

Political Identity of American Presidential Candidates 2016 in the International Newspapers Sites

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Abstract

It is known that voting choice may be affected, or mainly determined, by the identity of politicians. Newspapers coverage may represent the participation of the newspaper itself in the contest between candidates to win the presidency. Sometimes, newspaper construct identity positions for someone and that is a key area of investigation within this study.

In this context, the study examines the political identity of the 2016 American presidential election's candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the newspaper coverage. This analysis will mainly cover the periods of the debates and election days.

This paper will question the ways the newspapers portray the political identity of the American presidential candidates and the types of role model given by the newspapers to the presidential candidate identity. Consequently, this paper will finally question the identity portrayed in the newspaper whether it is a real image or a constructed identity that represents the beliefs of the newspaper and the candidate they support. From this point, the researcher will be able to identify whether the newspaper stereotyped the identity of a candidate or not.

This paper will depend on two theories which are the Identity theory and the Social Responsibility theory.

This paper will depend on the Discourse Analysis in order to measure and evaluate the ways in which identities have been constructed in the time frame.

The three newspapers that are included in this paper are The Washington Post (America), The Ahram Weekly (Egypt) and The Times of India (India).

Keywords - International News, News Coverage, Political Identity, American Presidency 2016, Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump

I. INTRODUCTION

Identity is the features of the self of the individual. Everyone can express his identity in chatting and they do this in different ways. For example, (Kuo and Margalit, 2012)⁽¹⁾ tried to simplify measuring the

identity in a clear way by asking various number of people to describe themselves, and they found out each one described it in a different way. One described it in terms of religion, while another described it in terms of race, another described in economic terms, etc...

Identity can be understood when a person expresses it through his words, but the question that raises here is whether what the person expresses will be exactly the same when covered in the newspapers or is it going to be constructed in order to reflect certain goals the newspapers are concerned about.

The decision to construct an identity in newspapers for a candidate like constructing an aged identity "could be viewed positively as a way of highlighting experience, but also negatively, in terms of a politician being past his/her best" (Hardman, 2008)⁽²⁾. In other words, the person may say something that describes one of his identities and when constructed in the newspapers, it gives a specific meaning especially when they are well-known candidates and are running for the American elections, 2016.

To understand the construction of identity in newspapers, you need to understand the ways journalists encode the identity of political actors "candidates" on the pages of newspapers. Also, the ways they construct any type of identity for the candidates discussed.

Each individual has multiple identities. Candidates also do. Political Identity includes all types of identities as these candidates represent themselves through the whole world, which means they will try to highlight all the identities they have. The candidate will try to highlight his views about everything.

Expressing your own point of view towards an issue, is related directly to your beliefs, which means it is deep inside yourself and is part of your original identity. But how the newspaper constructs and highlights it needs to be studied and analysed to understand how they portray the identity which was just expressed in few sentences as construction may be positive or negative.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research problem tries to find out the extent of construction of identity in International newspapers

towards Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, American Presidential Candidates 2016. This paper examines the ways in which political identities have been constructed in the International newspapers (America – India – Egypt). It will compare and contrast how these three newspapers have constructed different identities for those two candidates. Consequently, it will check whether the constructed identity was done on purpose or whether it reflected any ideological goals of the newspaper, also, to what extent this identity was influenced by the nature of the roles that these actors practiced positively and negatively.

In this context, the study attempts to find out the identity types used in the political pages such as personal, cultural, gender, racial, economic and national identity, etc... The study will then attempt to know the roles given to each candidate such as the 'straightforward success' role model, the 'challenging stereotypes' role model, etc... From this point, the researcher will be able to check whether stereotypes are being formed or not from analysing the identity discourse.

III. RESEARCH IMPORTANCE

Several factors show the importance of this study. In the beginning studying the identity discourse is not less important than studying how events are being covered and presented in newspapers and that is due to the link of the identity discourse with leading the public in an indirect way. This requires the need to analyse the identity discourse in the International newspapers to stand on the various dimensions of its role in drawing identities. In addition to the association between the identity discourse and the national and international identity of the country. Also, it is important to explore this type of discourse in different newspapers in order to understand the differences and similarities.

IV. RESEARCH GOALS

This study aims at exploring the types of identity given to the U.S Political Candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the International newspapers. Plus, the role model given by those newspapers to the presidential candidate identity. In addition to identifying the role of the International newspapers in drawing the identity of the major actors in the specialized political content. Also, the researcher will work out a comparison on constructing the identity in the different newspapers under study in which each newspaper represents a social culture and a school of journalism. The last study goal is checking whether the constructed identities and roles can lead to stereotypes or not.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to examine the political identity of American Presidential Candidates 2016 in the

International Newspapers Sites, the researcher conducted two dimensions in the literature review. The first will cover previous studies about the Political Identity in the Newspapers and the second will cover the previous studies about the News Coverage for Presidential Elections.

