

FRAMING THE PRESIDENCY: PRESIDENTIAL DEPICTIONS ON FOX'S
FICTIONAL DRAMA *24*

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Framing theory is one of the most used theories in the discussion of media effects on how people make sense of issues, especially in the political environment. Although it is majorly used for the discussion of news media, framing theory can also be applied in other areas surrounding media production. This thesis uses this theory to discuss how presidents are framed in fiction and implications of race and gender in the assessment of presidential characters by analyzing Fox's fictional drama *24*. Although at first the show seems to bring new options for the presidency, the analysis points Presidents Palmer and Taylor as unfit for office and President Logan as unethical and power-hungry. Following Entman's (1993) process for analyzing frames in media, embedded white male hegemony was identified in the show. As the show presented a postfeminist and postracial world, it continued to frame femininity and blackness as the opposite to effective executive leadership. Further, white masculinity was associated with power, ambition and ultimately corruption. As other races and gender were pointed as unfit, the status quo was questioned as being corrupt. The show both increases the cynicism that people may develop against politics and damages a more proper consideration of women and people of color to be elected president.

Kristina Horn Sheeler, Ph.D., Chair

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Introduction

The Constitution of a country – any country – is believed to be the highest form of law, a source from which to better understand how a country is governed and what set of rules are established in order to maintain civility and cordiality among inhabitants. A constitution has guidelines including who is eligible to hold certain political positions. The Constitution of the United States of America has been in effect since 1789 and although some articles have been called into question, the qualifications for people seeking the presidency are explicit. According to Article II, in order to qualify to become the president, “no person except a natural born citizen, or a citizen of the United States, at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the office of President; neither shall any person be eligible to that office who shall not have attained to the age of thirty five years, and been fourteen years a resident within the United States.” Just by reading this, it seems very simple as to what makes someone eligible to become commander-in-chief of one of the most powerful countries in the world. Yet, if one follows any line of political discussion, it is easy to perceive that the understanding of those qualifications is much more complex. If those are the only necessary qualifications, why did it take more than 220 years for an African American to be elected? Why has no woman commanded the oval office? And more importantly, why are these issues not properly discussed in the main media to the point that the population better understands and accepts the concept that the color of one’s skin or one’s gender is not a determinant of one’s capability of successfully governing a country?

Whenever you choose to tell a story – formally or informally – you try to make it entertaining and persuasive at the same time. You choose the best way to say it by

selecting certain aspects of what actually happened and setting others aside to create the story you consider ideal. In other words, you frame your story according to the goal you are trying to achieve. A good frame makes it a good story (Berinsky & Kinder, 2006). Framing doesn't always happen consciously, and it is difficult to find where frames begin or how they will end, but frames can be found almost anywhere (Van Gorp, 2007).

Framing as a theory has been vastly studied in the last few decades, and has become one of the “most popular approaches for investigating media effects” (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2011, p. 960). While studies such as agenda setting and priming focus on what the audience thinks about, framing focuses on media's influence on how audiences may perceive issues (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Kuypers & Cooper, 2005). Framing theory concentrates on how issues are developed and then delivered to an audience as well as what sorts of impacts can such frames may have in that same audience. Certain frames are so vastly spread by media and society that they become dominant or preferred in future occasions and become congruent to cultures' representations (Entman, 1993).

The political environment has been one of the preferred areas of study of framing and its impact. Especially considering that in the case of national politics, in which most of the news citizens acquire comes strictly from media outlets (Berinsky & Kinder, 2006). How media frames politics has a great impact in how people get and make sense of their news (de Vreese, 2008). This dependence on media makes citizens more susceptible to certain frames when trying to understand issues that are usually complex. Specifically to politics, media framing has an important role in shaping how people see politics and how they understand political positions.

Although most of framing research focuses on news media, other sources of information can influence people in how they make sense of politics as a whole. This thesis aims to take the discussion on framing further by focusing specifically on how the American presidency is framed in television dramas. Both the Rationale and the Literature Review serve as the foundation to the discussion of media framing and specifically to framing presidents. The Method section details how the analysis was conducted and what research questions were asked in the analysis. The Artifact section presents the television show that was used for the analysis of presidential framing in television dramas: Fox's show *24*. After the analysis and discussion of findings, the implications that such findings may have on the audience are discussed. Finally, the conclusion presents limitations and possible future directions for this thesis.

Defining Framing

The concept of framing lies in highlighting certain aspects of the information or situation while hiding others. Framing also makes connections among a group of events (de Vreese & Lecheler, 2012) to stimulate a desired interpretation, evaluation or solution (Entman, 2004/2008). Frames make, as Entman (1993) explains, the information one is trying to spread “more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences” (p. 53) by setting boundaries or categories, or related ideas in an active process (Reese, 2007). In order to do that, the person setting the frames repeats or associates information with symbols or previous understanding already established in the discursive domain that are culturally familiar to the audience (Entman, 2008). Framing has implications on different conceptions people develop about issues, or even modifies their way of thinking (Chong & Druckman, 2007) by encouraging them to think, feel or decide in accordance to what

the frame is portraying (Entman, 2007). To put it simply, as Hanggli and Kriesi (2010) say, “to frame is to actively construct the meaning of the reality in question” (p. 142).

Frames can never be neutral (Berinsky & Kinder, 2006). Frames are spread by political elites, who develop and persuade how issues are thought about and what implications can come from these frames. Beyond that, media actors play a central role as gatekeepers by producing the news that are consumed by audiences (Van Gorp, 2007) and determining which frames are read, seen or heard in their medium (Delli Carpini, 2005). Frames can be built around people’s fears and prejudices (Chong & Druckman, 2007), which increases frames’ persuasive power. They can be developed as a strategy to manipulate individuals’ perceptions or, in more positive terms, as a process through which people gain and legitimate common beliefs with their social environment (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Since frames can appear as a normal and natural choice of words and images, they are usually difficult to detect if not compared with other narratives. These comparisons reveal that rather than inevitable wording, developed frames are a central element in establishing a common understanding of events (Entman, 2008).

The way frames are posited will shape how individuals will process and store current information and in the future use those parameters to make sense of any new information received (Scheufele, 1999; Entman, 2004; Berinsky & Kinder, 2006; de Vreese, 2008). Frames become socially shared principles that end up persisting over time (Reese, 2007). Consequently, they become standard frames, and whenever these frames are reapplied, their use is not called into question anymore (Van Gorp, 2007).

Rationale

Framing theory shows the importance and the impact of a communicating text and the persuasive power that lies beneath it especially in political communication. Framing effects researchers are able to discuss the nuances of media coverage and to what extent it affects citizen's understanding of politics (de Vreese & Lecheler, 2012). Cappella and Jamieson (2008) show real concern on how framing may affect both the quality of democracy and citizens' perceptions about the press. Anderson (2011) argues that the study of frames helps unmask what lies beneath political discourse and may improve American political culture.

If a single frame dominates a media narrative, "politically impressive majorities will come to congruent understandings" (Entman, 2008, p. 37). With that, certain frames become harder to break and be replaced with more democratic ones. Some authors (Iyengar, 1991; Entman, 1993; de Vreese & Lecheler, 2012) argue that since the majority of people are generally not well informed about political issues, frames can influence their interaction with communication texts. By heavily framing news in favor of capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexism, individualism, consumerism and white privilege (Entman, 2007), these values are deeply entrenched in people's own values and therefore help maintain the status quo of power and discrimination in society.

Much has been discussed on the creation and perpetuation of media frames in the political environment. That does not mean though that there are not more areas of discussion to develop. The scope of framing analysis needs to spread beyond the understanding of media as press, broadcast and online news (Holbert, Tschida, Dixon, Cherry, Steuber & Airne, 2005). Certainly more areas may heavily impact citizens'

consciences. Other mediums, such as television and film fictions, can serve as persuasive sources of information for entertained audiences as well. Audiences may recognize events as they are played and make judgments on characters' actions according to the way they have been framed in fictitious narratives (Engelstad, 2008). Holbert, Tschida, Dixon, Cherry, Steuber and Airne's (2005) analysis of *The West Wing* and Sheeler and Anderson's (2013) analysis of fictional female presidents are some powerful examples of the discussion of the impact of fiction in the real-life political world. The study of fictional media framing can strengthen the discussion of political framing as a whole by going beyond the realm of news media and analyzing other possible influential sources in people's perception of politics.

