WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN THE MEDIA:

GENDER BIAS AND STATUS

IMPLICATIONS

by

My Hoang Bao Nguyen

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for Departmental Honors in

the Department of Management and Leadership

Texas Christian University

Fort Worth, Texas

May 4, 2020

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Project Approved:

Supervising Professor: Tracey Rockett, Ph.D.

Department of Management and Leadership

Stacy Landreth Grau, Ph.D.

Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Breinn Richter, M.B.A.

Department of Management and Leadership

<u>ABSTRACT</u>

This study seeks to contribute to the existing literature about how women have been consistently represented in the media in a biased and stereotyped manner, especially in comparison with their male counterparts. Using an advanced computational, text-analysis program called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), it investigates possible differences in use of language and capacity of coverage between articles featuring female figures and articles featuring male figures of three leading business magazines: *Entrepreneur, Fast Company, Inc.* from January 2018 to March 2020. Categories evaluated include word count, certainty, power, affiliation, and future-focused orientation. Results demonstrate that women are portrayed in less certain, less future-focused language, and especially are given strikingly lower word counts than men. However, there are no significant differences in the use of powerful and affiliative language between the two groups. This study then further discusses what implications these findings have regarding the status of women in public perceptions with assumptions about how women may overcome gender bias that future research can address.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction

As we are entering the new decade of the 2020s, there are significant conversations increasingly generated regarding equal access to opportunities, rights, resources for women, especially women in the workplace, with the rise of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements. Female figures such as Michelle Obama and Sheryl Sandberg have been stellar exemplars for women all around the world due to their commemorated accomplishments in male-dominated fields like politics or business. Recently, Greta Thunberg – a young social activist from Sweden was chosen as Time's Person of the Year for her leading role in climate change protests (Alter, Haynes, Worland, 2019). However, these rare cases of success and recognition do not fully reflect the reality of continuous socially framed disadvantages women encounter daily based on longstanding effect of gender bias.

For example, women account for half of U.S. labor workforce (Catalyst, 2019) but earn only 85% of what their male counterparts gain: "The gender gap in pay has narrowed since 1980, but it has remained relatively stable over the past 15 years or so" (Graf, Brown, Patten, 2019). Women are also faced with lack of representation at every level of organizations, especially in the C-Suite with 17% in 2015 and 21% in 2019 (Huang, Krivkovich, Starikova, Yee & Zanoschi, 2019). This phenomenon potentially accounts for the numerical scarcity of female CEOs in America – 5%. Similarly, in politics, "only 24.3 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women as of February 2019, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995" (UN Women, 2019). Being the outlier brings enormous disadvantages towards even capable and highly achieving women: overlooked presence, silenced voice, exaggerated mistakes etc.

Where the problem is rooted has been studied over decades, but one perspective on this is that one of the structural causes lies at the shortage and defectiveness of social perceptions of

women, immensely influenced by gender bias. Unfortunately, we, all genders included, are unconsciously accustomed to the image of "typical chief executive is six feet tall with a deep voice" which women do not match (Miller, 2018). A male leader is simply a leader, but a female leader is a *female* leader. People will perceive her as a woman first, attributing all social ascribed feminine characteristics to her on which they form opinions about her, before referring to other factors such as titles, competence, skills sets etc. (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). One of the domains in which this challenge posed against women can be seen clearly is media coverage. Time Magazine, from 1927-2017, only featured women as Person of the Year seven times (Khorsandi). With Greta Thunberg featured in 2019, women have been recognized eight times in an almost-hundred-year history of this honorable tradition. This fact should serve as an alarm for how women have been consistently demarginalized and underrepresented on media – which have been studied on previous research.

The purpose of this thesis project is to not only strengthen precedent findings on how gender bias played in the way women are portrayed in media, especially through online articles, but also to point out possible implications this bias has regarding status of women in general public opinions. This paper will examine articles featured cover person on three well-known business online magazine from January 2018 – March 2020. Using content analysis methodology, with an application of Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) program, this research hopes to achieve greater understanding of psychological barriers enforced in the media against female figures, in comparison with their male counterparts.

Literature Review

To better understand the content of this study, it is helpful to present relevant concepts theories, and phenomenon, especially ones about women in the contexts of gender and status in media coverage. Furthermore, there have been numerous researches conducted regarding this topic, that have paved the way for this study to continue the momentum of learning and fighting for women's fair and equitable representation in public platforms.