VI. POLITICAL IDENTITY IN NEWSPAPERS

Way & Kaya (2016)⁽³⁾ study explores the political identity representations in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict coverage in three Turkish newspapers. The researchers demonstrated the ways used by the three newspapers that were found associated to interests from three aspects in the political field which was used in the shooting incident in Ağrı. That was to achieve political points for interests closely associated to them. Results showed that "Sabah" newspaper analysis showed that the Kurds identity was represented as being "obstacle to the peace process" while BirGün newspaper analysis showed that HDP and Kurds are represented as being strong, helpful and peaceful.

Also, (Roosvall, 2014)⁽⁴⁾ study examines the ways the online slideshows from Swedish, UK and US web newspapers can represent the identity politics of the world. In other words, the ways the media can represent the identity politics through finding the links to various identity models in "representations of people in world news and relating them to discourses on humanity and notions of globalization respectively". Results showed that the reifying identity model rules, and acts as a shorter way to media consideration. It is shown in one of the examples that were analysed that identity politics on the representational level does rarely identify individuals as residents in the May Day reports.

In addition, (Bruter, 2009)⁽⁵⁾ study examines the impact of news on the political identity of European citizens. In the study, it was noted that political identities are hardly measurable. Findings confirmed the impact of news on identity, even though the findings are direct in believing that "cynicism does not protect citizens' identity" from news impact. The idea that it would make them even more exposed to news is far more argumentative and suggested as truly reasonable.

Hardman (2008)⁽⁶⁾ study tries to weigh the various ways of identity construction in the British newspaper editorials throughout the past thirty-five years. The newspapers analysed were The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Mirror and The Daily Mail. Results highlighted that the newspapers construct an identity whether positive or negative according to the political ideology of the newspaper. "In so doing, the newspapers are constructing identity positions for themselves along party-political, rather than purely ideological lines". In addition, inside the editorials the identities of politicians which are constructed are made in order to contribute in the shared group identities' construction.

Moreover, (Wenden, 2005)⁽⁷⁾ study questions the representation of the AlJazeera Special report about al-Aqsa Intifada as a substitute to that of the Western press. The researcher tried to know the ways the report identified the actors in this conflict. It investigates the ways the political struggle was identified by using the critical discourse analysis of twelve articles. Wenden concentrated on analysing the role of language in the articles published. Results showed that victim representation in the newspapers were given to the Palestinians and they were given the resistors identity, while Israelis were represented as being held responsible for the socio-economic consequences of the Intifada.

VII. NEWS COVERAGE FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Watkins (2013)⁽⁸⁾ study examines the newspaper coverage of the two U.S 2012 presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney's digital communication. Results indicated that Obama received more coverage in the newspapers than Romney. Obama's coverage mainly concentrated on quoting his Twitter feed and that was considered a neutral objective coverage however, Romney's coverage concentrated on his website and that showed more negative coverage.

Besides, (Benoit, Hemmer & Stein, 2010)⁽⁹⁾ study examines the newspaper coverage of presidential primary election campaigns. Benoit studied the New York Times newspaper from 1952 till 2004. Results showed a huge amount of news pieces related to the election and candidates in the newspaper coverage, decreasing over time shifting from issues and candidate qualifications to horse races and that was less useful to voters than many would assume". Results also showed that the New York Times coverage was positive however, the tone was more negative when compared to the previous elections.

Moreover, (Vliegthart et al, 2010)⁽¹⁰⁾ study explores the newspaper coverage of the U.S 2008 presidential candidates in eight European countries. The researchers investigated the visibility, tone and framing used in the news coverage. Results pointed that the newspaper coverage in Europe preferred Obama over McCain who never received a positive tone throughout the whole period of elections. In other words, the visibility, tone and frame were positively used for the sake of Obama in the coverage. Take into consideration that the three aspects were used in the coverage, but each one differs than the others.

Nitz et al (2009)⁽¹¹⁾ study investigates the news coverage of three major Norwegian newspapers towards the U.S 2004 presidential election. The researchers questioned whether the newspaper coverage was thematic or episodic, in addition to the tone and bias if available in the coverage, etc... Findings showed that more than half of the coverage

was episodic. The larger portion of coverage was neutral, not biased to any candidate. However, the tone and bias were available more in the visual images.