Literature Review

Framing the Presidency in News Media

Presidents – and presidential candidates – are constantly addressed and discussed by the media. Callaghan and Schnell (1995) state that the president is “the most capable of commanding the attention of national media” (p. 8). Glazier and Boydston (2012) point out that the relationship between the president and the media can be considered a complex one. Even before being elected, presidential candidates are susceptible to certain media frames that are used during election coverage that may have serious consequences on voters’ perception of democracy and politics. After election, presidents continue to be exposed to certain frames that affect not only how the audience perceives them but also how presidents conduct their mandate as a whole.

Iyengar (1991) argues in his study that frames significantly influence attributions of responsibility for political issues, especially in evaluations of presidents. Citizens, he argues, “focus on issue-specific opinions to form their general impressions of political leaders” (p. 114), being influenced by media’s constant use of procedural frames, which are narrower in function and focus of issues (Entman, 2004). Procedural frames evaluate political actors on their legitimacy through their technique, success, and representativeness, and do not motivate political deliberation (Entman, 2004). Procedural frames enable campaign coverage and deliberation to be presented as a contest, especially through the use of competition frames invoking games, sports and war (Anderson, 2011).

Strategy and Game Frames. Game frames have been vastly discussed by scholars surrounding political communication (Iyengar, 1991; Entman, 2004; Aalberg, Strömbäck & de Vreese, 2012; Delli Carpini, 2005). Through this frame, elections are

commonly compared to the often-labeled horse race. The focus lies in labeling winners and losers and is closely tied to opinion polls and election outcomes, using language that belongs to war and game environments to describe campaigns (Aalberg et al., 2012).

Wars and games are about competition, and usually have two teams fighting or playing against each other. Not only during the election months, but also throughout the whole political cycle, competing frames will battle for the audience's attention (Delli Carpini, 2005). Candidates are presented as being on opposite sides: they are shown in opposite colors (blue and red), their parties depicted as belonging to extreme opposites. Polls are presented with a candidate in first, second, or third place, along with infographics that distinctively show who is in the front (Aalberg et al., 2012). They are continually presented as being the "presumed winner," or before phrases such as "if the election were today, the winner would be." The other candidates are shown as the "runner-up," "coming from behind," or even "in the last position."

As pointed out by Johnson-Cartee (2005), the game frame affects even the election outcome itself. People have a tendency to follow whoever is winning and they might not want to vote for the candidate who is shown as a known loser. Just by positioning candidates in a specific rank position, frames may decrease the possibility that candidates' rank order between polls and election day changes. Iyengar (1991) argues that this kind of coverage encourages candidates to take national issues less seriously by mostly reporting only how candidates and parties are doing on polls.

The game frame also encourages voters to abandon critical thinking and issue discussion and focuses merely upon the persuasion necessary to gain votes. Entman (2004) considers democratic politics to be about political actors trying to convince the

audience to have the same perception as politicians do in order to gain the audience's support. While more extreme voters may not be aroused by the opposition's frames, most voters are susceptible to the influence of competing frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007). The success then lies in creating a storyline that is more persuasive than the opposing team. Commercials stop being about the candidate's platform and become about what the other candidates did or will do wrong. Instead of discussing how the candidate will improve different issues, the focus goes to how the other candidate is incapable of improving such issues.

Along with the game frame, another prominent frame that is found in the media especially during election is the strategy frame. In this frame, news stories center around interpretations of motives, tactics, and positions of candidates and parties (Aalberg et al., 2012) and their legitimacy according to their overall presentation (Entman, 2004). Linking to the game frame, reports also focus on what is necessary for candidates and political parties to get ahead or to stay ahead (Cappella & Jamieson, 2008). The implication drawn from this frame is that the primary interest and intent of politicians is to gain votes and therefore win the election, and not focus on the development of solutions or improvement of important social problems. Media sees and shows a politician's platform as trying to gain support and as being self-serving and misleading (Delli Carpini, 2005) while depressing the audience's knowledge on policy positions (Aalberg, Strömbäck & de Vreese, 2012).

A common justification of the vast use of all these frames is the fact that game and strategy frames facilitate the work of journalists when reporting election stories by demanding less research and resources than a discussion of more complex issues would

need. Also, the proliferation of polling enables media to cover election quickly and efficiently (Aalberg et al., 2012). These sorts of frames satisfy the economic needs of media, since it is believed that the drama inherited from them attracts a greater audience and can be profitable and entertaining as well (Delli Carpini, 2005).

Unfortunately, what media considers being good enough for news is not what the audience needs in order to make conscious decisions (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). While these frames facilitate media's work, they bring serious consequences. By framing the election process as a game – or more specifically, a horse race – voters are explicitly put in a passive audience position. They can only watch without participating. If voters continue to assume that they are outside of the political process, their opinion becomes more easily manipulated (Chong & Druckman, 2007). More so if all media outlets frame elections the same way, giving the impression of addressing an issue in a single voice and enhancing the frame's persuasive power (Van Gorp, 2007). Also, voters get discouraged from actively participating in the political process. By focusing on strategy, media may increase mistrust about political campaigns (Cappella & Jamieson, 2008), since the outcome is focused on politicians' self-interest and their will to win.

These frames also have consequences that perpetuate after election day. People who are exposed to such frames psychologically adopt them to interpret and evaluate future behavior, whether political or personal (Iyengar, 1991). Known winners will then have bigger chances to maintain their place in the second race. Furthermore, audiences may perceive the election cycle as ending the same day as the “race” ends. Voters do not consider that after election they should continue to pay attention and demand that the promises made during the campaign are actually conducted.

Some scholars are concerned about the impact of these frames. Johnson-Cartee (2005) explains that the increasing use of game framing has generated a decline in both civic participation and voting. Cappella and Jamieson (2008) argue that even small changes in framing can initiate people's cynicism towards politics. Audiences get the perception that politicians are nothing more than self-interested competitors who would say anything to win. Instead of merely presenting candidates' platform and expecting voters to make an informed decision, media shows candidates – and elected officials as well – trying to romance their audience to gain approval.

Romance Frame

More than simply being presented as competing with each other to win the election, the romance frame focuses on candidates competing to gain the electorate's affection and loyalty (Anderson, 2011). Candidates' relationship with their electorate can even be paralleled with the steps of a marriage: they romance their audience, who buys into it and accepts to go along with them; there is a public ceremony – the inauguration – that seals this relationship in which the elected official promises loyalty, going into a marriage that lasts until the next better suitor is found and replaces the old one (Hahn, 2003).

The romance frame is played by the media through the use of verbs such as woo, court, charm, among others in the same line. The narrative that is raised is based upon the attractiveness between voters and candidates (Anderson, 2011). This frame goes beyond the news sphere and can also be found in film and television shows. In fiction, presidents are commonly depicted as romantic heroes, who are protecting their country

against evil, fighting for what is right and saving their nation (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2006).

Candidates do not necessarily call the electorate's attention to be critical of their platform, but instead focus on romancing whoever is watching or reading about them to be mesmerized and infatuated about how they present themselves, making it easier to let more complex issues out of discussion. In this frame, politicians become the knights in shining armor who rescue the damsels in distress and take them to a near future of happiness and romance. Once again the audience becomes a passive observer waiting to have a solution handed to them, instead of participating in the discussion (Anderson, 2011).