First, it is important to recognize that gender bias or gender stereotypes have been constituted and influenced by the concept of gender roles, which can be understood as social expectations of individual's behaviors in accordance with their perceived gender (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013). While men are expected to portray agentic characteristics (assertive, dominant, competitive), women are required to express femininity through affection, care, altruism (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013). One's behaviors that are incongruent with his or her gender's social perceptions are subject to social disapproval, backlash or even punishment (Amanatullah & Tinsley, 2013). These negative sanctions can range from reduced likability, lack of favorability, to hostility, impairing atypical-gender individuals' progress in self-endeavors and social interactions. Thus, it is not surprising to find that stereotypes based on gender "are prevalent in American television, newspapers, magazines, movies, and other forms of media content" (Bissell & Parrott, 2013).

Gender Inequality in Media Coverage

Historically, women have been awarded with less media attention than men (Macharia, O'Connor, & Lilian Ndangam, 2010; Eran, Van de Rijt, & Fotouhi, 2019). Previous findings over years have proved that the underrepresentation of women in media, both traditional and digital, has not improved. "Women are central in 11% of the online news items, comparable to

the situation in traditional media where the statistic is 13%" (Macharia, O'Connor, & Lilian Ndangam, 2010). Political candidates who are female also receive less media coverage, compared to male candidates (Baitinger, 2015). In the field of sports, the tendency is similar: female athletes are not covered as frequently as men (Montiel, 2015). In Hollywood, an UCLA research has shown that in 2016, 29% of leading actors are female, and the number is 7.7% for female directors (Chichizola, 2017).

A formidable amount of research has been examining the gender gap in media coverage in various aspects such as number of women featured on news, articles, movies compared to men (Power, Rak, & Kim, 2020). Numbers are reported on how fewer women working in media industry ranging from editors, authors, reporters, correspondents, film crew etc. are than men; that may partly account on the general underrepresentation of women in this realm. However, there is not much information regarding the specific level of expression and coverage women are receiving in the same context with men: for example, word counts of articles on business magazines, featuring men and women separately. Given how demarginalized women's voice and presence usually are, it is reasonable to expect that the number of words in articles featuring women would be much smaller.

> *Hypothesis 1: Articles featuring women have fewer word counts on average than articles featuring men.*

Gender Stereotypes in Media Coverage

Previous studies have illustrated "the media's bias in favor of women who are traditionally feminine and who are not too able, too powerful, or too confident" (Wood, 1994). Many years ago, female characters in movies, TV shows, musicals, etc. have been portrayed as "women are expected to behave in a more positive, less powerful, more expressive way"

(Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Now, things are still the same. Actress Geena Davis once points out that "there have been far fewer opportunities for females and other groups to play different characters. Instead, the woman has often been the girlfriend or the wife of the lead character. This was sending a message to everyone in society that women had less value" (Lee, 2018). Given the powerful influence of media in our life, it is undoubtedly assertive that how women are portrayed through these platforms can affect general perceptions of themselves by magnifying these stereotypes of lessening womanhood. Besides, gender stereotypes have been shown to undermine women's self-esteem, according to Harvard Business School Assistant Professor Katherine B. Coffman (Gerdeman, 2019). It is hard to point out where is the beginning of this vicious cycle: social stereotypes against women affects gender bias in media coverage, or gender bias in media coverage reinforces stereotypes against women?

Whatever the answer is, it is indisputable that the image of women in media coverage is often associated or normalized as unconfident or lack of certainty about themselves: they are "softer, more tender, less sure of themselves" (Wood, 1994). Meanwhile, this paper will aim at articles featuring successful women on the cover, who have certain achievements and titles associated with their career or brands, including CEO, founders, award-winners etc. Whereas, when women present themselves in incongruent way with ascribed female role (e.g.: being competitive, ambitious, self-interest motivated), they suffer from unfavorable results (Rudman & Phelan, 2008), so it is possible to predict women's esteem may be marginalized on articles featuring themselves. It will be interesting to see whether these accomplished women, who are supposedly fueled with self-esteem and certainty, are still portrayed in a stereotyped way through linguistic means such as languages, words, and tone:

Hypothesis 2: Articles featuring women contain less certain language than articles featuring men.