Also, (Saunders, 2006)⁽¹²⁾ study aims at understanding the news coverage before the U.S 2008 presidential election trying to know the amount and prominence of coverage differ among the expected candidates. Findings showed that newspapers included coverage about "frontrunners" and they constructed a motion track for the presidential candidate before the first primary. "The media does not tell us what to think about, but rather who to think about".

VIII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. This study will depend on two theories which are:

1. Identity Theory

"Identities are the traits, characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is". Identities can be concerned about the past when you are talking about the previous true identity of the person, can be concerned about the present when you are talking about the identity of the person nowadays and can be concerned about the future when you are talking about the wishing identity of the person in the future according to his actions of the goals he is willing to achieve. In other words, Identities are changeable as stated in (Leary & Tangney, 2012)⁽¹³⁾ handbook.

In the identity theory, (Stets & Burke, 2000)⁽¹⁴⁾ showed that the point of commitment was presented. It has two characteristics as discussed by Stryker and Serpe in 1994. The first one is the people who the person is attached to through the identity. This means the stronger the commitment, the greater the salience. The second one is the depth of the person's attachment to the people around. This means the stronger the attachment, the greater the salience.

Identity theory questioned the reasons why saliences changes over time. Another question is identifying the ways self-meanings are linked to the person's behaviour (Stryker & Burke, 2000)⁽¹⁵⁾.

Stets (2014)⁽¹⁶⁾ pointed out that the gender identity was the first one measured by Burke. Then later ethnic identity was measured too by White and Burke. Then age identity was measured by Mutran and Burke.

2. Social Responsibility Theory

The Social Responsibility theory adopts a concept opposite of that of absolute freedom. This theory states that freedom is not an absolute right, but it is a right, duty and responsibility at the same time. That is why media is asked to fulfil certain obligations towards the society. The media must establish and develop professional standards which must include truthfulness, objectivity, balancing, accuracy, diversity which reflects the diversity of ideas and opinions, respecting public values, taking

care of public interests, avoiding all that may affect it negatively and respecting the privacy of the individuals (Hassan, 2012)⁽¹⁷⁾.

3. Methodology

This study is an analytical rather than descriptive. The study will depend on the Survey method to answer the research questions and fulfil its goals and measure and evaluate the ways in which identities have been constructed in the time frame. The researcher has used this methodology in an attempt to find out and explain the identity construction in International newspapers by using the discourse analysis tool that will be used to examine the three newspapers. The comparative method was also used to compare and contrast the three journalistic circumstances which are the American, Indian and Egyptian.

4. Time Frame of Study

The Time Frame will cover mainly the periods of the debates and the election days.

5. Study Sample

The three newspapers that are included in this paper are The Washington Post (America), The Ahram Weekly (Egypt) and The Times of India (India).

6. Study Questions

This study will address the following research questions to study the political identity in the newspapers coverage.

- 1- How did the newspapers portray the identity of the American presidential candidate's identity?
- 2- What type of role model is given by the newspapers to the presidential candidate identity?

7. Results

The Ahram Weekly used the quotation tactic. The newspaper did not directly draw an identity for any of the candidates. The journalists just quoted both of them. Sometimes, it was clear that they highlighted the positive personal identity of Hillary Clinton. At the same time, they throughout the sentences highlighted some negative identities for Donald Trump starting with negative personal identity, racism and sexism identity, etc...

On the 29th of September, the newspaper published a feature titled "Clinton pips Trump on Points"⁽¹⁸⁾ concerning the issue of her winning the first debate, however, there is no knock out yet as the newspaper described. The newspaper did not give Trump any negative identity, but only showed that Clinton accused him of "racism, sexism, and tax evasion". Clinton was given a positive personal identity by portraying her as being "more confident and calm" unlike Trump who was given a negative

personal identity as he was portrayed as being "testy and less disciplined". In addition, the newspaper stressed that she was the first lady to win the presidential nomination of a major US Political Party.

Even at the time of scandals Clinton was facing, the Ahram Weekly newspaper did not draw a negative identity to her though, the word scandal is already known and related to negative identity. They even discarded the idea of drawing a negative one. Still, they switched this negative one to a positive by showing that she is impressing her audience with her "strong personality" telling that she is known with her "iron will". This was clearly shown at the feature titled "Scandals and strength of Hillary Clinton"⁽¹⁹⁾ on the 6th of October.

On the 27th of October, the newspaper published a feature titled "Democracy troubles"⁽²⁰⁾ where they showed how Trump's "veiled threat not to respect the results" if he did not win. They discussed how this violated the electoral traditions of the Americans. Here, the newspaper described Trump's campaign as being "nasty" pointing this to his own personal actions. Another negative identity attached to him.