Candidates end up being depicted as masculine heroes, drawing implications about gender as well. By candidates being depicted as romancing their voters, it is implied that they are men, or that men are the ones supposed to romance and woo their voters. Male identifiable traits are valorized (Edwards, 2009a). Media's use of masculine pronouns helps posit candidates in a masculine role while voters are placed in a feminine role (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). Media's perceptions of presidential roles focus on stereotypical masculine traits, highlighting their virility and courage, for example, while the audience is perceived in a way that enhance its characteristics as feminine, implying that femininity is weak and fragile (Woodall & Fridkin, 2007). The audience is influenced by these frames to believe that only a man can save and take care of the country, damaging any attempt of women who run for the same position to be considered in the same manner as men.

Individualistic Frame

During and after the election, a president's influence in the media becomes a valuable asset when trying to manage how the media frames the president to his audience. Spragens (1979) argues that the president can even dominate the media if he knows how to use it properly. The individualistic frame is one of the most developed frames by the media. Iyengar (1991) states that the individualistic frame uses episodic narratives that make acts and characteristics of individuals more accessible. The president's character is evaluated and voters make judgments based on how the president plays his role (Holbert et al., 2005). Benoit and McHale (2003) illustrate some personality characteristics commonly raised in American presidential campaigns, such as morality, empathy, sincerity and drive. If the media emphasizes candidate's attributes, this perception is mirrored by the audience (de Vreese, 2008) and becomes part of a candidate's evaluation and audience understanding of the presidency as a whole.

Commonly seen in these individualistic frames is rugged individualism. By reinforcing patriarchal values alongside military and war characteristics – which are usually linked to men – gender and racial differences are enhanced by such frames (Edwards, 2009b). These frames focus on white masculine notions of excellence and leadership that are posited as opposite to expectations from political minorities. With that, women and individuals of other races are unable to fit the frame created by the media as the individual who would be most able to run the country. The issue goes away from policy and decision making to a matter of gendered and racial expectations of behavior.

Also, by using individualized frames, media suggests the political process is less complex than it actually is. Therefore, citizens make political leaders – such as the president – the only one responsible for whatever socio-economic issue that the country faces. Audiences are led to forget that presidents are equipped with many staff members, or that policy changes depend not only on the president but also on senators and representatives.

Framing Gender

Masculinity and femininity carry strong connotations about the roles and capabilities each gender possesses and should adhere to (Sapiro, 1993). While addressing masculine presumptions as the norm (Adcock, 2010), media framing of women in politics focuses on many gendered frames when discussing women (Falk, 2009), focusing more on personal traits rather than professional aptitude (Murray, 2010). Devitt's (2002) study demonstrates that newspapers pay more attention to women's personal characteristics and that women receive less coverage about their stand on public policy issues if compared to men. Frames are constructed in a way that show women lacking leadership and belonging to the opposite side of what is expected of a politician (Sapiro, 1993).

Candidates' physical appearance is one of the most common resources used by journalists while framing women. Unfortunately, media tends to link women to traditional norms of femininity (Falk, 2010). Journalists focus right from the beginning on candidates' clothes, hairstyles and posture. In 2008, Sarah Palin was framed by her attractiveness and her supposed appropriate femininity – the illustration of the beauty queen frame, while Hilary Clinton was framed as not being attractive enough (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). Discussions even went as far as the amount

of money that was spent on Palin's and Clinton's overall style, or their overanalyzed hair styles – something that never intrigues the media about male candidates.

The family frame is another aspect that has been constantly discussed about women as opposed to men. Media has a tendency to highlight a female candidate's personal life and family responsibilities, and lays focus on the domestic sphere (Falk, 2010). Carlin and Winfrey (2007) argue that the so-called mother frame diminishes female candidate's credibility. Although it can be seen as a positive frame by showing women as caring and understanding, such frames damage their leadership appeal by questioning their aptitude to rule a country while at the same time managing their maternal responsibilities. At first media tends to show female candidates as supermoms who can juggle it all, soon afterwards changing to being in doubt if these same candidates are able to do both jobs well. As the media shows women trying to achieve new political roles, it also perpetuates traditional values and expectations of women (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013).

Women's marital status and their role as wives and mothers become important elements of this sort of frame, which is not the case for men (Falk, 2009). While it is common to see men showing their families in commercial ads during their campaigns, if women decide to bring their family forward, they are criticized as exploiting their family in an attempt to gain more votes. Some journalists have argued that women running for office should wait until their kids are grown to pursue a career (Carlin & Winfrey, 2007), implying the impossibility of doing both functions properly – as a mother and as a politician.

Gender frames bring implications not only about the triviality that takes place when describing all women in politics, but also implications on the audience's understanding of what femininity means and what is expected of women. With their main focus on appearance and personal issues, journalists leave less space for the presentation of candidates' policy issues and therefore make it harder for audiences to become interested in these candidates' substantive issues. These depictions increase the gap that has been perpetuated between femininity and political competence. Femininity – and what is expected from a woman – becomes the opposite of masculinity – and what is expected from a man, who has been positioning the norm of how a politician should be (Edwards, 2009b). That way, it becomes almost impossible for women to achieve the expected competency that these masculine frames imply as desirable traits and find their space in the political world.

Another frame vastly used by the media is the one of the first-woman, or pioneer. Although women have been present in the political sphere since the first wave of the women's rights movement (Edwards, 2009a), and have run for office even before they were allowed to vote (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013), they are still depicted as a novelty, with frames having changed very little over time (Falk, 2009). While depicting women as a change in the current schema (Murray, 2010), this frame reinforces the stereotype of women not being fit for the position for lack of experience (Falk, 2010) since they are shown as being new in the political world, undermining their credibility and expertise (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). Also, by framing female candidates as the first, the audience is led to forget previous attempts by other female candidates or the role women have played in political movements.

Media vastly uses a postfeminist narrative in the developing of women's frames (Scott, 2010). Postfeminism gives the illusion that gender differences are no longer an issue. It suggests, as McRobbie (2004) points, that equality has been achieved, bringing a new set of meanings that emphasize that feminists struggles are no longer present or needed. Although postfeminism may acknowledge women's achievements due to feminism, it exhausts any intent or purpose that feminism would have now, pointing it as outdated (Vavrus, 2002). Some postfeminists even argue that the current feminism can actually harm women by giving them "unrealistic expectations – that we can 'have it all'" (Vavrus, 2002, 22).

Media omits any consideration of the benefits that feminism history may have for women today (Vavrus, 2002) while at the same time it appears to be well-informed and well-intended in its response to feminism (McRobbie, 2004). With the omission of feminism history, gendered frames are developed based solely on women's individual success and talent rather than on the struggles and accomplishments after centuries of feminist movements (Vavrus, 2002). This implies that the failure of proper female representation in politics, for example, is due to women's own individual weaknesses, disregarding women's long history of discrimination and struggles.

Vavrus (2002) also argues another important element present in postfeminism: the ideology that white, heterosexual, and middle-class women are the general representation of all other women. A small group is seen as the definition of women's capabilities and possibilities. Not only is this logic elitist, but "it parallels class interests of the political elite and media corporations of the United States" (p. 23). Postfeminism fails to consider

particularities and individualities of different women, putting them all back into one same category, severely damaging centuries of feminism's achievements.

These political gendered frames are closely related to traditional cultural frames already embedded in society, which means that the frames have greater influence on the audience's gendered expectations (Van Gorp, 2007). Media discourses developed about women perpetuate the traditional understanding of what a woman is expected to be and how she is expected to behave (Falk, 2009). With an unequal coverage of men and women in politics, Falk (2010) concludes that media decreases the probability of the audience to feel that women would be fit for a political position. Banducci, Gindengil and Everitt (2012) expose that the coverage of female candidates reinforces gendered expectations for women and marginalize women's political lives in comparison to men's political lives.

Beyond marginalizing, these frames are embedded with double binds that women have to deal with (Blankenship & Robson, 1995). These frames penalize women for any alternative chosen by them (Jamieson, 1995) – since no matter what the option is, they will be intensely criticized by that alternative. Women get criticized by either reinforcing gendered expectations or by doing the opposite (Woodall & Fridkin, 2007). Or, as Jamieson (1995) explains, women are “caught in situations in which they too are dammed if they do and dammed if they don't” (p. 4).