Historically, media portrayals of men and women are consistent with the cultural view of gender stereotypes: men are powerful, active, aggressive while women are passive, dependent, and often incompetent (Wood, 1994). This phenomenon of acting gender bias should not be surprising, considering the fact that media industry has been known as traditionally discriminating and exclusive environment against women: several media institutions have not had a female chief editor and where women also earn much less than men (Ross, 2018). Even female journalists do not see themselves as having equal power in influencing news agenda as their male counterparts do, which they attribute to lack of equal salary and working conditions (Rodny-Gumede, 2015). These evidences lead to a creation of another hypothesis about different depictions of power level between men and women:

Hypothesis 3: Articles featuring women contain less powerful language than articles featuring men.

It is also well established that the media tends to misrepresent women by associating them with domestic sphere, focusing on their appearance and relationships, and neglecting their professional achievements (Power, Rak, & Kim, 2020). Men are commonly seen as uninvolved in human relationships while women are primarily taking care homes and people (Wood, 1994). Studies have shown that in interpersonal relationships, women tend to have more concern for affiliation and exhibit affiliative behaviors such as nodding, laughing, sitting in open posture etc. (Luxen, 2005; Offermann & Foley, 2020). It is also a common belief that women do have higher need for affiliation than men, and they are more motivated to form relationships and maintain loyalty with their colleagues (Hill, 1987; Nelson, 2019). Hence, it is expected that the result of

this study will also correspond with the prevalent belief that women have more affiliation by supporting:

Hypothesis 4: Articles featuring women contain more affiliative language than articles featuring men.

The last hypothesis that this research considers is tied closely with how gender bias play against women in evaluation and hinders their growth. Despite persistent efforts to enhance gender diversity, especially in higher level at corporations, "women are often evaluated for promotions primarily on performance, while men are often promoted on potential", according to the McKinsey&Company Special Report in 2011. This discrimination seriously undermines women's endeavors in their career since they are less likely to be granted with opportunities even though they have better qualifications than their male coworkers. In a widely recognized experiment led by psychologist Georgina Randsley de Moura (2019), participants valued leadership potential more than past performance for male candidates, while they preferred women with demonstrated leadership performance, rather than potential. This can be interpreted as with a male's profile, evaluators incline to make judgments based on their expectations of this person can achieve in the future. Whereas, with a female's profile, evaluators make judgments based on what this person has accomplished in the past. The bias, though unconscious and often hidden, is very apparent: with men, it is about what he may be able to do and "let's give him this promotion"; with women, it is about what she has done and whether she deserves this promotion.

This inequality may result from the finding by Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) that women are perceived as worse than men when it comes to ability to create a vision, while being recognized as excellent in all other areas of competency. Unfortunately, "crafting and articulating a vision of a better future is a leadership prerequisite. No vision, no leadership." (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2009).

Therefore, women seem to fall behind in the promotion race, especially in executive levels, because their capability of envisioning is deemed as lacking. In general, men are often associated with future-focused orientations and traits, while women are not.

Hypothesis 5: Articles featuring women contain less future-focused language than articles featuring men.

Materials and Methodology

Content analysis is the chosen method to assess the hypotheses, using articles from three popular business magazines: *Entrepreneur, Fast Company, Inc.*, within issues from January 2018 to March 2020. Only articles featuring the cover person are included. There is a total of 38 articles, 19 of which are from *Entrepreneur* magazine, 9 from *Fast Company,* and 10 from *Inc*. Women are featured on 20 out of 38 articles analyzed. Figures portrayed in these pieces come from various areas from business executives, founders, sports athletes, to artists and celebrities. Topic illustrated in these articles can be personal stories, career achievements, work ethics, reflections and aspirations etc.

To execute the research, this thesis will heavily take advantages of a text analysis application called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), whose information can be found on liwc.wpengine.com. This program was first developed in the 1990s by researchers who were interested in "studying the various emotional, cognitive, and structural components present in individuals' verbal and written speech samples" (Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan, & Blackburn, 2015). The software has been continuously updated and the version used for this paper is the newest - LIWC2015. Credibility of this application has been proved by its continuous usage by researchers all over the world in their linguistically related studies in several disciplines: "What can software tell us about political candidates?" (Kangas, 2014); "Peer to Peer Lending: The

Relationship Between Language Features, Trustworthiness, and Persuasion Success" (Larrimore, Jian, Larrimore, Markowitz, & Gorski, 2011); "Communication in Genetic Counseling: Cognitive and Emotional Processing" (Ellington, Kelly, Reblin, Latimer, & Roter, 2011) etc.