Looking on the 3rd of November, the newspaper published a feature titled "Bitter to the Wire"⁽²¹⁾ concerning the issue of Hillary Clinton's private email server affair. Again no negative identity was given to Clinton however, the negative one was given to Donald Trump who the newspaper pointed out that he was after that investigation. They even gave Clinton a positive personal identity as she was portrayed as being a strong woman who "continued to level attacks".

The same day, the newspaper published a feature titled "Hobson's choice in US elections"⁽²²⁾ where they described Trump as being mad, racist and his "politics of hate are repulsive". All these are features that support a drawn negative identity to Trump. Also, labelling him as being offensive, shameful, and "reputation of being a bull in the political china shop". However, they identified Clinton that she is no less hateful and repulsive. In addition that in the piece, the journalist drew a positive identity for Clinton towards minorities and immigrants as they will find "welcoming arms of Hillary Clinton". All these were an indication that she must win this election.

After Trump's victory, the Ahram Weekly wrote in a feature titled "The Middle East and Donald Trump"⁽²³⁾ on the 17th of November where the newspaper concentrated on Trump's racist view towards Muslims which is a negative one.

The main Role Model used in the Ahram Weekly was the 'triumph over difficult circumstances' role model and it was assigned to Hillary Clinton who they always drew for her a positive identity.

Looking at The Times of India newspaper coverage throughout the times of debates and

Election Day, it was talking about Donald Trump and his actions. He received outsized coverage. Highlights summarized the piece and showing the identity given to him. The main identity that can be concluded from this newspaper is the sexual identity either for him or for Hillary Clinton, but the lion's share was for Trump. The Times of India described Trump's victory as "an insurrection against the elites". The newspaper's main headline was "India must come up with a 'Trump plan' to cope".

Many pieces talked about the allegations of sexual misconduct of Donald Trump with many women such that of the 21st of October, the newspaper published in a piece titled "Women who have alleged inappropriate conduct by Donald Trump"⁽²⁴⁾. From the headline the reader can conclude a negative sexual identity for Trump, although by just checking the highlights, the reader can understand that lots of women accused him, but he dismissed them as being "absolutely false allegations".

Also, on the 22nd of October, after the three debates ended, the newspaper published a feature titled "Donald Trump booed as he and Hillary Clinton trade biting jokes"⁽²⁵⁾ identifying both of them with their sexual identity. The newspaper concentrated on such identity as each of them was assaulting the other about the sexual topics in their life, making such identity on papers.

Also, on the 24th of October, the newspaper published another piece titled "Donald Trump campaign crumbles despite the Hillary Clinton scandals"⁽²⁶⁾ concentrating on the sexual identity throughout the sentences. About Clinton they wrote "the remarkable thing is Clinton is surging forward despite a plethora of scandals surrounding her" and about Trump they wrote "is own odious record of sexism, misogyny, and ceaseless narcissism that has turned off many voters".

But in this piece, the newspaper quoted Trump saying that "We are winning and the press is refusing to report it. Don't let them fool you". That was a different coverage where it seemed they were supporting Trump showing his strong personal identity.

Also, other pieces concentrated on the sexual identity of both presidential candidates such as "New allegations of sexual misconduct rock Donald Trump campaign"⁽²⁷⁾ and "I respect women, says Donald Trump. Audience bursts out laughing"⁽²⁸⁾, etc...

In one of the Interactives in The Times of India newspaper, they published a comparison between Clinton and Donald titled "Donald Trump vs Hillary Clinton – Comparison and Difference"⁽²⁹⁾ showing only her positive identity through showing her positive hierarchy either in her jobs or as being a woman who achieved lots of nominations and so on. On the contrary, it portrayed Trump as one who took charge of his father's real

estate company, was removed from the Forbes 400 rich list, three more business bankruptcies between 1992 and 2009, etc... For both of them, the piece stated the truth because they were based on facts, but for Clinton, they only got facts that portrayed her positive identity, while for Trump, they got facts that showed his negative identity more than positive ones like publishing his book *Art of the Deal*.

No role models were assigned to any of the candidates in The Times of India.

Looking at The Washington Post newspaper and starting from the Post's View which was written by its Editorial Board titled "Hillary Clinton for president"⁽³⁰⁾ where they gave her a positive identity convincing their readers to vote for her anyway. On the other hand, they also published another Post's view titled "He said, we said"⁽³¹⁾ where they tried to conduct a file from all their previous writings against Donald Trump who the newspaper itself did not believe is well-qualified to be president of the United States and was trying to convince people not to vote for him showing only his negative identity. This file showed various negative identities that can be concluded from words used such as "unique threat" and "intolerable cruelty", etc...

