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Project Title	A media ceiling? Gender representation in print news-media photographs of public servants

Description of Research Project (1500 characters maximum)

Since the publication in 1970 of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which identified the forms of inequality Canadian women faced in the workplace, the federal government has put in place measures aimed at improving their representation in the public service. Examples are the adoption of the Employment Equity Act in 1983, and its amendment in 1995, as well as the implementation of the Employment Equity Policy in 1999. Even though women still face inequity in Canadian government offices, female employees now outnumber males in the overall federal public service and represent 47.3% of executives (Treasury Board of Canada 2017).

This type of gain is important in a democracy, for several reasons. On a symbolic level, a representative public service increases the likelihood that citizens will identify with members who belong to the same demographic group as them. This, in turn, opens up to these individuals the possibility of a public service career – i.e., access to state power (Groeneveld and Van de Walle 2010). Although direct interaction with public servants sends a message to individuals about who is a member of the public service, so do photographs published in newspapers. Considering that people are more often exposed to these photographs than to public service employees, these visuals can have a significant impact on the impression that individuals develop about these workers. The representation of gender in these type of visuals was explored in a pilot study that this researcher conducted with funds obtained through a 2015 LA&PS Minor Research Grant and a 2016 YUFA Sabbatical Fellowship.

The work completed so far, based on the preliminary analysis of 505 photographs published in the Ottawa Citizen between 1985 (a year after the implementation of the Employment Equity Act) and 2015 featuring federal public servants, shows that the proportion of women represented in these photographs does not reflect the reality of the public service. Female public servants appear in 25% of the images studied, while males are seen in 75% (these numbers include photographs showing individuals of both genders). Women are also more likely to be represented in a union context, while their male colleagues are more often seen performing professional tasks.

The objective of this research is to expand on the pilot study by analyzing photographs of federal public servants, published in newspapers from different regions of Canada, to identify patterns of gender representation. In addition, by painting a portrait of the representation of federal public servants across Canada based on a wider body of data, this research will, among other things, identify regional trends. The research will use the same research plan and methodology as the one developed and refined during the pilot study. Eighteen keywords associated with the concept of “federal public servant” are used to search two databases, Canadian Major Dailies and Eureka, to identify photographs published in the following newspapers (source of research material): La Presse (Montreal), The Calgary Herald, The Globe and Mail, The Halifax Chronicle Herald, The Toronto Star and The Vancouver Sun. The images are collected online and on microfilm at York University library, then uploaded to NVivo. The photographs are coded for gender, role portrayed by the individuals and context of the image before being analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively, individually and collectively, and through longitudinal analysis.

Relationship to existing research and significance: This research project builds on the intellectual tradition of representative bureaucracy but brings an innovative perspective that uses visual analysis. It allows showing that gender equity in the federal public service cannot be fully addressed without considering the role of the media. Photographs published in newspapers may have lessened the impact of the equity measures the federal government

has been putting in place for 40 years. They may have also created a “media ceiling,” maybe even more difficult to break through than the one women have faced in the public administration. It is hoped that once the project is completed, similar studies of visible minorities and Indigenous groups can be conducted using the same database of photographs. These future projects will help develop a complete overview of the visual representation of federal public servants in the printed news media since the 1980 and help understanding better the concept of representative bureaucracy.

References

Groeneveld, S., and S. Van de Walle. 2010. “A Contingency Approach to Representative Bureaucracy: Power, Equal Opportunities and Diversity.” IRAS 76(2): 239-258.

Treasury Board of Canada. 2017. “Demographic Snapshot of Canada’s Federal Public Service, 2016.” <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/innovation/human-resources-statistics/demographic-snapshot-federal-public-service-2016.html>, retrieved on November 12, 2017.

Undergraduate Student Responsibilities (1500 characters maximum)

The student will help with the collection and organization of hundreds of photographic files taken from of a variety of Canadian newspapers. More specifically, the student will:

- Use a microfilm reader/scanner and online sources to find the images from lists provided by the supervisor, and download them;
- Edit the brightness and contrast of some of the photographs on microfilm;
- Organize and copy the photographic files on different media.
- Because of the nature of the database used to construct the lists of photographs, some elements on it may not be relevant while others that should be on it are missing. It is an important responsibility of the student to determine if an element must be collected and identify possible missing ones during the collection.
- It is expected that the student will answer emails from the supervisor within 24 hours and meet with her at her request (excluding weekends and holidays).

The work takes place at the York University Scott Library and anywhere the student has access to a computer and the Internet. The student may also have to go to the Toronto Reference Library (located at the corner of Yonge St. and Bloor St.) few times.

The learning outcomes associated with this project will be useful to the student in several other academic and professional situations. At the end of the project, the student will be able to:

- Locate, physically and online, the archives of the most important Canadian dailies;
- Find information in recent and past issues of Canadian dailies;
- Operate a microfilm reader/scanner;
- Edit photographs for brightness and contrast;
- Organize hundreds of electronic files following specific guidelines;
- Feel more confident about working independently and taking initiatives;
- The student will have also developed the attitude necessary to present high quality, detail-oriented work.

Qualifications Required (750 characters maximum)

- Ability to complete very detail-oriented tasks rapidly and produce very high-quality results. The project rests on the quality of the information collected, and this qualification cannot be stressed enough;
- Resourcefulness, capacity to work independently and take initiatives;
- Capacity to follow precise guidelines
- Competence for organizing and copying multiple electronic files;
- Knowledge of the functioning of microfilm reader/scanner or willingness to learn;
- Knowledge of basic concepts of public administration, especially
- Knowledge of photography editing (such as Adobe Photoshop or Mac Photos, for example) is strongly preferred but

not required.

-Understanding of written French (intermediary level or above) is preferred but not required.
