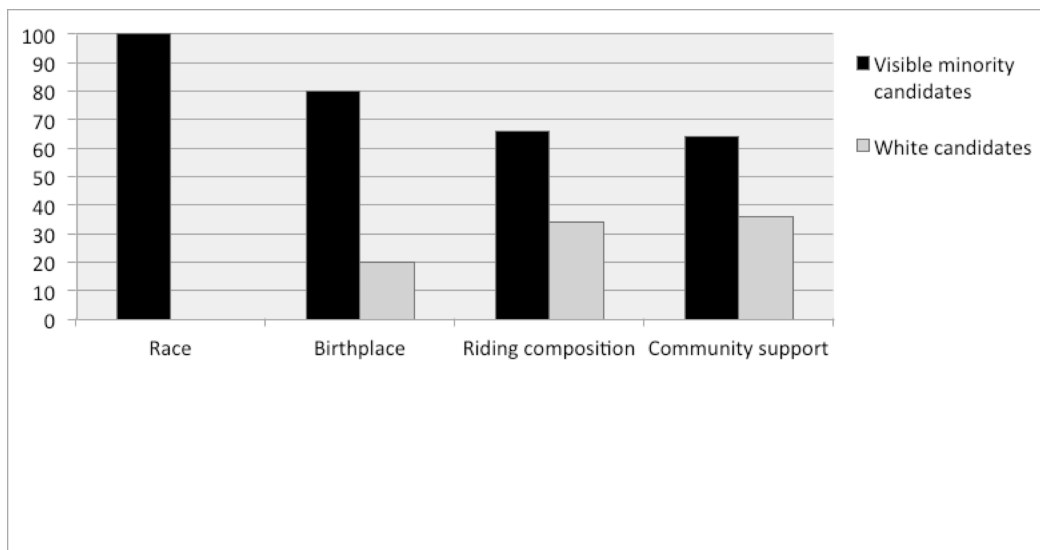
shape, tone, and emphasis of their own coverage. As such, the content analysis will be complemented by interviews with candidates, staffers, and party officials that will allow for an assessment of media strategies, message communication, and overall candidate presentation.

The results presented here, however, suggest that visible minority candidates are portrayed differently than White candidates. Specifically, visible minority candidates are more likely than White candidates to be framed in terms of their socio-demographics and novelty and as less interested in mainstream policy issues, like health and the economy. Moreover, unless visible minority candidates have proven themselves in the electoral arena, either as incumbents or campaign winners, they are less likely than White candidates to be portrayed as quality candidates or political insiders. Although the paper finds few party effects, there are clear gender effects. While on the basis of this analysis, we cannot draw a causal link between candidate coverage and political outcomes, we can say that voters do receive only a partial picture of visible minority candidates. This has the potential to affect the way voters evaluate the political choices before them. Perhaps more damagingly, by focusing visible minorities' coverage on socio-demographics, novelty and a narrow set of policy issues, rather than on more politically salient topics and characteristics, the media may reinforce stereotypes about candidates' suitability for office. Not only might this have an effect on voter assessments, but it could serve to discourage visible minorities from seeing themselves as candidates. Given that the visible minority candidate pool is already proportionately smaller than the White candidate pool, this poses a threat to political inclusiveness and the health of our democracy.

**Table 1. Candidate Characteristics**

	<b>Visible Minority Candidates (n)</b>	<b>White Candidates (n)</b>	<b>All Candidates (n)</b>
<b>Number</b>	34	34	68
<b>Provinces</b>	Ontario (14) BC (10) Alberta (6) Saskatchewan (1) Manitoba (1) Nova Scotia (2)	Ontario (16) BC (7) Alberta (3) Saskatchewan (1) Manitoba (3) Nova Scotia (1) New Brunswick (1) PEI (1) NFLD (1)	Ontario (30) BC (17) Alberta (9) Saskatchewan (2) Manitoba (4) Nova Scotia (3) New Brunswick (1) PEI (1) NFLD (1)
<b>Visible Minority Population in Riding</b>	> 50% (17) 15.1% - 49.9% (7) < 15% (10)	>50% (16) 15.1% - 49.9% (8) < 15% (10)	> 50% (33) 15.1% - 49.9% (15) <15% (20)
<b>Gender</b>	Male (22) Female (12)	Male (22) Female (12)	Male (44) Female (24)
<b>Party</b>	Conservative (17) Liberal (13) NDP (4)	Conservative (10) Liberal (20) NDP (4)	Conservative (27) Liberal (33) NDP (8)
<b>Incumbents</b>	Incumbents (18) Non-incumbents (16)	Incumbents (20) Non-incumbents (14)	Incumbents (38) Non-incumbents (30)
<b>Elected / Defeated</b>	Elected (17) Defeated (17)	Elected (28) Defeated (6)	Elected (45) Defeated (23)