Basically, LIWC works by reading texts in digital files and comparing words in such texts against its built-in dictionaries which help identify which words belong to what psychological, social, emotional categories. In specific words, LIWC processes all words in a given text, then calculates the percentage of total words that match each of dictionary category. "For example, if LIWC analyzed a single speech that was 2,000 words and compared them to the built-in LIWC2015 dictionary, it might find that there were 150 pronouns and 84 positive emotion words used. It would convert these numbers to percentages, 7.5% pronouns and 4.2% positive emotion words." (LIWC website). There are a variety of available categories to get results from, such as psychological states (e.g.: sadness, anger etc.), cognitive processes (e.g.: insight, certainty etc.), drives (e.g.: power, affiliation, risk, etc.) and many more. The more words a given text has, the more reliable its LIWC outputs are.

The articles' entire textual content, including titles and headings, are transcribed into word documents, so that they can be read by the application. The categories included in this analysis are word count, certainty, power, affiliation and future-focused time orientation. Due to small sample size (n=38), only few most relevant categories to the topic of this study are chosen. After being processed, a list of percentage of words in the analyzed article that match with each category considered will show up on screen as outputs. Data from each article is collected and recorded based on gender of figures featured. Then, a statistical analysis was conducted using t test, which allows one to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the

means of two groups. If the difference is significant (p=<0.05), then the hypothesis is supported. If the difference is not significant (p>0.05), the hypothesis is not supported.

Results

Word Count

Hypothesis 1 (H1) proposed that articles featuring women have fewer word counts on average than articles featuring men. A significant difference was found between the articles featuring women and articles featuring men in terms of word counts (t(36)=-2.2242, p<0.05). In support of the hypothesis, articles featuring women (M=2317.2, SD=1017.9) were more likely have fewer word counts than articles featuring men (M=3161.9, SD=1317.3). The difference is striking since word counts in articles featuring women account for roughly 73% of word counts in articles featuring men. Results are presented in Table 1.

Word Count Differences between Genders	
	Word Count
Articles featuring women	2317.2
Articles featuring men	3161.9

Table 1. Differences in word counts between articles featuring women and men.

Certainty

Hypothesis 2 (H2) proposed that articles featuring women use less certain language than articles featuring men. A significant difference was found between the articles featuring women and articles featuring men in terms of certainty in percentage from LIWC output (t(36)=-2.6265, p<0.01). In support of the hypothesis, articles featuring women (M=1.11, SD=0.2358) were more likely to lack certainty than articles featuring men (M=1.41, SD=0.3776). Results are presented in Table 2.

Certainty Differences between Genders	
	Certainty
Articles featuring women	1.11
Articles featuring men	1.41

Table 2. Differences in certainty between articles featuring women and men.

Power and Affiliation

Hypothesis 3 proposed that articles featuring women use less powerful language than articles featuring men. Hypothesis 4 proposed that articles featuring women use more affiliative language than articles featuring men. There is no significant difference found in either of these analyses, so these two hypotheses are not supported.

Future-Focused Time Orientation

Hypothesis 5 (H5) proposed that articles featuring women have less future-focused language than articles featuring men. A significant difference was found between the articles featuring women and articles featuring men in terms of future-focused time orientation in percentage from LIWC output ($t(36)=-1.8999$, $p<0.05$). In support of the hypothesis, articles featuring women (M=0.953, SD=0.2556) were less likely to be future-focused than articles featuring men (M=1.127, SD=0.3093). Results are presented in Table 3.

Future-focused Differences between Genders	
	Future-focused
Articles featuring women	0.953
Articles featuring men	1.127

Table 3. Differences in future-focused orientation between articles featuring women and men.

Discussions

The majority of hypotheses are supported: women are indeed portrayed in different ways compared to men in the media. They have been receiving fewer word counts in featured articles. Also, women are linguistically portrayed as less certain and less future-focused than men in pieces featuring themselves. This corresponds well with previous studies and contributes to the growing literature of biases and inequal women's representation especially linguistic-wise. This reality of gender inequality in recognition and acknowledgment seriously hinder women's rights and benefits to be perceived and presented as they deserve.