The unavailability of reconcilable opposites in the double binds presents many barriers to how women are perceived as compared to male candidates. They are framed as weak or naïve if they possess assumed feminine traits, or as going against what is expected of women if they show masculine traits (Calin & Winfrey, 2007). If they

exercise their intellect or seek public life, they are framed as endangering their family; and if they focus on their family, they are framed as not being able to give the appropriate attention to their public life (Jamieson, 1995). If they are ambitious, they are criticized as being irrational, inappropriate or even dangerous, going the opposite direction of what is perceived of men's ambitions (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). And when women manage to surpass these double binds, new ones are created reminiscent of the old ones (Jamieson, 1995). Instead of positioning women as belonging to the public sphere, these frames reinforce the idea that women's place is at home (Falk, 2010), discouraging them to become part of the political environment.

The gendered frames portrayed by the media help reinforce rather than challenge how political leadership and governance are seen by the audience – with masculinity as being the norm (Adcock, 2010; Banducci et al., 2012). Media finds it acceptable to be sexist while sending messages that women are not as competent and suitable for office, even if they have the qualifications for it (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009).

Framing Race

Race has also been the topic of many discussions surrounding framing and political media. While women have been compared against traditional masculine norms, racial minorities have been discussed against notions of whiteness. Media posits candidates in narrow characterizations and narratives (Achter, 2009) with both subtle and overt primers and signals about race (Reeves, 1997). Explicit invocations of race in public discourse can influence how audiences come to think about race and consider their own racial identity (Reeves, 1997; Caliendo & McIlwain, 2006; Coe & Schmidt, 2012).

Specifically for African Americans, media tends to frame candidates through the lens of Civil Rights progress and continuity. Their candidacy becomes an index for racial progress, like in the case of Jesse Jackson, when his race became the foreground for all representations of him (Achter, 2009). Obama's election brought discussions that he had fulfilled Martin Luther King's dream, and that racial equality had finally prevailed (Gavrilos, 2012). His election delivered the hope of a postracial U.S., where the traumas of racial injustice had been overcome (Hoerl, 2012) and the racial gap had finally been healed.

Race then becomes the most newsworthy aspect of a candidate (Caliendo & McIlwain, 2006). Not considering the fact that the U.S. has an ever-increasing multiracial population, race becomes the main narrative that guides the frame. Squires and Jackson (2010) criticize that this depiction is a sign of how shallow political and racial frames continue to be. Hoerl (2012) argues that such a process forecloses the opportunity to deeply comprehend all U.S. social movements' history and the role in building democracy.

What we see in today's media is traces of postracialism. Postracialism points "race and racism as ancient history with little bearing on contemporary culture" (Rossing, 2012, p. 44). The focus on perceived Civil Rights accomplishments neglects the discussion over the oppression experienced by African Americans and aims to forget the impact that slavery and segregation still have on current history (McPhail & McPhail, 2011; Gavrilos, 2012). At the same time, postracialism overlaps history with a discourse that the past was not that bad and that today racial reality is only getting better by minimizing the actual reality of racism (Ono, 2010). It creates a concept that society has

finally broken free of race issues that have previously occurred (Watts, 2010). Just as postfeminism, postracialism gives the illusion – as misguided as it might be – that we all live in a same level world (Vavrus, 2010).

Postracialism discourse damages a successful articulation of racial politics and damages current attempts toward actual racial justice (Rossing, 2012). This discourse takes the discussion of race away from politics, media and other areas. As Rossing (2012) points out, postracialism ignores the improvements that have yet to be accomplished in racial relations. Ono (2010) implies that postracialism in fact continues to be an “old-style racism garbed in new clothes” (p. 227). Postracialism relies and reproduces the American ideal developed under capitalism: that if you work hard and play fair, it is possible to achieve anything in the U.S. (Ono, 2010). This discourse becomes a distraction for people. The history of discrimination and social struggle is not taken into account and any failure in achieving a desired outcome is blamed only on personal weakness and unpreparedness. Race is framed as a mere social construction (Watts, 2010). Media as a whole fails to remind and educate its audience on social inequalities and struggles and how they continue to have an impact in the present.

In Obama’s case, by using his presidential election as the sole justification of a postracial country, scholars argue that racial inequalities are downplayed and not critically evaluated. Moore and Bell (2010) say that Obama’s depiction and posture rejects structural inequalities. Gavrilos (2012) critiques that instead of using Obama as the exemplar of a postracial society, he should be considered as the exception: an extraordinarily gifted politician who was able to win the election, not just a mere African American who was able to cross a racial barrier. Also, the fact that he is the first and

only elected African American president is not representative of the actual fulfillment of a postracial mentality (Moore & Bell, 2010; Gavrilos, 2012).

Just as black men's struggles and social contributions continue to be underemphasized (Tyree, Byerly & Hamilton, 2012), so are their current political characterizations and aptitudes. African American candidates can commonly be linked to frames of performers, being compared to other African American athletes or entertainers, showing their talent for engaging with crowds and igniting emotions (Achter, 2009). While these frames help candidates in terms of their popularity among audiences, it raises suspicion about candidates' political aptitude once to in office. By being shown as entertaining, this frame contradicts expectations of politicians who do not fool or mesmerize their electorate, but perform their tasks plain and simple. African Americans are not shown in leader roles or as being in charge, reminiscing of African Americans' own slavery history as being inferior or presented as mere entertainment to Caucasians.

The reason for framing race, especially in entertaining terms, is very simple, according to Terkildsen and Damore (1999): race sells. It is still a prominent issue that gets people's attention. Candidates' races are more highlighted particularly when they are running against white candidates – interestingly race is almost never mentioned if there are only white candidates. Achter (2009) points out that “defining so-called different candidates against the standards of white masculinity not only reinforce gender and race as literal, immutable categories, it also severely limits our thinking about race, gender, and the wide range of expressions of leadership in U.S. political culture” (p. 108). Race becomes a discussion of its own over the candidate's platform. It becomes a variable that can undercut the candidate's appeal (Reeves, 1997).

Even voters' races are referenced in the discussion of minority candidates (McIlwain, 2011), as some sort of differentiation of which audiences are being won over by these candidates. The emphasis on this race discussion can influence both prejudiced and non-prejudiced citizens. Terkildsen and Damore (1999) explain that the former would be influenced in maintaining their racial values while the latter would be cued by a stereotypical process of representation.

Opposing the concurrent discussion of race by the media, studies have shown that candidates running in biracial races avoid mentioning their race in order to avoid greater discussions of it (Terkildsen & Damore, 1999; Coe & Schmidt, 2012). Overall, racial silence has been the norm from presidential candidates, unless they are compelled to discuss it (Coe & Schmidt, 2012). Candidates downplay their blackness and at the same time display white signs of leadership in order to attempt to fit the traditional presidential norm that media and society perpetuate – the one of only white males being fit to run a country, since audiences use this norm in politics as the guideline to evaluate candidates (Achter, 2009). Obama, for example, downplayed his race during his first presidential campaign. He tried to follow a colorblind perspective, occasionally scripting black masculinity in negative terms during his campaign and only better acknowledged racial gaps after his election (McPhail & McPhail, 2011). Joseph's (2011) study points that the media only developed images of Obama in positive lights when he abandoned his blackness.

As candidates try to avoid discussions of race and the media continues framing candidate's race (Terkildsen and Damore, 1999), serious consequences occur with the electorate. By using race as the source of its frames, media reinforces racial difference

and damages the audience's attempt to look beyond black candidate's personality and personal background and critically assess their political aptitude. By following Entman's (2004) cascade model, that explains how frames are passed from and influenced by political elites to the media, and from the media to the audience, if politicians and the media are not properly discussing race, the audience is not encouraged to critically debate and deliberate over race issues. Although both media and political actors have the power to enhance racial discussion and improve race relations, they do not help voters discuss and better understand what race and diversity in political space is really about (Coe & Schmidt, 2012). Gavrilos (2012) argues, for example, that Obama's election success should not be compared to the restructuring of the systemic, social and institutional power in the U.S. In fact, she states, Obama should be viewed as an exception to the status-quo, since even after his election media still bases its frames on white male hegemony and privileges (Squires & Jackson, 2010) and does not give space for diversity to be really present in the political arena.

