

En-gender(ed) Politics: Representing Congress Members in the Best-selling Tabloid Newspaper in Taiwan

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Introduction

1. Since the 1980s, constitutional stipulation on a gender quota, efforts from feminist organisations and an improved socio-economic status for women have all contributed to widening the political participation of Taiwanese women.^[1] Currently, Taiwan has one of the highest percentages of female parliamentary representation (over 30 per cent) compared with neighbouring countries.^[2] Nowadays, it is also not uncommon to find political women in high-level posts. In 2000, Annette Lu Hsiu-lien became Taiwan's first female vice president, and was re-elected in 2004. In 2008, Tsai Ying-wen was elected to the position of chairperson of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, the political party in power between 2000 and 2008) and stood as the presidential candidate for her party in the election. There has also been a shift in the background of contemporary female politicians. Unlike a large number of females in the past who were seen as the successors of a family legacy, a new generation of women in politics is increasingly recognised in accord with (or because of) the merits of their educational background, passion and prior activism.^[3]
2. While these progressive changes are taking place, many feel it is yet too early to laud the advent of gender equality in politics, as patriarchy in the domain of politics continues to manifest in the day-to-day work of female politicians. One aspect of inequality takes the form of patronising language that refers to the women's sexuality, personality and appearance. A case in point is the way that unmarried female politicians are often bombarded with banter regarding their single status and interrogations of their sexual orientation. Examples abound. During the 2008 election, unmarried presidential candidate Tsai Yi-wen was forcefully requested by a senior male colleague, Shi Ming-deh, to declare her sexuality.^[4] In 2010, unmarried congresswoman Luo Shu-lei was alleged in a news magazine to be a lesbian in love with a television newsreader—a report she later denied. Subsequently she threatened to sue the magazine for libel.^[5] While these single female politicians are being questioned about their sexuality, others are reminded of their 'lack of femininity.' Offensive remarks about tough female politicians, such as 'I feel so sorry for your husband,' have been repeated too often to be considered newsworthy and the boundary of what is acceptable continues to be redrawn each time a more direct insult is launched. In 2005, an episode of confrontation over a political scandal broke out between Congresswoman Kuan Bi-lin and Congressman Chiou Yi. After a bout of heated argument, Mr. Chiou walked away from the scene in front of a myriad of media cameras with his last words addressed to Ms. Kuan as 'an ugly woman even by the lowest aesthetic standard.'^[6] Although Ms. Kuan later pressed a libel charge against Mr. Chiou, the court acquitted him because he was 'expressing personal opinion.'^[7]
3. Despite complaints from women's groups and female politicians, it remains challenging for women to negotiate their femininity in the masculine political arena. Therefore, a female politician is more

likely to be portrayed as 'deviant,' 'rude' and 'someone who needs to be brought into line' when she speaks out. The ex-vice president Annette Lu, for example, used to be framed as 'big-mouthed' and 'someone who does not know her place' for she occasionally expressed different opinions to those of the President.[8] Another story of this kind involves Congressman Lee Ching-hwa who suggested that Congresswoman Chiou Yi-ying 'lacked proper family education' after she heckled him during his speech. When she demanded an apology, Mr. Lee insisted that giving an apology to a shrew is against moral reasoning.[9]

4. Anecdotes like these hint at a situation in Taiwanese politics where the increasing political participation of women somehow rubs uncomfortably against persistent patriarchal values. This contradiction nevertheless is made more apparent to the public by the recent tabloidisation of local journalism spearheaded by the advance of a fully-fledged tabloid newspaper, the *Apple Daily (AD)*, in May 2003. Pioneering colour printing on all pages and with an emphasis heavily focused on sensational news, the *AD* has swiftly generated a large following. Three years after its inception, the paper has outsold many established titles to be one of the two most popular newspapers in Taiwan, particularly among the 30–34 year old age group.[10] While almost all other newspapers in Taiwan struggle to maintain sales figures, *AD*'s ability to reach a circulation of around 530,000 in 2008[11]—a 20 per cent increase from 2004—has motivated other commercial media to emulate its style and consequently a trend of tabloidisation has resulted.[12]
5. As the mass media has the power to influence people's sense of taken-for-granted normality, the editorial choices of *AD* in deciding what to report and how to report it become a relevant topic for scholarly investigation. Hung-chun Wang, for instance, examined the discourse in *AD*'s entertainment section and found that the newspaper has applied different gender stereotypes to local artists.[13] Comments made about female artists tended to highlight their physical attractiveness and marital status. To follow up the above-mentioned shifts in Taiwanese politics and media, in this study I aim to examine how the *AD*, one of the most read newspapers in Taiwan, contributes to the reflection and shaping of gender values in politics. Using coverage of congress members in the 7th Legislative Yuan (February 2008 to January 2012), I also wish to address the gap left by previous research which focused primarily on the media representation of either prominent female political figures (e.g. the first lady, presidential candidates and national leaders) or particular election campaigns. However, it should be noted that the everyday media coverage of political women as a collective entity carries equal importance, as it constantly and consistently feeds into the public perception of women's potential and suitability for politics, and carries an implicit impact on women's political participation over time.