Fewer word counts allocated for women in articles featuring themselves strengthen prior findings on the general tradition of discounting women's achievement and profile through minimizing their coverage. For example, it is found that letter of recommendations written for female candidates for medical schools in America tend to be short (fewer than 10 lines), while letter of recommendations for male candidates tend to be much longer (over 50 lines) (Trix & Psenka, 2003). "In a 2015 report, women made up a mere 19% of experts featured in news stories and 37% of reporters telling stories globally" (Rattan, Chilazi, Georgeac, & Bohnet, 2019). In other area such as movies, an analysis by Amber Thomas (2017) indicates that women only speak about 27% of the words in top 10 highest grossing films in 2016.

Moreover, the striking shortage of average word counts per article featuring women contradicts with the common gender stereotype that women talk much more than men (only 73%). While this myth has been disproved by recent research that women and men both speak roughly 16,000 words/day (Mehl, Ramirez-Esperanza, Vazire, Pennebaker, & Slatcher, 2007), it co-exists with social barriers on women about how they should behave or how many words they should talk. It is possible that women featured in this paper chose to speak less, to avoid

continuously being stereotyped as talkative (Tannen, 2017), so that their articles, if written objectively and bias-free, turned out with fewer word counts.

However, if the women who were featured did not choose to intentionally reduce the amount of words in their speech, then it is likely that their words were not presented as fully as men's. An effect of gender bias against women in media coverage is that women have less space and less significant recognition. It is also remarkable to note that the articles about female figures tend to focus on their associations with a brand or company, or projects with social mission: they are generally more contribution-related and "What has she done for others?"-oriented. Whereas, articles about male figures can range widely from career achievements to personal ideologies and inspirations: more individual-focused and "What does he think/feel/want?"-oriented. This may lead to women being asked less diverse types of questions and presented in a smaller scale of landscapes and topics in the media, as compared to men, resulting smaller amount of word counts in articles featuring women.

Similarly, this study shows that written pieces about women tend to have more words indicating doubt, and fewer words indicating certainty than pieces written about men. This result also agrees with previous findings about women and confidence. Trix and Penska (2003) found that letters written for female candidates contain more language related to doubt than for male candidates (24% v. 12%). Even women themselves tend to downplay their certainty while men magnify their confidence and hide their doubts (Heatherington, Daubman, Bates et al., 1993). It is important to acknowledge that this evidence do not aim to prove women have lower level of confidence than men, but instead, indicate that women tend to appear not as certain as men.

This tendency can be explained by active causes (e.g., women prefer to remain humble (Tannen, 1995) so they speak with less certainty), or passive causes (e.g., women are portrayed

as uncertain due to stereotypes that they lack confidence). Interestingly, a previous large-scale research using LIWC software provide "the finding that women used more certainty words parallels earlier discoveries that women used more intensive adverbs" (Newman, Groom, Handelman, Pennebaker, 2008). When put together with this paper's result, it does not bring in a disjunction, but instead signifies a possibility that women do speak with high level of certainty but are still depicted in online articles as less certain than men regardless. Gender stereotypes may strongly influence perceptive processes of these articles' authors and subconsciously induce them to more likely pick out information about female figures that involves uncertainty.

Furthermore, this study's findings have several implications related to the relationship between gender and status. Articles featuring women having fewer word counts and lack certainty in comparison with articles featuring men may correlate with the societal prejudice that women are at lower status than men. Naturally "men remain higher status than women" (Lucas, 2012; Conway & Vartanian, 2000), and with the tradition of men in leadership roles (Lucas, 2003), women face significant barriers to be influential due to their status of being women. They are less likely expected to have capabilities to be in charge or seen as "fit" to lead, which may be the reason why women who are business executives or prominent leaders are still characterized in the media as less confident and certain. Regardless of their stellar achievement, women may still be deemed as undeserving of same amount of media coverage as men.