Presidency and Television Dramas

Just as news media, fictional media – more specifically films and television shows – is an intrinsic part of the influence television plays in people's lives. If news media can have an effect on how audiences make sense of political issues, it is possible to assume that other sorts of programming can be influential as well. Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles (2006) argue that in order to be successful, television discourse must express dominant cultural perspectives. Popular culture is a powerful and accessible rhetorical form, which means that it has great influence by how it imitates public life.

When it comes to the presidency, fictional depictions usually share perspectives of dominant cultures. Representations of the presidency are influential to the audience due to their ability to approximate a credible or desirable presidential reality. In film and television fiction, producers add one more representational text of what the presidency consists of and how it works (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2006). While news media shows only front stage roles performed by presidents, television dramas allow their audiences to also get a glimpse of what happens on the backstage (Holbert et al., 2005).

In fact, the number of depictions of fictitious presidents has increased over the years in television and film. These depictions are an interesting source to try to understand what the cultural and ideological expectations of a president are about. These characters enable the articulation of a multilayered argument on different political issues (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). They provide a “commentary on the nature of presidential leadership” (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 2006, p. 2).

In the same way that we see disparities in how the real life presidency is depicted by the media when it comes to race and gender, television fiction has mainly maintained the same white male hegemonic atmosphere for the presidency. Out of more than 60 different portrayals of fictional presidents on television, only seven were played by African American actors and six were portrayed by white women. White men are still more commonly seen running the Oval Office, and non-whites are put in less desirable roles (Coe & Schmidt, 2012).

Vaughn (2012) argues that while many journalists have praised African American presidential depictions in television as having a positive impact on the election of Obama, such portrayals can be seen as negative as well, since they can reinforce “bias-driven

concerns and ambivalence about electing minority candidates” (p. 47) and make white voters feel as if the country’s racial history is not in consideration anymore. The author defends that fictional characters give little support to the argument that such portrayals have actually paved the way to Obama’s election by delivering characters that are morally ambivalent or offensively absurd.

Sheeler and Anderson (2013) posit that film and television tend to portray women as being as qualified as men while presenting any possibility of sexism as outmoded and ridiculous. But at the same time, they argue, these same presentations reinforce masculinity, militarism and whiteness that are part of the norms of presidentiality “by characterizing fictional women presidents as primarily sexual, maternal, and humanitarian” (p. 40). Fiction reinforces the concept that women are not suited to be commanders-in-chief by the hegemonic norms that have been perpetuated by the media. If more women or non-white characters are positioned as commanders-in-chief, it may contribute to increase the discussion and promotion of minorities’ advocacy in the political world (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). If performed properly, fictional depictions can eventually break down stereotypical frames that have perpetuated only white men as suitable for office.

White Male Hegemony and the Media

The discussion of frames and their effects on the audience also draws the necessity of a discussion of hegemony, especially related to media. Carragee and Roefs (2004) argue that the study of framing would be enriched if it were more integrated with hegemony theory. By using both theories it is possible to examine how power shapes the framing process as well as how frames are involved in the social construction of

meaning. The authors explain further that it is necessary to consider the sponsors of such frames – usually elites – and the economic and cultural resources available to develop these frames. Also, by integrating both theories in an analysis, it is possible to better understand the role of the media in the distribution of power.

As discussed before, certain frames become common sense after a while and the norm through which other issues are made sense of. Media frames have become not only dominant, but in some cases naturalized (Block, 2013). Carragee and Roefs (2004) say that this is made possible by considerable ideological work elaborated by elites and certain groups over the general population. These groups develop symbolic elements that are embedded in the culture so that they can be transmitted by cultural organizations to their audiences (Block, 2013). Hegemonies are then implemented and forced into other groups. Through the study of media hegemonies it is possible to recognize, as Carragee (1993) posits, the role that cultural productions have in defining meaning and values.

The meanings and values perpetuated by current media hegemonies have a great impact in all areas of people's lives, including political and economic activity. These meanings and values affect people's whole process of living and how they develop their identities and relationships (Williams, 1977). With a great variety of media sources, people's interaction with media platforms serves as a great field for the production and transmission of hegemonic means (Block, 2013), since people are constantly consuming and attracted by the media. As Williams (1997) explains, hegemonies are constantly renewed, defended, recreated and modified. Hegemonies need to be constantly watched over in order for them to be perpetuated over time; as well as adjusted and incorporate cultural shifts whenever necessary (Khan & Blair, 2013). Media is a great platform in

which this can all be enacted (Block, 2013), since it can reach various audiences at the same time.

Some authors discuss how media hegemonies may have a great effect on the overall political environment. While supporting and perpetuating the status quo through frames, media is also doing very little, if doing anything at all, to ignite social change (Altheide, 1984; Carragee, 1993). Although media appears to have penetrated all areas of political life (Block, 2013), it is still reinforcing power imbalances in society as well as strengthening existing power relations. Block (2013) criticizes that the mediatization of the political sphere, while it has made politics more visible, does not necessarily translate into more participation of citizens in the whole process. Media actually reinforces the asymmetries that currently exist. Carragee (1993) argues that media can go as far as reducing viewers and readers to passive receivers of ideologically closed texts. It keeps certain values and interests in alignment with powerful institutions and group's interests.

In the political realm, one of the most established hegemonies is white masculinity as the norm for politics. As whiteness and masculinity go unmarked, they are pervasive and embedded as the norm (Gavrilos, 2012). They are used to privilege white, heterosexual men against other groups (Khan & Blair, 2013). White masculinity is invisible and yet influences the development of the identities of those inside or outside of its domain (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995). It influences audiences to not think or discuss suggestions of white supremacy as it legitimates the status quo as appropriate (Gallagher, 2003). Khan and Blair (2013) use the example of Bill Clinton during Hillary Clinton's campaign to argue that even when they are not running, white males still posit themselves

as the center and reaffirm hegemonic discourses of gender expectations for the presidency.

White male hegemony becomes the background from which political media frames are developed. The hegemonic understanding of politics is that it is a white man's world. White masculinity is connected to power. It is articulated as the center from which all others are judged (Khan & Blair, 2013). The standards for success are much less strict for white males than others (Gavrilos, 2012). Voting outcomes serve to prove how much this perception of white male superiority is embedded in American society. Out of 101 senators in office in 2014, only two are African Americans and 20 are women. Out of 44 elected presidents in the U.S., only one is African American, not to mention the total absence of women. This white male rule is so secure, as Gavrilos (2012) argues, that it is never questioned. If such a trend were to occur in any other sort of voting outside the political realm, it would be much more likely that this lack of diversity would be questioned.

The prevalence of white males in politics is observed in realms that go beyond real life interactions. As white privilege is incredibly present in television and the film industry, the same lack of diversity exists in political characters. Fictional depictions of politics – especially the presidency – that follow this ideology serve as yet one more source through which white masculinity is enforced upon the audience through the creation of frames, enhancing media's influence in the perpetuation of the status quo. And in the few instances that space is given to women or men of color, it is usually with problematic descriptions.

Methodology

Research Question

Just as news media uses political frames when addressing candidates, other media formats can use the same frames to deliver their message, giving more strength to media hegemonies that are delivered through these frames and shaping the current political reality. Along with news, television fiction is part of people's lives for more than just entertainment. Television shows can be influential in how people perceive real life occurrences and develop expectations in several areas, including politics. Just as gender and racial frames have an impact in media's coverage of presidential candidates and elected presidents, it is possible to assume that gender and racial frames are also present in fictional shows. After discussing political, racial and gender framing, as well as media power on the perpetuation of political hegemonies, three research questions are posited:

Research question 1: How are presidents framed in television dramas?