**Figure 1. Candidates' proportion of socio-demographic mentions**



**Table 2. Factors affecting candidates' viability coverage**

	<b>All viability mentions (% of stories)</b>	<b>Insider mentions (% of stories)</b>	<b>Quality mentions (% of stories)</b>	<b>Novelty mentions (% of stories)</b>
<b>Incumbency</b>				
<i>Visible minority incumbents</i>	87.0	86.8	5.7	1.2*
<i>White incumbents</i>	84.5	82.6	6.6	--
<i>Visible minority challengers</i>	7.4***	5.0***	2.5*	--
<i>White challengers</i>	31.0***	27.1***	7.6*	--
<b>Electoral outcome</b>				
<i>Visible minority, elected</i>	72.2*	71.2**	5.5	1.4**
<i>White, elected</i>	65.7*	63.0**	6.6	--
<i>Visible minority, defeated</i>	54.3	53.7	3.7*	--
<i>White, defeated</i>	50.0	47.7	9.3*	--

\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.10

## APPENDIX A.

### Coded variables

The following variables were included in the codebook. Coders were given detailed instructions to assist them in identifying and making decisions about each variable.

- Coder ID
- Item ID
- Candidate's name
- Publication in which article appeared
- Page number on which article appeared
- Date of publication
- Number of words in article
- Article includes a photo of the candidate
- Article type (e.g. news, column, editorial)
- Region in which newspaper is published (e.g. BC, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic, national)
- Province in which the candidate ran
- Percent visible minority population in candidate's riding
- Gender of candidate
- Party of candidate
- Race of candidate (e.g. White, South Asian, Chinese, Black, West Asian, Arab, Japanese)
- Candidate is a visible minority
- Candidate was elected
- Candidate is an incumbent
- Article mentions candidate is a visible minority
- Article mentions candidate is White
- Article mentions candidate identifies with a non-Judeo-Christian religion
- Article mentions candidate speaks a minority (non-official) language
- Article mentions candidate speaks a majority (official) language
- Article mentions candidate is an immigrant / foreign-born
- Article mentions candidate is Canadian-born
- Article mentions candidate's parent(s) are immigrants / foreign-born
- Article mentions candidate's parents are Canadian-born
- Article mentions the minority composition of the candidate's riding (e.g. visible minority, non-English / non-French, non-Judeo-Christian, immigrant)
- Article mentions the mainstream / majority composition of the candidate's riding (e.g. White, French / English, Judeo-Christian, non-immigrant)
- Article mentions candidate's support from minority communities
- Article mentions candidate's support from mainstream / majority communities
- Article portrays candidate as a political insider
- Article portrays candidate as a novelty
- Article portrays candidate as being of high quality
- Article mentions a political or election-related poll or survey in the headline, sub-headline or first three paragraphs
- Article mentions a political or election-related poll or survey in the rest of the story
- Article uses a game frame in the headline, sub-headline or first three paragraphs
- Article connects the candidate to a policy issue
- Article connects the candidate to a crime / justice issue

- Article connects the candidate to a social welfare issue (e.g. social assistance, social housing, homelessness, poverty, pensions, low-income)
- Article connects the candidate to an immigration or multiculturalism issue
- Article connects the candidate to some other policy issue [identify issue with appropriate code]
- Article is mostly about candidate
- Article includes a direct quotation from the candidate
- Article includes a quotation about the candidate
- Article includes a paraphrase about something the candidate has said
- Tone of the candidate's coverage in the article

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