What is significant about this inequality is that it strengthens an impression that women indeed deserve their lower status than men, and that is why they end up with less exposure and biased illustrations in media. Some status characteristics are universally effective, while some are only active in limited settings. Gender is "diffuse" status characteristics (Lucas, 2003), which are universally effective in almost all settings, including human interaction online. Based on status

characteristic theory and status construction theory, people use gender as a social difference to form status about others, and then use gender as a status characteristic to form expectations and beliefs of others (Lucas, 2003; Ridgeway, Backor, Li, Tinkler & Erickson, 2009). Thus, even in online interaction (e.g.: a person reading an article about someone else), people can still easily form perceptions about one's level of status. If women are to be constantly given unequal recognition and less objective descriptions in different media platforms, they tend to continue receive lower status treatment.

Similarly, this study's findings also support the possibility that women are often viewed and portrayed as less future-focused than men. In many of articles analyzed featuring women, the female figures are often demonstrated as reminiscing about their past and their journey to present achievements. Whereas, the male figures are depicted through their aspirations for the future, what they are going to do with their life and their career. Since the future is linked with dreams, hope, potential, it is always more exciting and inspiring to talk or think about the future, compared to looking back to the past (often regarded with regrets or mistakes). So, it is possible that future-focused articles will be embraced by readers and the featured figures are more respected in terms of achievements and credibility. With vision tied closely with leadership, men who are often illustrated with future-focused orientation will be more powerful and influential, while women remain at lower status.

However, it is possible that women are in fact great visionaries, just as men, but they are less attributed with their vision (Goudreau, 2009; Ibarra & Obodaru, 2009). Beth Brooke, former global vice chair of Ernst & Young, suggested that women prefer to work with others and are often listeners. They aim at outcomes produced by collaborative efforts rather than telling others what to do. Additionally, given their inclination to stay humble, women are less concerned with

personal recognition but more focused on achieving the common goals instead. This nature of modesty accidentally hurts women in the long run since they are less perceived as visionary especially in prospective decisions long-term strategies, and thus less authentic and less capable as leaders (Hill, Miller, Benson, & Handley, 2016).

The H3 and H4 hypotheses are not supported by this study's results: articles featuring women do not have less powerful language than articles featuring men, nor do they have more affiliative language. This finding turns out to be consistent with conclusion from an experimental study examining sex-based differences in managerial behavior by McLellan, Shinew, & McCoy (1994): "No significant differences were identified between male and female resource managers in their needs for affiliation, power, or achievement." One possible explanation is that the women chosen to be featured in articles have similar level of power and affiliation compared to males. They are all high-achieving women who have been in either official (e.g.: CEO) or unofficial (e.g.: famous actress) leadership positions or both. It is not hard to understand why they are portrayed as equally powerful and independent as the male figures, given their exceptional profiles. However, emerging from this are potential gender-based different standards used by magazines to select featured figures: women must have contributed notably to be recognized when their male counterparts have lower bar for appreciation.

One substantial coincidence between the two studies is that the female figures included both have achieved certain level of status and personal accomplishments. The women featured in articles analyzed are all high-achieving women who have been in either official (e.g.: CEO) or unofficial (e.g.: famous actress) leadership positions or both. The female individuals participating in the 1994 experiment were organizational managers. Both groups did not express lack of power or emphasis on affiliation. Especially in term of media portrayals, women are

represented with equal degrees of power and affiliation. This raises an interesting question about whether recognized accomplishments and positions can enhance women's naturally ascribed low status, so that they are not described as less powerful and more affiliative.

Although this similarity of how women and men are depicted in terms of power and affiliation should serve as an optimistic sign, it implies a dilemma hindering successful women's attainments in life. First, women belong to lower status groups in society, and thus, are subjected to a higher standard to prove competence than higher status groups (e.g.: men) (Ridgeway, 2001). Women must work harder to validate their ability, and to be recognized as much as men. However, when women exercise behaviors of authority, power, and capability (as required to be perceived as having high status and influence), these practices bring them more challenges than benefits. They are faced with "multiple, nearly invisible nets of comparative devaluation that catch women as they push forward to achieve positions of leadership and authority to slow them down compared to similar men" (Ridgeway, 2001). This is likely one of the primary factors contributing to the small number of women at the top in institutions, offices, businesses, etc. all over the world.