Debates on gendered representation in the media

6. Caroline Heldman, Susan Carroll and Stephanie Olson suggest that 'while media coverage does not tell us what to think, it tells us what topics to think about and how to think about them.'[14] Gender-biased coverage is believed to have damaging consequences for the public's perception of the professionalism and suitability of female politicians that could seriously impact on aspiring candidates, political activists or the electorate at large. Scholarship in the 1990s and before, formulated ways in which women suffered 'symbolic annihilation'[15] and received more disadvantageous reports in the media. A common problem is that political reports on women tend to concentrate on comparatively trivial subjects rather than their achievements and prominent campaign issues.[16] Research from Canada and the US found that media coverage centred more on women's personal characteristics, physical appearance, fashion sense and lifestyle, and that women politicians were referred to more frequently in terms of their families.[17] In the UK and Northern Ireland, studies also revealed that most female members of parliament believed that 'objectification' by the media appeared to be the norm for female politicians, while their male

colleagues were only occasionally objectified in the event of scandals.[18] Further, gendered discourse can be detected when females are focused on alongside other females. Demeaning terms, such as 'catfights' or 'menopausal contests' are often applied to women and the narratives usually give a false sense of jealousy and 'suggest a 'war between women.'"[19] However, competitions between men are very differently constructed in the media and men's robust attacks on each other are interpreted as if they are 'expressing a statement' or even being 'eloquent and witty.' The portrayal of women is different—they have their 'claws out' or they are 'having an emotional outburst.' [20] It is also found that although the media reports on the professional performance of female politicians, it tends to frame them in stereotypically feminine terms, highlighting their compassionate or caring natures. Such a seemingly benign framing strategy has been opposed by many scholars on the grounds that it risks portraying women as incapable of strong leadership and inept at handling difficult issues.[21] It also risks reinforcing the assumption that women's expertise should be confined to domestic social issues. Although some female politicians are probably willing to ride on this perceived 'feminine' expertise, these issues often fail to compete with an economic crisis or military deployment, which are conventionally linked to males and carry more weight in the agenda-setting program of the media.[22]

7. While sex-differentiated coverage has not disappeared completely, some shifting focus has been noted. Some researchers have started to argue that the concept of the deliberate omission of female politicians from the media is less relevant now that there are many successful high-profiled women in the contemporary political scene worldwide,[23] and that attention needs to be shifted from 'visibility/invisibility' towards the quality of representation. Joanna Everitt concurred that the 'invisibility' of women politicians in the media is not on the scale that it was in the 1980s,[24] largely due to the increasing number of women holding elected office and an improved ethical standard on the part of the media. Other scholars proclaimed that the ways in which stereotypes appear in the media are becoming more inconspicuous.[25] In 1999, a European Commission study also concluded that the status of gender portrayal across all the media is no longer monolithic stereotyping of the kind described in content studies of the 1970s and 1980s.[26] In her study on the media coverage of women leaders worldwide, Pippa Norris also noted that a simple or crude stereotyping relating to appearance or feminine traits has been replaced by media frames which 'reflect a more subtle conventional wisdom about how women are seen as politicians.' [27] For example, she found that one of the news frames frequently employed about women was the 'first woman' frame, which emphasises the path-breaking nature of women's accomplishments. While this frame is seemingly complimentary, it is nonetheless highly gendered and implies that women are anomalies and relatively inexperienced in high public office.[28]
8. The above literature that I have analysed has painted a picture that shows that men and women are treated differently in media coverage in western democracies. However, there remains an unanswered question—whether and how 'gender' plays a part in media representations in an East Asian context—where the embedded and emerging dynamics of culture, tradition and media commercialisation battle for supremacy?

Method

9. In this study, I aim to shed some light on the issue by comparing the *AD*'s coverage of congressmen and congresswomen in the 7th Legislative Yuan through both content analysis and narrative analysis. Content analysis is chosen as the tool with which I examine media texts because it helps to 'quantify and manifest features of a large number of texts,' and it helps 'me make broad inferences about the processes of representation,' [29] while narrative analysis looks into the ways in which news stories are structured and how language functions in the stories on textual as well as cultural levels.[30]

10. Data were first gathered from the congress library e-database, [31] which collects reports on congress members in major newspapers. The unit of analysis in content analysis was a 'piece of news' containing the names of congress member(s) in the headlines irrespective of sections. There were seventy-five congressmen (69.4 per cent) and thirty-three congresswomen (30.6 per cent) who served full-term in the 7th Legislative Yuan. Out of these members, only forty-eight congressmen (64.0 per cent) and twenty-three congresswomen (69.6 per cent) ever made it to the headlines in the *AD*. In order to have a similar number of congress members in each gender group, researchers selected twenty-four congressmen (i.e. the five most-reported and nineteen randomly-chosen congressmen) and their respective news reports to make direct comparison with the twenty-three congresswomen. In total, these forty-seven congress members generated 561 news reports. However, sixty-nine 'red-herring' reports were later excluded because although the name of the congress members appeared in the headline, the content of the news was not about the congress members, but about their associates, mostly friends and remote relatives.
11. The final sample included 492 pieces of writing. Two trained research assistants coded the articles into 'tone' (positive, negative and neutral), 'length' (an article is regarded as 'short' if it contains fewer than 250 words, and 'long' if it exceeds 800 words—a demarcation used in Taiwanese newspapers when inviting submissions), 'section allocation' (national news highlights, entertainment, politics, sports, finance), and 'theme' (here refers to the major focus) of the articles. In the coding process, 'length' and 'section allocation' were fixed objective categories, whereas the 'tone' and 'theme' were more likely to be affected by personal judgement. In order to ensure coding consistency, the coders first looked at each article's headline and lead paragraph to see if it generally conveyed a positive, neutral or negative image of the congress member. The coders then read the rest of the article and compared the frequency of language use that contained positive or negative inferences. If no particular feelings were evoked in the headline and the lead paragraph, and no emotionally charged language was detected, then the article was coded neutral. Inter-coder reliability is 0.82. As for 'theme,' we first coded 100 articles and derived a preliminary set of codes. We looked at the codes that had a minuscule number of reports and recoded them into the closest themes. In the case where two or more themes appeared in the article, coders looked for the most dominant theme in the headline or the lead paragraph. On the whole, negative themes such as 'scandals,' 'relationships' and 'lawsuits' were much easier to identify, while 'election' and 'professional performance' overlapped somewhat as they were often mentioned in the headline/lead paragraph at the same time. In such cases, coders were asked to read the remainder of the article and judge by the column inches/word counts of each theme. 'Comment on others' was a difficult category to determine, as many comments made by congress members on others also related to a certain policy or a political event. We decided to recode these as 'professional performance,' and reserve 'comment on others' to non-political comments, such as lighthearted jokes about another celebrity. In the end, only a very small percentage of articles fell into this category. Inter-coder reliability for 'theme' is 0.78. All codes were entered into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for further analysis.

