

Question:

Compare and contrast the public and media perception and knowledge of female parliamentarians, carried out by the use of questionnaires in the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and surrounding areas. Also, by analysing media coverage of the 2005 Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Conferences, by comparing tabloid and broadsheet newspapers.

Aims:

There has been much debate on the issue of female Members of Parliament and whether they are taken seriously by the general public and the press. The main aim of this project is to gain insight into the similarities and differences of public and media perception of female parliamentarians, and how aware they are of their roles and functions.

The General Public

The first category that needs to be addressed is the general public section. The main questions that need to be answered are:

- Is there a difference in the way women view female Members of Parliament in comparison to the way male members of the public do.
- Do females have a greater knowledge of who the women Members of Parliament are and what work they carry out.
- Does age have an impact on how the public perceives the female's effectiveness and does this variable alter what is known about them.
- Does a persons professional status alter what knowledge they have of women Members of Parliament. The more professional a persons employment the greater their knowledge, or is the reverse true.

The Media

The media is a huge organisation and commentators of parliament, civil servants and ministers believe this is where the debate is conducted and where things matter in today's society. Therefore, it will be interesting to see:

- To what extent the media attempts to influence public opinion of female parliamentarians.
- There will be a necessity to compare the tabloid perception with the broadsheet.
- Were female Members of Parliament written about seriously for their input into the recent party conferences or were they seen as being unimportant with nothing of major importance to contribute.
- Were the policies women represent actually taken seriously or were they portrayed as simplistic and unachievable.
- If a female journalist wrote the article relating to the conferences were women Members of Parliament represented differently to the way male journalists would write about them.

Sources:

When considering where the information will be gathered from, the main source which will be used in the first section, is a questionnaire which will relate to and help answer the aims of the project.

To establish the media's perception and knowledge of female parliamentarians, four different newspapers will be required. Two broadsheet newspapers which are; 'The Times' and 'The Telegraph' and two tabloid newspapers; 'The Sun' and 'The Mirror.' These can easily be accessed from The University of Hull website, within the library

pages. The decision to compare broadsheet and tabloid was made so it would be possible to see if broadsheet newspapers report on females in a different and more serious manner than the tabloids. 'The Times' was chosen due to the fact it is very well respected, it is seen to be professional and to write about its subject matter in an educated and reasoned way. Again, 'The Telegraph' is seen as a professional newspaper, however, has a different style of presentation. 'The Sun' is seen as 'the working man's paper' and is, therefore, not respected in professional circles, and will probably have a different way of presenting female parliamentarians. Although, 'The Daily Mirror' is a tabloid newspaper like 'The Sun,' it is slightly more respected and will possibly represent women in a different light.

Method:

It will be necessary to investigate what methods to use to collect and interpret information.

Methods of collecting information

When designing the questionnaire, all aims will have to be taken into account and questions need to be based on the information required. Once the questionnaire has been completed, it will be necessary to collect the information. This will be carried out by surveying on St. Peter's Avenue in Cleethorpes, which will, therefore, gather information from the surrounding areas of Humberston, Waltham and New Waltham. The information will also be sought from outside Freshney Place Shopping Centre in Grimsby, which will access information from Immingham and surrounding areas. The days will be conducted at the beginning of January for six days, three periods at each site, aiming for a total of one hundred to one hundred and fifty responses. There will be a

need for this many to ensure that the overall answers are as accurate as possible. The method used to collect the responses will be random sampling, whereby questioning every sixth person to pass.

The information required for the media section will be articles from 'The Times,' 'The Telegraph,' 'The Sun' and 'The Daily Mirror.' The sections used from these will be the three weeks coverage of the 2005 Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Party Conferences, concentrating on women Members of Parliament. There will be numerous articles collected on this subject and then they will be condensed to the most important few.

Methods of analysing information

Once the information has been collected, it will then need to be collated and interpreted. The general public section, in the form of questionnaires will be examined via a series of analysis, using the computer package SPSS. The results of this can then be analysed and my aims can be answered and any other information that comes to light as a result can be highlighted.

The newspaper articles will be examined using press analysis. The articles will be investigated by identifying an overall theme within the whole document, in order to provide evidence as to how the media perceives female parliamentarians and what knowledge it has of them.

Time Plan:

DATE (WEEK COMMENCING)	ACTIVITY
Monday 21st November, 2005	Hand in Proposal.
Monday 28th November, 2005	Hand in essays.
Monday 5th December, 2005	Exam period.
Monday 12th December, 2005	Exam period.
Monday 19th December, 2005	Design questionnaire.
Monday 26th December, 2005	Christmas.
Monday 2nd January, 2006	Collect responses to the questionnaire.
Monday 9th January, 2006	Collect responses to the questionnaire.
Monday 16th January, 2006	Collect tabloid newspaper articles.
Monday 23rd January, 2006	Collect tabloid newspaper articles.
Monday 30th January, 2006	Collect broadsheet newspaper articles.
Monday 6th February, 2006	Collect broadsheet newspaper articles.
Monday 13th February, 2006	Week to solve problems and catch up if not running to schedule.
Monday 20th February, 2006	Analyse information and write up report.
Monday 27th February, 2006	Analyse information and write up report.
Monday 6th March, 2006	Analyse information and write up report.
Monday 13th March, 2006	Analyse information and write up report.
Monday 20th March, 2006	Hand in report.