A study by Gail M. McGuire (2012), named "Gender, Race, and the Shadow Structure: A Study of Informal Networks and Inequality in a Work Organization", affirmed the validity of status characteristics theory, in which women will be in less advantaged positions, compared to male counterparts in similar structural characteristics. Women are less likely to receive support from others because even though they have equal access to resources and information, "women may have been perceived by network members as poor or risky investments because of cultural beliefs that ranked them below that men, according to status character theory" (McGuire, 2012). The finding concludes that people take each other's gender into account when choosing who to

support and provide with assets. A certain level of achieved status – title or positions – can potentially help women avoid unfair allocation of resources based on gender. Although women are discerned as less likely to succeed, people's perception may change towards a female whose success has already been recognized, and they will be more tempted to see her through powerful, independent, capable lenses.

An additional implication of this study is that elevating women's status may help to enhance their chances to succeed and ascend in different fields, media included. The industry of media is famously known as male dominated (Tauberg, 2019). Therefore, journalists and editors may actively practice tokenism, "highlight women's successes and accomplishments simply in order to prove that they are not biased against women" (Shor, van de Rijt, & Fotouhic, 2019). Tokenism is not gender equality and can generate unfavorable outcomes for women. It is a situation in which women struggle in a male-dominated environment, and their practices are amplified with discrimination, underestimation, implicit bias, and even isolation (McDonald, Toussaint, Schweiger, 2004). When women are "tokens" in leadership board, their legitimacy is seriously questioned and degraded (Holmes, 2019). It is likely that women in media are facing the same problem: for example, "She is chosen/featured because she is a woman".

An article by McDonald, Toussaint & Schweiger (2004) on "The Influence of Social Status on Token Women Leaders' Expectations About Leading Male-Dominated Groups" examined closely how gender-token women leaders (women leading a male-dominated group) have negative expectations and experiences in group interaction and whether elevated status may help to mitigate these drawbacks. The research has confirmed that with high-status gender-tokens women, by which they have an apparently higher status then their group members, their expectations are more aligned with non-token women (women leading a female-dominated

group). This has shown that increased status, simultaneously accompanied by self-confidence (e.g.: certainty), does help to improve women's experiences with leadership and perceptive competencies. Even though there is no clear answer on how enhancing status can help women overcome negative expectations, it does indicate the close ties between status's ability to abate challenges women face due to socially ascribed gender, which can be studied more in depth in future studies.

Limitations

The biggest limitation of this study is the small sample size of articles selected for the analysis, especially articles featuring female figures on magazine covers. Due to the limited number of articles included, it was hard to achieve deep statistical significance. To compensate, findings from related previous research were referred in this paper to give weight to the results of this study. Similarly, many claims and suggestions of this paper were produced by using existing relevant literature.

Another limitation is that this study has not tested its implications, especially ones related to gender and status. It has not determined how different representations of women v. men in magazines may affect readers' perception of each group's status respectively. Further studies may continue to explore this topic through surveys or experiments.

Relying heavily on LIWC program is another limitation of this research. Despite its credited reliability and constant usage in similar studies, LIWC is not completely optimal in categorizing language. It cannot understand metaphor, irony, or sarcasm and yields better results with more words. Some articles included in this study have fewer than 1,000 words, making its interpretation more susceptible to skepticism. Thus, the output of LIWC needs to be considered carefully as probabilistic.

Besides, all magazines included in this study are America-based, which may affect the generalization of the results. Since America is a masculine society where traits associated with male individuals are more valued and desirable, according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1997), it is predictable that male figures are portrayed more favorably than females in American media. If this study can be expanded into other regions, especially feminine ones, the result may not be the same. However, since majority of societies are masculine-oriented, the difference is probably not significant.

Conclusion

This thesis attempts to continuously provides insights about biased portrayals of women in the media, through underrepresentation and misrepresentation. Findings from this study affirm the barriers caused by gender bias women must endure. They are portrayed in a less certain, less future-focused language, and especially are given strikingly lower word counts than men. Whereas, there are no significant differences in the use of powerful and affiliative language between the two groups. The results' implications are hoped to serve as relevant and helpful information regarding the status of women in society with assumptions about how women may overcome gender bias that future researches can address.

Understanding the discrimination and inequality female individuals are encountering not only in real life, but also in public perceptions, is critical to changing the narrative and empowering women in their future endeavors. Highly achieving and influential women should be objectively and accurately depicted in the media, in accordance with their level of capabilities and accomplishments, to inspire and encourage others to live and contribute to their full potentials. Equality for women is the prerequisite for equality for all genders and minorities.

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