Results and discussions

Results of the 492 reports showed that congressmen on the whole received almost twice as much coverage as congresswomen, accounting for more than two-thirds (68.8 per cent) of the sampled articles. A closer look at the 'tone' of the reports found that a negative tone was the dominant one for both sexes, and that there was no distinctive gender difference in the tone used ($P=0.187>0.05$), although it might seem that congresswomen were more likely to be reported with an angle—triggering more positive (5.4 per cent higher than congressmen) and negative (2.3 per cent higher than congressmen) feelings (see Table 1).

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Male	23.4(77)	41.3(136)	35.3(116)	100(329)
Female	28.8(47)	43.6(71)	27.6(45)	100(163)
Total	25.2(124)	42.1(207)	32.7(161)	100(492)
*Numbers in grid represent percentages with case number in brackets				

Table 1. Gender comparison: Tone of coverage. Compiled by the author

12. In terms of section allocation, over 80 per cent of the articles was located in the 'National News highlight' section, and about another 10 per cent coverage was positioned in the 'Entertainment' section.' There was also no distinctive gender difference ($P=0.163>0.05$), defying the belief that reports on female politicians are more likely to be assigned to sections perceived as more frivolous and irrelevant. In fact, it appeared that tabloid newspapers are as likely to (dis)place stories about congressmen in sections unrelated to politics (see Table 2).

Section placement	Male	Female	Total
National news highlight	84.5(278)	81.6(133)	83.5(411)
Entertainment	10.0(33)	12.3(20)	10.8(53)
Opinion	2.1(7)	3.7(6)	2.6(13)
General politics	1.5(5)	0.0(0)	1.0(5)
Sports	0.9(3)	0.6(1)	0.8(4)
Local news	0.0(0)	1.8(3)	0.6(3)
Life/finance/society	0.9(3)	0.0(0)	0.6(3)
TOTAL	100(329)	100(163)	100(492)
*Numbers in grid represent percentages with case number in brackets			

Table 2. Gender comparison: Section placement of coverage. Compiled by the author

13. Moreover, the majority (72.2 per cent) of all reports were medium-length (see Table 3). Although on the surface it seemed that articles on congresswomen were more likely to be over 800 words, statistical analysis concluded that there was no distinctive gender difference in article length ($P=0.354>0.05$). Further cross tabulation with 'theme' also found no significant correlations or gender differences.<

Article length	Male	Female	Total
0-250 words	10.9(36)	9.2(15)	10.4(51)
250-800 words	73.3(241)	69.9(114)	72.2(355)
Over 800 words	15.8(52)	20.9(34)	17.5(86)
Total	100(329)	100(163)	100(492)
*Numbers in grid represent percentages with case number in brackets			

Table 3. Gender comparison: Length of coverage. Compiled by the author

14. Unlike 'tone,' 'section placement' and 'article length,' data on 'theme' demonstrated a distinctive difference between sexes ($P=0.007>0.05$). Out of all the theme categories, a noticeable gap in the

volume of coverage in the 'relationship' category soon caught researchers' attention (see Table 4). In this heavily featured theme, the newspaper clearly preyed on congresswomen more often than their male counterparts. While only 7.9 per cent of reports on congressmen focused on their romances, as high as 17.2 per cent of the articles on congresswomen depicted their relationships—or sometimes the lack thereof.