Research question 2: What are the racial implications of presidential framing in television dramas?

Research question 3: What are the gender implications of presidential framing in television dramas?

Method

There are different approaches in the application of framing theory. Studies can identify trends while defining issues, compare different media coverage, analyze variations in different types of media, or discuss the impact those frames might have on an audience (Matthes, 2009). For Entman (1993), the essence of framing lies in selection and salience. In his analysis of framing, he has argued that through analysis it is possible

to study frames by how they define problems (determine the agent and the impact of that action compared to a commonly expected outcome), identify the cause of such problems, make moral judgments and suggest remedies (offer a possible solution for or justify that situation), and predict likely effects.

Based on my extensive discussion of media and presidential framing and being guided by Entman's (1993/2004) understanding of media frames, I will analyze three presidents – David Palmer, Charles Logan, and Allison Taylor – depicted in Fox's television show *24* during seasons two, five and seven. I intend to both watch all the seasons that will be analyzed and read the scripts of the episodes in order to assert emerging frames in two specific situations: of presidents as commander-in-chief and in their interactions with their families. My analysis will contain detailed descriptions of the encountered frames and extensive discussion of each president separately according to their race and/or gender. Also, each president will be compared to the previously discussed frames posited by media on issues of race and gender. Frames encountered in each president will be cross-analyzed and discussions on the differences due to race and gender will be elaborated. As a final discussion, I will elaborate on what sort of implications the show's depictions of the presidency present and the importance and meaning that such frames can have on the audience and in people's perception of political life and diversity in the presidency. Also, I will elaborate on the ways shows such as *24* can enhance or suppress discussions about the presidency as a whole and on issues of race and gender in politics. Finally, I discuss how television shows and new media can better impact the election U.S. president and audiences understanding and perceptions of politics.

Artifact

24 is an American television show produced for the Fox network that premiered on November 6, 2001, having in total 192 episodes over eight seasons until May 24, 2010, when the final episode was aired. In addition, a television movie, *24 Redemption*, aired between seasons six and seven. In May 2014, an additional special season was produced containing 12 episodes titled *24: Live Another Day* (Fox, 2013).

The storyline revolves around Counter Terrorist Unit (CTU) agent Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland). Each 24-episode season covered 24 hours in the life of Bauer, having each episode represent a real-life hour in the life of the character. The seasons included plots with terrorists, presidential assassination attempts, weapons of mass destruction detonations, cyber attacks, as well as conspiracies that dealt with government and corporate corruption.

The series gained fans and critical acclaim, and also several nominations and awards, including 58 Emmy nominations with 20 wins (including Outstanding Drama Series and Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series for Kiefer Sutherland in 2006 and Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama for Cherry Jones in 2009), 12 Golden Globe nominations with two wins, and ten Screen Actors Guild nominations with four wins. It enjoyed critical and commercial success from the beginning, drawing more than 11 million viewers for its premiere season and around 12 million viewers in subsequent seasons (Chamberlain & Ruston, 2007). At the same time that it appealed to mainstream audiences, it also developed a cult devotion, with a great number of fan websites, blogs and forums on the Internet (Peacock, 2007).

Along with raising discussions about many political topics, including torture, the show was also a platform to introduce the discussion of diversity in the Oval Office. Dennis Haysbert, the actor who played President Palmer, believed that the show was important for political discussions: “The American people from across the board – from the poorest to the richest, every color and creed, every religious base – [were able] to prove the possibility there could be an African-American president, a female president, any type of president that puts the people first” (Reynolds, 2008). Buzzola (2007) argued that Haysbert’s character made the idea of an African American president “not only normal, but also desirable” (p. 1). Even John McCain praised the character in an interview naming him his favorite TV president (Svetkey, 2008). Unlike other presidential portrayals by African Americans, David Palmer seemed real and believable, someone who paved his way to be where he was and commanded respect, and was not a character from a future far away (Moore, 2009).

Just like David Palmer, President Allison Taylor, played by Cherry Jones, was portrayed in more realistic ways. Unlike some female representations of presidents, she was directly elected by the people in a current reality. Fox Entertainment Chairman Peter Liguori said in an interview that a female president in the show seemed only normal given the broad array of presidents in the show’s previous seasons (Associated Press, 2007). After some more controversial presidential portrayals on the show, Taylor went back to the more traditional expectations of television presidents, including the non-negotiation with terrorist policy (Snierson, 2009). Jones argued that her character was not inspired by Hillary Clinton, but was actually a combination of Eleanor Roosevelt, Golda Meier, and John Wayne (Ravitz, 2008).

On the other hand, President Charles Logan, played by Gregory Itzin, presented a more cynical take on the presidency. Kubicek (2008) described him as “both extremely evil and pathetically weak-willed, which is a deadly combination for anyone in power” (p. 1). Logan developed a presidency rooted in twisted schemes that had the audience hooked on the show and the character (Hughes, 2010). Itzin pointed that the show had an impact on the public’s mind and the world’s perception of the country due to its power and the universality that the stories had (Itzin, 2010). Although his character’s Machiavellian maneuverings had failed by the end of season five, the actor explained that Logan saw himself as a hero in his mind even if the character was not pleased with his choices at times (Itzkoff, 2006). Itzin said in an interview that his audience hated the character, but at the same time approved and congratulated Itzin’s work as an actor (Itzkoff, 2006).

Three different seasons have been chosen for this analysis: seasons two, five, and seven. The selection criterion was that these three seasons present president characters during their first mandate as well as having the only presidents who were able to survive the whole season in office. Presidents David Palmer, Charles Logan and Allison Taylor were also chosen since each represents a different ethnicity or gender pertinent for this analysis. Although seasons four and six presented Caucasian and African American presidents, the characters selected had more density and presence in the show’s overall storyline.

By analyzing these three seasons and three different presidents, it will be possible to discover and discuss what sorts of frames were applied to the presidents. Also, it will

be possible to cross-analyze if and how they were framed according to their gender and/or ethnicity.

Day 2 – Season Two (2002)

The season is set 18 months after the first season, with the storyline beginning at 8 A.M. Bauer has to stop a nuclear bomb from being detonated in Los Angeles and assist President Palmer in discovering who was responsible for the threat in order to avoid an unfounded war between the United States and three Middle Eastern countries.

The president in this season is David Palmer (played by Dennis Haysbert), an African American president from the Democratic Party who is elected in the first season. His family, more specifically his ex-wife and brother, become key figures in his administration.

Day 5 – Season Five (2006)

The season's storyline begins at 7 A.M., again 18 months after the previous season. While everyone believes that Bauer is dead – except for a few close friends, he is forced to come back when some of these friends are murdered and he is framed for it by terrorists, who attempt to steal nerve gas to protect U.S. oil interests in Asia. Bauer is trying to prevent the release of the nerve gas when he discovers a conspiracy inside the government.

Charles Logan (played by Gregory Itzin) is a Caucasian from the Republican Party. His relationship with his wife enables a strong background for his plot. Logan was actually elected as the Vice President, but was sworn into office after the President is severely hurt in season four. His storyline shows his administration falling into

corruption. In the subsequent seasons, the character reappears and becomes one of the show's primary antagonists.

Day five is the most acclaimed season by fans and critics. Along with the show's highest ratings, the season also received 12 Emmy Award nominations and five wins, including Best Drama Series.

Day 7 – Season Seven (2009)

This season begins at 8 A.M., 65 days after the TV movie *24: Redemption* and 46 months after season six. Bauer begins his day in trial for alleged crimes he committed while working for CTU after the current administration's implemented policies against torture. His trial is stopped when the FBI asks for his help when the government firewall is breached and he has to uncover who is corrupted within the current president's administration, and who allows Sangalans – a fictitious nationality created by the show – to enter the White House and capture President Taylor.