After the first debate, on the 27th of September, the newspaper published a piece titled "Clinton outscores Trump – but the campaign isn't over yet"⁽³²⁾ where they judged that Clinton's identity is strong and she is winning saying that "Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump seemed evenly matched, but the longer it went on, the more she was able to score against him". Also, they stressed on what Clinton said to Trump that he is spreading a "racist lie" about constructing his campaign basing it on a false accusation towards her campaign's role. That was a negative personal identity for Trump.

After the second debate, on the 9th of October, the newspaper published a piece titled "Second presidential debate takes the low road as attacks and slurs dominate"⁽³³⁾ where they gave Trump the identity of being "combative" where they portrayed him as a challenging character.

After the third debate, on the 19th of October, the newspaper published a piece titled "At the third debate, Trump won't commit to accepting election results if he loses"⁽³⁴⁾ where they gave Trump the identity of being a "defiant" where they portrayed him as argumentative and aggressive character.

On the same day, the newspaper published another piece titled "Trump has a strong start in the debate – and then a killer mistake"⁽³⁵⁾ where Balz, the journalist described the start of the third debate by being a "strong" and maybe it was going to be the "best of the three", but reaching the end of it, he described Trump with the following: "series of angry exchanges, interruptions, insults that served to undercut the good he might have accomplished earlier". His personal identity was portrayed negatively. Not only this, but here throughout his

piece, you can find that newspaper concentrated on the unexpected actions identity of Trump. It was written that it is not known where Trump will travel, no clear schedule. "He was in Colorado on Tuesday, rather than Arizona. He was recently in Wisconsin, which looks out of reach at this point. He will be in Ohio and Florida and North Carolina over the next few days, but also plans a stop in Virginia, despite no objective evidence that he has much chance there".

The negative identity was given to Clinton at the time of the case of her private email server scandal. Still at those times, the journalists always sustained a polite and humble tone in their news coverage trying to neutralize the negative identity that is attached to her due to the scandal. However, it seems that the positive identity was given to her most of the times more than Trump.

The main Role Model used in the Washington Post was the 'challenging stereotypes' role model and it was assigned to Donald Trump who they always drew for as they showed that his challenge makes him take the unexpected track. In most of the times, it was shown through negatively identifying him. In addition to the 'Family' role model who we can conclude was assigned to Hillary Clinton. This can be concluded because the newspaper always dealt with Clinton as being part and a main member of the United States. They knew her and consequently supported her to become the president.

IX. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

This study ties in with a long tradition of research on how elections are covered in the newspapers, but what's new is questioning the identity positions adopted by each newspaper and that is a key area of investigation within this study. Add to that, the type of role model given to the candidates in the newspapers.

Results indicated that The Ahram Weekly newspaper was objective in its news coverage. Both of them received positive and negative identity. Still Clinton received more positive personal identity than Trump. Noting that when reading the whole pieces, you can find that the Ahram Weekly wrote from the point that Clinton is going to win and the race is settled in favor of Clinton as Egyptians favored Clinton over Trump as shown in (ACW, 2016)⁽³⁶⁾ survey.

The Times of India newspaper used the thrilling news coverage in portraying the identity of both candidates. It stood at an equal distance between both of them. It concentrated on the sexual identity for them.

The Washington Post newspaper from the very beginning declared that it is taking Clinton's side and from this point it formulated her positive identity through providing all the evidence and proof that convinces the American citizen that Clinton

is well-qualified and Trump is not. That did not mean they distorted Trump's identity, but they drew his image as being a defiant and challenging person whose actions are always sudden, unpredicted and unexpected at all. Take into consideration that Americans used to prefer the expected people as Michelle Obama described Clinton as being "trustworthy, consistent, devoted, and caring—all of the qualities of a great mom, but also of a great president".

Different newspaper systems do differ, but differences are not easily interpreted. Results clearly showed that the three newspaper stereotyped the identity of Trump in favour of Clinton, each with its own tactic.

Different Role models were found, but it is shown they are not directly related to the identity construction. In other words, you can find someone who is given a negative identity on papers, but still is a role model in a certain way as shown in The Washington Post newspaper results.

Through the identity theory, all the results were analyzed. In addition, through using the social responsibility theory and analyzing the results, it was proven that the newspapers who were supposed to fulfil certain obligations towards the society did not as most of them positively or negatively drew the identity of the candidate according to their own agendas forgetting their main social responsibility towards the society.

In conclusion, the main key finding is that newspapers constructed positive or negative identity positions for the subjects according to their agendas and favoured certain candidates according to the political ideology held by the three newspapers under study and accordingly role models were set.

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