Theme	Male	Female	Total	Gender gap
Election	20.7(68)	27.6 (45)	23.0(113)	+6.9
Professional performance	22.2(73)	19.0(31)	21.1(104)	-3.2
Scandals	14.9(49)	14.7 (24)	14.8(73)	-0.2
Relationship	7.9(26)	17.2(28)	11.0(54)	+9.3
Personal life	9.4(31)	9.2(15)	9.3(46)	-0.2
Legal battle as accusers	7.9(26)	3.1(5)	6.3(31)	-4.8
Physical appearance	7.0(23)	3.1(5)	5.7(28)	-3.9
Comments on others	5.2(17)	4.3(7)	4.9(24)	-0.9
Others	4.9(16)	1.8(3)	3.9(19)	-3.1
TOTAL	100 (329)	100 (163)	100 (492)	
*Numbers in grid represent percentages with case number in brackets				

Table 4. Gender comparison: themes of coverage. Compiled by the author

15. When researchers delved into the reports on 'relationships,' it was found that the tone differed significantly between males and females ($P=0.047<0.05$). Relationship news involving congressmen were largely negative, whereas relationship stories about congresswomen were more spread out across tones (see Table 5). This could be related to the argument that male politicians were covered mostly in the event of scandals, but it was more 'normal' to provide relationship coverage about female politicians, irrespective of the nature of the news.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Male	7.7(2)	57.7(15)	34.6(9)	100(26)
Female	35.7(10)	39.3(11)	25(7)	100(28)
Total	22.2(12)	48.1(26)	29.6(16)	100(54)
*Numbers in grid represent percentages with case number in brackets				

Table 5. Gender comparison: tones of 'relationship stories' in percentages (case number). Compiled by the author

16. Moreover, in the course of analysis, researchers also noticed that the amount of coverage in *AD* was unevenly distributed across congress members, with the top five most-reported congressmen featuring in 65.3 per cent of all articles on males with almost 70 per cent of total headlines on females involved the top five most-reported congresswomen (see Table 6). The amount of media attention received by an individual 'celebrity congress member,' defined here as one of the top five most-reported in headlines, can be five to ten times more than a 'non-celebrity congress member.'

	Top-five most reported congress members (celebrity congress members)	The rest of the congress (non-celebrity congress members)	Total mentioning in headlines
Male	65.3 (215)	34.7(114)	100 (329)
Female	69.9 (114)	30.1 (49)	100 (163)
*Numbers in grid represent percentages with case number in brackets			

Table 6. Coverage distribution between celebrity and non-celebrity congress members. Compiled by the author

17. When we looked at only the coverage of the 'celebrity group,' the gendered pattern as identified in previous sections became more pronounced. While still no significant differences were observed in tone ($P=0.121>0.05$), section allocation ($P=0.298>0.005$) and length ($P=0.408>0.05$), the gender difference in 'theme' became ever more evident ($P=0.000<0.05$) with a widening gap particularly in the 'professional performance' and 'relationship' categories. The analysis revealed that *AD* coverage of the top five most-reported congressmen was more likely to be about their professional performance, whereas articles on the top five most-reported congresswomen were more likely to be about their relationships (see Table 7). In a stark contrast, no significant statistical gender difference in 'theme' was found among the 'non-celebrity' congress members, and the gendered pattern in 'theme' displayed a nearly opposite trend as compared with the 'celebrity' group (see Figures 1 and 2).

Theme	Celebrity Congress members			Non-celebrity Congress members		
	Male	Female	Gender gap	Male	Female	Gender gap
Election	13.0 (28)	24.6 (28)	+11.6	35.1(40)	34.7 (17)	-0.4
Professional performance	28.8 (62)	15.8 (18)	-13	9.6(11)	26.5(13)	+16.9
Scandals (excl. relationships)	14.0 (30)	14.0(16)	-0	16.7(19)	16.3(8)	-0.4
Relationship gossip	7.0 (15)	22.8 (26)	+15.8	9.6(11)	4.1(2)	-5.5
Other aspects in personal life	6.0 (13)	10.5 (12)	+4.5	15.8(18)	6.1(3)	-9.7
Pressing charges or suing others	7.9 (17)	1.8 (2)	-6.1	7.9(9)	6.1(3)	-1.8
Physical condition	9.8 (21)	2.6 (3)	-7.2	1.8(2)	4.1(2)	+2.3
Comments on others	7.4 (16)	6.1 (7)	-1.3	0.9(1)	0.0(0)	-0.9
Others (e.g. opinion polls)	6.0 (13)	1.8 (2)	-4.2	2.6(3)	2.0(1)	-0.6
Total	100 (215)	100 (114)		100(114)	100 (49)	

Table 7. Gender comparison in coverage themes among celebrity and non-celebrity congress members. Compiled by the author