Allison Taylor (played by Cherry Jones) is the first female Republican president within the show's universe. She takes office during the TV movie *24: Redemption* that was aired between seasons six and seven. She has a conflicted relationship with her family, including a murdered son, a daughter who is incarcerated and a husband who is shot during day seven. She is faced with tough decisions throughout the season, including blackmail and whether to cave to terrorist demands, which ultimately results in the death of innocent American lives.

Analysis and Findings

Analysis

David Palmer – Season Two

As the first elected president on the show, David Palmer's presidency is framed as being in a reality when America has overcome racial bias. The show tries to frame itself in a postracial reality when race is no longer taken into consideration when electing the president. The concept of the show in the beginning of the season is that anyone, no matter what race or gender, has a fair chance of getting elected. But throughout the season the show contradicts this concept. Like real life candidates, Palmer has to downplay his blackness in order to fit the white male hegemonic norm. The postracial frame is not sustained and soon overcome by white hegemony that ultimately dominates his framing. In other words, the show fails to maintain the postracial framing by presenting Palmer with situations and dialogues that diminish his aptitude as president.

Palmer is initially framed as the personification of all the ideal characteristics of a president. But by the end of the season Palmer's character is in fact too good to be true. His presidency is actually embedded with racial frames that point him as unprepared to properly face the situations that are occurring in the country. Although Palmer has some characteristics that fit the romance frame, such as having women fighting over his attention, he is not ultimately framed as the hero of these women or his electorate or as having all the characteristics that this frame implies of men. Palmer also fails to fit the rugged individualism of the individualistic frame by not putting himself at the center of the occurrences during the season and diminishing his patriarchal characteristics while emphasizing Bauer's rugged individualism. And although the president is African

American, his presidency is framed as predominantly white, supporting the white masculine hegemony that currently exists in politics.

Aside from his divorce, President Palmer is framed as having all the potentially ideal characteristics voters look for in a president. He is someone who worries about the environment (Episode 1), is forthcoming with both the media and the American people “more so than any other president” (Episode 2), very decent – some characters even consider him “too decent for his own time” (Episode 21), knows what happens in his administration (Episode 4), and is a good leader, who “has patience beyond human limits” (Episode 24). From the beginning, his race is presented as an aspect that is not an issue to his presidency, something that is not under consideration or that would influence his aptitude to have been elected for that office, fitting the postracial frame. He is confident that he got elected because of his aptitude, and his race played no role in his election.

His confidence in himself is present throughout the season. Even under pressure, he still manages to be concise and sure of himself. After being charged as unfit for running the country, he reassures the other members of his administration that he is able to act under tremendous pressure, including when he is accused of not being fit for his job:

PRESIDENT PALMER: Listen to me. All of you. I know you're not in the same room with me, but you can see and hear me plainly enough. Take a good look. Do I seem scared? Am I breaking into a nervous sweat? Am I babbling? At a loss for words? Is my voice shaking? Can any one of you look me in the eye and tell me I'm disabled? (Episode 21)

Interestingly though, at the same time that he presents this confidence, his own administration frames him as unfit and vote to have Palmer taken out of office. By the

end of the voting, it is presented that as much as Palmer may be confident about his actions, the most persuasive person in the room – and the one who gets him out of his office – is the vice-president, a white man (Episode 22). It is possible to draw a contradiction between the postracial frame with the fact that in the end, white men still have the final decision on the development of events during that season. As much as race seems to not matter in the season’s reality, white men are still ultimately the most knowledgeable and framed as the true protectors of the presidency.

His “ideal president” frame is reinforced throughout the season as him being a president whose first concern is the American people, and not his political agenda or career (Episode 4). Palmer is protective of his citizens. He worries about their safety. He does not tolerate any sort of racism or xenophobia. He likes to talk to his people because, as their leader, “they deserve my assurance” (Episode 24). Even his life is not more important than the life of his citizens. He is not afraid to risk his own life by going to the city where a nuclear bomb went off to be able to show his citizens that “everything is under control” (Episode 15).

He is a president who strives for peace, and considers that war should be the last resort to be used. He values American lives. In fact, for him, any loss of life is “unacceptable” (Episode 2), even non-American lives. He does not make decisions on speculations (Episode 1) that could mean endangering innocent lives or attacking innocent countries (Episode 21). He does not use war, or the U.S.’s military force, as a way to demonstrate the country’s power. During a dialogue with the deputy head of NSA, Eric Rayburn, Palmer explains that the NSA’s suspicions against a Middle Eastern

country are not enough to retaliate because of a previous attack and that such retaliation would endanger American lives with a possible war:

ERIC RAYBURN: Mr. President, if I may. I think you need to have a serious conversation with the Pentagon. They've been apprised, but they need to know how to proceed.

PRESIDENT PALMER: It's too early to discuss a response. We don't even know who to retaliate against.

ERIC RAYBURN: You know the Prime Minister was lying.

PRESIDENT PALMER: Yes, he was lying about the terrorist camps. But that doesn't mean his government is responsible for this threat.

ERIC RAYBURN: Mr. President, I think...

PRESIDENT PALMER: Eric, enough. Right now, my only concern is protecting Americans. (Episode 1)

In this dialogue, Palmer is not only considering protecting American lives, he is also considerate of the diplomatic outcome that retaliation would bring. Palmer is a diplomatic president. He wants to maintain – for as long as he can – diplomatic ties with the other countries, even those that might host terrorist cells.

President Palmer takes the power he has in his hand very seriously and he feels empowered by such a position. As the president, he is prepared to be the one who makes the tough calls (Episode 4) and the only one who knows what actions his staff should take (Episodes 4 and 24). He acts as the most powerful person in that office, someone who doesn't take orders (Episode 21), and someone to whom everybody else has to respond to immediately:

CHIEF OF STAFF NOVICK: With what we've gone through in the last 18 hours, I'm certain [the vice-president]'s just being pulled in 10 different directions.

PRESIDENT PALMER: We were, and in some ways still are, on the brink of war. I'm the commander in chief. When I call, there's only one direction.

He thinks he knows the best action to be taken, and his decision must be final, no matter what others might think (Episode 5).

But while he is very straightforward and decisive with his administration, he does not put himself in the hero role and doesn't even expect people to see him that way. Not even his staff sees him as the country's savior. He explains that this role belongs to someone else: Jack Bauer (Episode 1). Unlike most depictions of fictional presidents as becoming heroes of their nation, Palmer relies on Bauer being the hero of the day. For Palmer, the success of his administration on that day is only possible if Bauer steps up to action and acts as the hero. In fact, Palmer is the only president in all seasons to have such a close relationship with and reliance on Bauer being the show's hero. Different moments show their close relationship and Palmer's dependence on Bauer. He has emotional conversations with Bauer and is scared to betray or damage their relationship (Episode 5). He completely trusts that Bauer will know what to do and gives Bauer as much time as he needs (Episode 9). As a hero would never lie, that is what Palmer expects from Bauer:

PRESIDENT PALMER: Mr. Almeida, what makes you so sure that this is any more real than the Cyprus recording?

TONY ALMEIDA: Well, that's just it, sir. I'm not.

PRESIDENT PALMER: But Jack Bauer is?

TONY ALMEIDA: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT PALMER: Thank you for your candor, Mr. Almeida. I'll take this information under advisement.

TONY ALMEIDA: Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT PALMER: I'm calling off the attack.

CHIEF OF STAFF NOVICK: Sir, before you do that we should talk through the consequences.

PRESIDENT PALMER: We've talked enough, Mike.

CHIEF OF STAFF NOVICK: Mr. President, I appreciate your respect for Jack Bauer – I do – but you know the man's reputation.

PRESIDENT PALMER: I know the man. (Episode 19)

He is so trusting on Bauer being the hero that he believes in Bauer more than anyone else in his administration (Episode 16). Bauer doesn't have to show him any proof when

making accusations against his staff (Episode 10). Even when Palmer is temporarily removed from office, he still doesn't lose his faith in Bauer. His achievements can only be accomplished with Bauer's help. While Palmer tries to present himself to his staff as the most powerful person in that place, he believes that the actual power lies with Bauer.