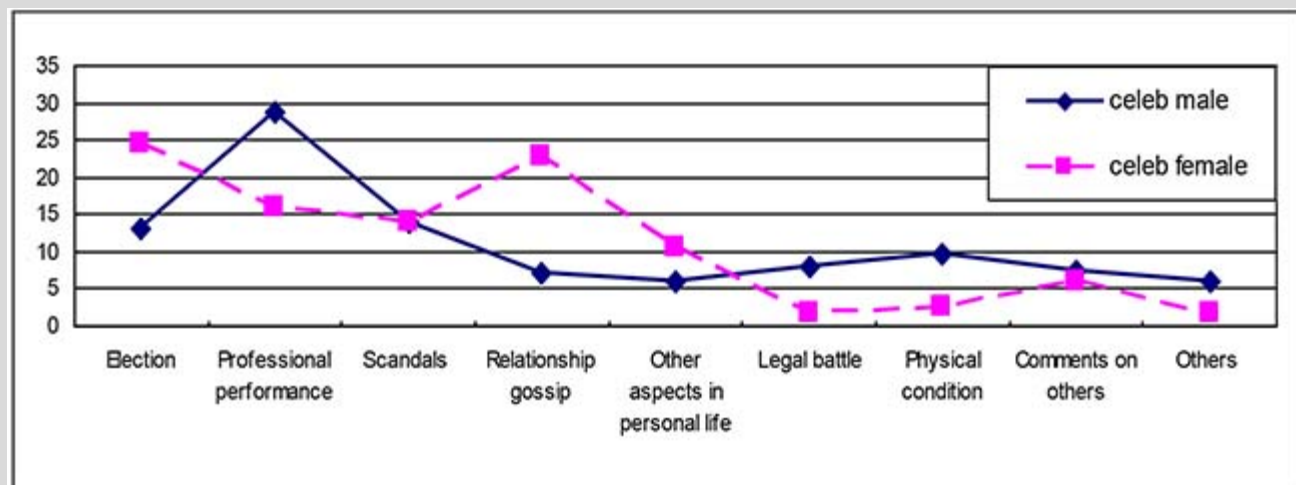


Figure 1. Gender comparison between celebrity congress members: Difference in themes. Designed by the author

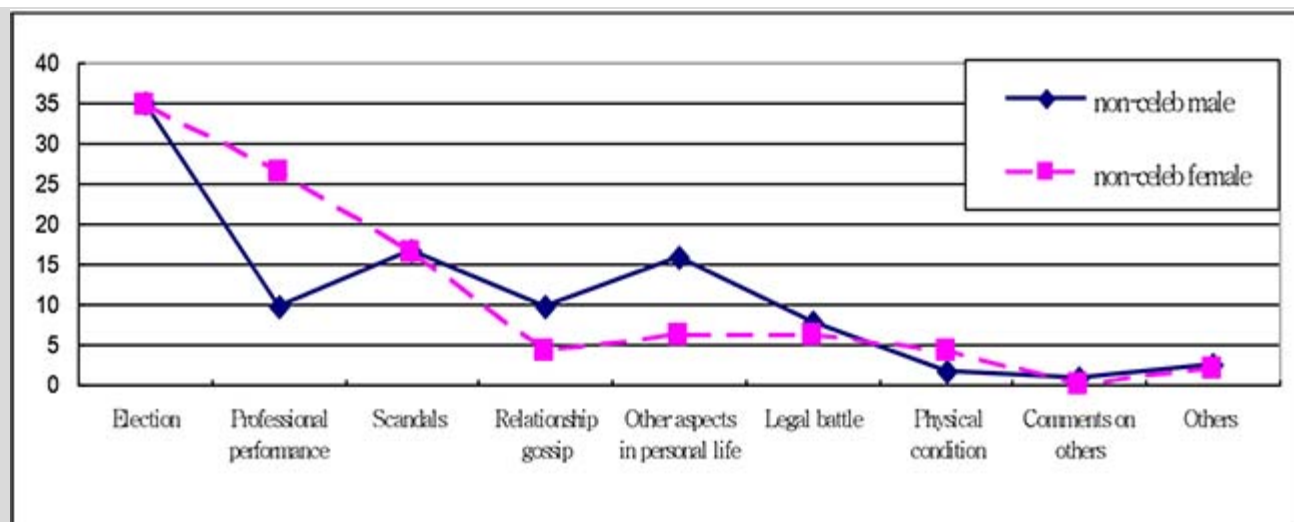


Figure 2. Gender comparison between non-celebrity congress members: Difference in themes. Designed by the author

18. Although it was expected that the amount of gossip and human-interest stories would be higher in a tabloid title, the data from the content analysis offers some valuable insights that help us unpack the issue of gender politics in the climate of media tabloidisation. The data concurred with existing literature that male politicians received more media attention and the editorial decision remained biased in certain aspects. However, it was noted that the quantity of reports is not the only indicator with which to judge gender equality in media coverage, as improved visibility does not always correlate with positive publicity, and there remains a gender difference in how/why congress members receive a higher degree of media attention. It appeared that the *AD* was particularly interested in exploiting the relationship stories of some congresswomen and, for some frequently reported congresswomen, relationship coverage is the only topic written about them during their term in office.

Unfolding narratives in relationship coverage

19. Previous content analysis revealed that 'relationship' was the theme where quantitative reports about male and female congress members differed greatly. Following this trend, an additional way to investigate how gender differences could surface is by examining how relationship stories are told in detail and how dominant gender ideology shapes the narratives. For this part of our analysis, we chose to analyse the narratives in two strings of reports on congress members' affairs. Although the affairs differ in detail, they pose enough similarities to be compared and to serve as a good site from which to examine the nuances in gendered media discourse.

Coverage on Congressman Wu's affair

20. The first string of news was about an extra-marital affair involving Mr. Wu Yu-Sheng, a congressman who had received the highest number of votes in his constituency in the 2008 elections. Married with children, he was caught on camera dating a single female socialite, Miss Sun, in an expensive sushi restaurant, followed by a short stay in a luxurious motel. The news was first revealed on 13 November 2009. In the breaking news ('First hand: Congressman Wu takes beauty clad in Chanel to Wego Motel,' article 1 in Table 8), the lead paragraph summarised the date and quoted Wu in explaining his behaviour as 'suddenly lost, made a mistake.' The fourth paragraph portrayed Wu as an accountable man who, despite his error, would take full responsibility for his actions and would protect the reputation and privacy of the socialite. Wu was reported to be extremely sorry and quoted again as saying that he was the one to blame for the damage done to his image and family, and he asked the journalists not to bother his wife who had

no prior knowledge of the affair. The coverage also indicated that his marriage had not been in trouble and that his wife had been good at handling the household finances and was supportive of his political career. The first article set the tones for the narrative, casting Wu as a repentant husband, responsible lover, and a pragmatic politician desperately needing to be forgiven.

	Date of report	Headline
1	13 Nov 2009	First hand: Congressman Wu takes beauty clad in Chanel to Wego Motel
2	14 Nov 2009	Wu bows and apologises, shuts himself into a five-day self-reflection
3	14 Nov 2009	Editorial: Wu's redemption and de-criminalization
4	14 Nov 2009	Apple Poll: Would you forgive Wu since he has admitted wrongdoing and apologised?
5	15 Nov 2009	Wu's hands are dirty, no host place at the party celebration
6	15 Nov 2009	Secret lover from PR background, Wu met at piano bar
7	16 Nov 2009	The car used by Wu in the scandal allegedly from sponsor
8	19 Nov 2009	Spice Apple Column: Wu is "truly responsible"
9	20 Nov 2009	Fire broke out over Wu in Talk Show, host Tao blasts callers on air
10	20 Nov 2009	Wu's wife to sue or not to sue, Wu keeps changing the story
11	21 Nov 2009	Timely release of 'The Other Man', bloggers volunteer Wu to endorse the film
12	23 Nov 2009	Wang feeds Lee the sushi of love, pilgrimage to Wu's infidelity spot
13	25 Nov 2009	Singer 'Xiao-Kuei' follows Wu's steps to Wego, no drama without Sun
14	13 Dec 2009	Second-hand comments about Wu getting a room with Sun
15	4 Mar 2010	First interview, Sun in tears: 'No words of consolation from Wu'
16	5 Mar 2010	Sun and Wu already in touch, 'No words of consolation' a lie busted by friend
17	11 Jan 2011	Writer Feng Kuang-yuan gets libel for mocking Wu's affair
18	21 Feb 2011	Sushi restaurant popular among celebs, Wu's dating choice shot to fame
19	7 Sep 2011	Wu withdraws charge against Feng, Feng mocks Wu
20	26 Nov 2011	Writer Feng appears in court in specially-designed T-shirt with a slogan to mock Wu
21	17 Dec 2011	Protecting his votes, Wu avoids Feng like plague before election

Table 9. Dates and headlines on Wu's relationship story. Compiled by the author

21. Three articles featuring the scandal appeared the day after, beginning with "Wu bows and apologises, shuts himself into a five-day self-reflection." Apart from depicting the 'self-imposed punishment,' the lead paragraph also emphasised how Wu tried to 'protect' the socialite's anonymity, although her name, age, home address, profession and social circle were subsequently revealed by journalists in the rest of the article. The article also recorded comments from Wu's colleagues, most of whom expressed sympathy and disbelief since Wu had always been known for his 'high moral grounds.' Some of the colleagues were even reported as praising Wu as a 'man with guts.' Shuai Haw-ming, a congressman who also knew the socialite, went further to say that he 'envied Wu,' but soon distanced himself from further association with the story. These comments from Wu's colleagues were ostensibly positive and they glossed over the seriousness of the matter.^[32]
22. Another article, 'Wu's redemption and de-criminalization,' came from the newspaper's editorial office. It started with praises on how Wu dealt with the crisis:

After the scandal was revealed, he reacted well. Honest, and told the truth, unlike other politicians who would have twisted the story, arguing that they were discussing policy matters or would drag their wife to back their innocence. However, in the end, he cannot escape the repertoire of asking for forgiveness.[33]

The editor went on to argue that it is human instinct to pursue polygamy [read polygyny]. Therefore, we needed to re-examine the legitimacy and logic behind Taiwanese family law, which allows a wife to sue her husband and the third party in the case of an extra-marital affair. The editor argued that Wu, as a congressman, should redeem himself through filing a parliamentary proposal to decriminalise the third party.

23. This was subsequently followed by an opinion poll conducted by the newspaper with the question, 'Apple Poll: Would you forgive Wu since he has admitted wrongdoing and apologised?' [34] Using 'since' instead of 'even if' in the question implies that Wu could and should be forgiven as a 'truly repentant' husband. Although the majority 54.64 per cent of respondents decided that Wu cannot be forgiven as cheating is inexcusable, irrespective of the reason, more than one-third (36.09 per cent) of the respondents regard him as a 'real man' and would forgive him. Another 9.27 per cent answered 'don't know.' In the following days, the focus of coverage shifted to discussing the background of the socialite, the possible legal reaction from Wu's wife, the restaurant and the motel where the date took place. Another article ('First Interview: 'Sun in tears: "no words of consolation from Wu"') was an interview with the socialite, Ms. Sun, who complained that Wu had not sent any consolation since the scandal broke out. However, her account was quickly reported to be a lie. In 'Sun and Wu already in touch, "No words of consolation" a lie busted by friend,' her friend revealed that Wu had been in contact and assured her that his wife would not sue. Therefore, the friend criticised Ms. Sun for being a hypocrite and only undertook the interview because she wanted to make herself more famous.[35]
24. Among all twenty-one reports, only two criticised Wu and patriarchal ideology. 'Spice Apple Column: 'Wu is "truly responsible",' attacked Wu's hypocrisy and devalued his 'five-day self-reflection' period as a de facto cowardly excuse to go into hiding, leaving others involved to be in the firing line for him.[36] 'Fire broke out over Wu in Talk Show, host Tao blasts callers on air,' featured the annoyed response from a female radio host when a male listener, self-identified as 'Darwin,' called in to her show and justified Wu's behaviour as 'the result of evolution.' The female radio host, Tao-tzu, reproached his argument as 'part of [an] evil patriarchal ideology that men use to suppress women' and argued that women should also enjoy sexual freedom and opportunities to challenge this ideology.

Coverage on Congresswoman Kao's affair

25. The main character in the second news string is congresswomen, Kao Chin Su Mei, who represents the Aborigines of Taiwan. Before becoming a congresswoman, she had been an actress/singer, appearing in popular television dramas in the 1990s. This background has had both a positive and a negative impact on her political career. On one hand, it provides the vital publicity a politician craves. On the other, it overshadows her political achievement, as her work as a congresswoman is often mocked as 'performance' and 'putting on a show.' Back in 2006, Ms. Kao was first revealed to be romantically linked to Mr. Lee Hong-yuan, then deputy mayor of Taipei County. During her term in the 7th Legislative Yuan, they continued to be seen behaving intimately with each other on several occasions. Whereas Kao was unmarried, Lee had been married for thirty years and had four children. Neither of them officially confirmed or denied the affair which allegedly came to an end in 2011.

	Date of report	Headline
1	15 Sep 2008	Slam dunk love steal/ Kao takes Mr. Lee back to her den
2	01 Oct 2008	Kao gives cold shoulder to the Deputy/ Time for a foreigner to play her knight
3	24 Mar 2009	Lee's wife second round with Kao/ Hanging on to their 30 years' marriage/ Forever stay side by side with her husband
4	25 Mar 2009	Kao should say sorry to the Thai-ya tribe
5	Dec 18 2009	Kao seduces married man at restaurant/ Lee's wife bottles up
6	Jan 15 2010	Kao eats and drinks with married man / Lee admits mistakes breaking [traffic] rules
7	30 Jun 2011	Kao regrets loving married man/ "deviating from moral standards"

Table 10. Dates and headlines on Kao's relationship story. Compiled by the author

26. As one might have gathered from the headlines in Table 8, the scandal was framed very differently from Wu's case. The narrative depicted Kao as an evil third party who was seductive, scheming and immoral. For example, the first report ("Slam dunk love steal/Kao takes Mr. Lee back to her den") detailed their dates on three occasions with the first dinner date being described as follows:

After dinner, Lee said goodbye to his friend, holding up Kao's little hands. Their bodies then twisted into interconnected curls in the alleyway. The night continued in the piano bar, 'Sex & City'. After two hours of lovely wine and music, they headed back to Kao's place. The journalist waited until 3 a.m. and did not see Lee leaving.[37]

27. Another paragraph in the report described their second date on the tennis court, where Kao was portrayed as a pretty object for Lee's eyes, implying that the relationship hinged upon her physical attractiveness.

Kao and Lee played in the same team. Kao plays really well, beating the opponents hands down. Lee withdrew after an hour because of tiredness, sitting on a bench appreciating the beautiful movements of his darling.[38]

28. The message of Lee being seduced by a physically attractive woman also manifested in the accompanying images: one depicting Kao playing tennis with the caption, 'Kao keeps fit through exercise, agile on court at the age of 42,' in contrast to the image of Lee captioned 'Lee stretched out his arms in a jersey, a big belly clearly seen.' [39] Their third date was on the set of a televised Mid-moon festival celebration, and Kao was reported as having danced on stage in an aboriginal dress while Lee sat in the audience enjoying watching her movements. Interestingly, descriptions of Lee in the report were much more forgiving, although he was the married party in the affair. He was referred to as the 'trusted water engineer by President Ma' and 'the father of four children.' The report also quoted Lee's brother as saying: 'I can only beg you [journalists] not to destroy his political career when you write about this scandal. He has a lot to offer [to the country].' [40]

29. Another narrative in these reports centred on 'the war between two women' and highlighted tension and conflict between Ms. Kao and Lee's wife, conveniently leaving Mr. Lee out of the picture. This was particularly obvious in the headline of an article which blatantly termed the ongoing affair as 'Lee's wife's second round with Kao.' The content of the article unravelled the way that the journalist caught Lee's wife unexpectedly on her way to work and inquired about her thoughts on the scandal. In addition to her actual response to the questions, the article also provided reference to Mrs Lee's facial expression and mannerism in brackets, such as '(frowning, head down and lip tight),' '(looking embarrassed, stammer),' '(looking a little more relaxed, putting on a brave face)' and '(lost of words all of a sudden, evading the question).' [41] One effect of giving this 'extra

emotional information' was to direct the readers to feel more sympathetic towards Lee's wife, and hence reinforce Kao's image as the evil third party. This tendency of leading the readers and imposing moral judgement was also seen in the headlines of three more articles, 'Kao seduces married man at restaurant/Lee's wife bottles up'; 'Kao eats and drinks with married man/Lee admits mistakes breaking [traffic] rules'; 'Kao regrets loving married man/"deviating from moral standards"'.^[42] Here the term 'married man' was used in each headline instead of 'Mr. Lee.'

30. Another article was a condemnatory letter written by a male student who self-identified as a member of the Thai-ya tribe—the same Aboriginal tribe as Kao. In his letter, titled 'Kao should say sorry to the Thai-ya tribe,' he accused Kao of wasting tax payers' money and time on her personal matters, including the 'melodrama' with Lee, and therefore he suggested she owed the public and apology.^[43] Moreover, according to him, Kao should not blame the media for reporting the scandal, because the media is merely assisting the public to examine her behaviour. One could argue that the editorial choice here not only skilfully defended *AD*'s position of preying on Kao's relationship, but also indirectly expressing its view on Ms. Kao and the alleged affair.

For a long time, negative reports about you have led to misunderstanding on our tribe from the Han Chinese, particularly on the morality of aborigine politicians. Those affairs about you not only hurt the Han Chinese, but also damaged their views on females from the Thai-ya tribe. And your 'performance' treads on our dignity and subjects aborigine issues to media manipulation.^[44]

31. The paper's editorial attempt to condemn and demonise Kao was repeated in an article which was based on an interview with Kao. When asked about the scandal in the interview, Ms. Kao admitted that although her relationship history might seem to be 'deviating from moral standards' in the eyes of many in Taiwanese society, she pleaded that the public should just judge her on her professional performance as a politician. However, the article adopted the headline, 'Kao regrets loving married man/ "deviating from moral standards",' which focused on the first part of her message and which slightly twisted the meaning of the original words in the interview.^[45] As Lewis Hinchman and Sandra Hinchman pointed out, narratives represent the storyteller's way of interpreting the world and sometimes create moral tales to preach about how the world should be. Several features in the narrative structures analysed here have demonstrated the gendered double-standard in the reporting of the affairs.^[46] For example, the narrative on Wu's infidelity focused on his emotion and portrayed the 'mistake' as a genuine human weakness. His 'temporary stray' was framed as 'out of character' and his admission to the affair was 'a brave deed,' and even 'an honorable thing for men to emulate.' Overall the tone was forgiving and condemnatory commentary on Mr. Wu only emerged about a week after the initial report appeared. In contrast, the narrative on Ms. Kao's affair focused on her physical attractiveness and portrayed her as seductive and scheming (similar to Ms. Sun). Her affair with Lee was framed as a lingering battle between a virtuous wife and an evil third party and her reflection on her behaviour was framed as a belated confession from a deviantly immoral woman. Moreover, both narratives invite the reader to identify with the 'good' wives who upheld the traditional womanly virtues: tolerance, caring and being supportive of their straying husbands. Their sacrifice would ultimately be rewarded as the affairs in the end would reach a resolution where the strayed men returned to their families and the third party ended up with a bruised emotion and reputation.

Conclusion

32. Congress members have a duty to serve their constituents and their direct contact with the public and public issues has made them household names and therefore topics for everyday newspapers. However, studies on gender representations of Taiwanese congress members, both as individuals and as entities, remain thin. Within the limited literature to date, few have incorporated coverage from prominent tabloids to capture the implications of the commercialisation and recent changes in

newspaper journalism. My research offers a more up-to-date picture of political reporting and a useful comparison between male and female politicians in the most-read tabloid newspaper in Taiwan. Overall, findings indicate that gendered representation has not disappeared but has been transformed into a more complicated and elusive form—not so much in the obvious ostracisation or blatant lambasting of women, but more in the editorial choice of who, what and how to report stories on congresswomen.

33. First, the analysis revealed that congressmen as a whole are still getting more coverage, even though the tabloid coverage concentrated on only one-third of the congressmen and congresswomen. About two-thirds of congressmen and congresswomen were never mentioned or very rarely mentioned (i.e. once or twice) in their four-year term in office. More interestingly, my research found that the one-third of congressmen who did appear in newspaper articles, were reported more often because of their professional work while the one-third of congresswomen gained visibility due to relationship gossip. Although some might see this as an inevitable feature of a tabloid newspaper creating 'celebrities' and cashing in their 'stardom,' it also encourages readers to focus on different aspects of politicians of different sexes. Second, although little gender difference was found in the tone, length and section location of *AD's* coverage on congress members, there remains a different treatment in the subject matter selected for reporting. As found in the paper's coverage on local artists,^[47] there is a propensity of stories about women's relationships and marital status. One can only infer that the unnecessary emphasis on congresswomen's relationship gossip would divert the public's attention towards their professional performance and risk creating a false impression about how female politicians channel their time and energy. Moreover, excessive column inches on this relationship gossip could also affect the visibility of other types of topics related to congresswomen and opportunities for other congresswomen to be reported. Last, but not least, a close examination of the *AD's* relationship coverage reflects the latent patriarchal values upheld by the newspaper. As shown in my narrative analysis earlier, a different set of assumptions can be applied to evaluate the actions of politicians of different sexes. In representing the relationship scandal, male politicians are portrayed in a more forgiving manner, highlighting 'man errors' and the 'normality' of scandalous behaviour; whereas the behaviour of female politicians was scrutinised within a set of stricter moral codes. If the behaviour of women politicians falls out of the standard codes, they are identified as 'the deviant others' whose overall integrity is questionable and the implication is that their behaviour in other aspects could also be affected. The findings in this study concluded that the *AD* has not been gender-neutral when it comes to reporting on congress members, and readers are advised to reflect upon the ways that perceptions towards female politicians are shaped by seemingly light-hearted tabloid coverage and also to remain critical when consuming popular media texts.

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Published with the support of Gender and Cultural Studies, School of Culture, History and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

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Last modified: 28 August 2015 1427