As the season develops, his initial "ideal president" portrayal falls short when flaws are presented in his administration. While he embodies the perception of being in charge, in several instances throughout the season, many members of his administration act against Palmer's orders by not agreeing with him. Palmer sees himself as someone who demands respect and is in charge, when in fact his staff does not buy into that assumption. His administration is not persuaded by his influence and power. Actually, members of his administration show signs that they do not believe the president knows how to do his job. The head of the NSA and even the vice-president of the country act in order to stop Palmer's actions for the sake of the country's wellbeing. The vice-president invokes the 25th amendment because he does not agree with Palmer's actions and is able to get Palmer out of the office – even if for a few hours – because he believes, just as other members do, that Palmer is not in fact capable of being an effective president (Episode 21). Roger Stanton, head of the NSA, calls his administration "too passive" (Episode 13) and takes action himself to bring more accomplishments to it. Palmer knows that it is not possible for him to perform his job appropriately if his own people are working against him (Episode 7). Yet, while he takes few actions to prevent other member of his staff from impeding his job or damaging his actions.

Although Palmer's primary concern is his presidency and the events that happened throughout the day, on many occasions the focus of his character goes away

from acting as president to having to deal with the women in his life – more specifically his former wife Sherry Palmer and his special assistant Lynne Kresge. From the moment both women meet they argue about who is the most appropriate person to be by his side (Episodes 7 and 8). While they are arguing, Palmer's opinion is not considered in any moment. The only two major female characters who interact with Palmer think they know better what President Palmer needs in order to succeed in his presidency.

Although he is framed as a good father (Episode 1), the same cannot be said about his relationship with his ex-wife. They have quite a disturbed relationship. He does not have any control or saying over Sherry Palmer's actions that might affect him. She on occasions ends up having more political power and influence than he does. The only time in their story that he was the one actually making the decisions was when he filed for divorce (Episode 11). Sherry Palmer explains that he was only able to become the president because she helped him get there (Episode 6). She was an important member of his political life. When interacting with her, President Palmer loses his power and needs to have her by his side to deal with the situation: he lowers his guard around her (Episode 10); he runs decisions by her (Episode 11); she openly questions his judgment (Episode 8), so much so that he is unable to realize that she is working against him to hurt his administration (Episode 11).

While not openly spoken of, his race is highlighted by the fact that he is the only member of his administration who is African American. Though he shares various scenes with his wife and his advisor Kresge, he is still surrounded by a political environment that is consistent with what history has presented: a majorly white male political administration. In the show's reality that tries to imply a postracial reality, the

lack of diverse personnel gives the impression that white men are still the most trustworthy in the political world. Not even his wife – the only other African American major character – is a trustworthy person. He may have been able to surpass prejudices that people would have about electing an African American president, but he himself did not change his administration into a more diverse one.

As the season develops, the audience is constantly presented with the white male hegemony that is consistent with the audience's actual reality, contradicting the postracial frame initially presented by the show. By presenting an African American president, it would set a precedent that discrimination does not exist or that differences no longer matter. Yet, the season does not present any sort of racial discussion while reinforcing white supremacy. At the same time that it does not discuss social inequalities, *24* implicitly maintains their existence by presenting a majorly white cast, especially inside Palmer's administration.

If President Palmer starts his day as an image of the ideal president, by the end of his day this perception falls apart. Palmer is shown as a man who is not able to control his own administration or even his family during his presidency. Throughout the season, almost all members in his administration seriously doubt his aptitude as the commander in chief. Palmer's administration betrays him and he is almost taken out of office. By the end of the season, after all danger has ended, he still is not positioned in the leader role. After giving a speech to celebrate the country's (or more specifically, Bauer's) victories, he is poisoned in public – an assassination attempt – and ends the season fallen on the ground. Palmer, instead of being praised over the achievements accomplished on

that day, is almost assassinated and does not even get an opportunity to celebrate the end of that day of terror and use what happened as leverage in his administration.

Charles Logan – Season Five

President Charles Logan's portrayal during the fifth season of the show is presented as the most cynical out of the three presidencies here analyzed. Although he is initially framed as an indecisive man, by the middle of the season the audience learns that Logan has been in control all along, and that he was part of the planning of most occurrences during that season. Although at times he sustains the white masculine hegemonic frame that is used when assessing the presidency, he also calls the same hegemony into question by framing the presidency as corrupt and just as inapt as the other presidents on the show.

Logan is framed following the individualist frame, where all his actions are centered on him. Out of the three presidents, he is the most self-centered of all. As much as Logan has a staff working great lengths to overcome the issues of the day, he still expects that if any accomplishment occurs he is the only one who gets the credit for it. Logan is also the most power driven. In order to achieve his goals, he does not mind using questionable ethics just to come out of the day as a successful president. That includes letting hostages possibly die so that he gets a treaty signed, committing his wife to a mental institution so she is not in his way or having Jack Bauer killed so Bauer does not ruin Logan's plans.

In the first episodes, Logan does not seem a decisive man. He doubts himself (Episode 6). He is constantly seeking advice and is easily influenced by other people, including his chief of staff (Episode 5), who convinces him of admitting Martha Logan

into a psychiatric institution, and his own wife, who convinces him of coming clean about his actions (Episode 7). Logan seems to want other people to come up with solutions (Episode 9). When he is faced with having to make a decision, he does not want to take any responsibility in case anything goes wrong:

LYNN MCGILL: Mr. President, we are running out of time. We need your decision, sir.

PRESIDENT LOGAN: This is a field operation. It's up to you.

BILL BUCHANAN: With all due respect, Mr. President, it's not. We don't have the legal authority to make this decision, only you do.

PRESIDENT LOGAN: You are putting me in a terrible position.
(Episode 8)

It is only on episode 16 that Logan starts to unfold his true personality and it is possible to make sense of his actions throughout the day and a complete assessment over who he really is. Instead of an indecisive president who does not really know what is happening, he is involved with most of the occurrences of the day and is in command of everything that has been happening. Most of his actions were calculated by him so as it would seem to the other characters that Logan would let them make the decision, in fact Logan was the overall leader of the situation and in the end what actually the one in charge of the development of the events. His perceived indecisiveness was actually a cover so Logan would get things occurring the way he wanted.

Logan follows the framing of the majority of white male presidents on television, who juggles power and influence, who strives to leave a mark on his presidency, and who makes tough and many times unpopular decisions. Logan has an agenda of his own. His ultimate goal is not the protection of the world or the hope for a better environment, but the protection of America over other countries and the maintenance of the status the

country has in comparison to others. Logan is not necessarily worried about the good of other countries or the impact that his decisions might have on international politics.

Although he is the only president in this analysis who was not directly elected for president¹, in this season he is framed embracing his masculinity and his political power from the first moment he is introduced, including the rugged individualism present in individualistic frames. Logan is self-centered – the most out of the three presidents. He worries about his appearance and, more importantly on how the media – and therefore the public – sees him while acting as president (Episode 1). For him, there is no true relationship between a president and its electorate, only perceptions. And he wants to be in charge and persuasive of how his audience sees him. Logan is ambitious. He wants his presidency to mean something, to leave his legacy to the public (Episode 4). He is concerned and works toward getting his audience to have a positive perception of him, especially about how challenging the presidency is and how successful his performance is at the White House (Episode 11). As he explains in a conversation with his Secretary of Defense, James Heller:

PRESIDENT LOGAN: How dare you stand there and judge me? You have no idea. Until you sit in my chair, you don't know what the hell you're talking about. (Episode 18)

He posits himself as the most powerful person during the season, someone who needs to be shown respect. He puts himself as the leader of the situation, as he makes clear to his advisor Novick: “Mike, let's get one thing straight: I don't answer to you” (Episode 18). Not only does he consider himself the most powerful, but the most knowledgeable as

¹ Logan is first presented in Season four as the vice president, who is sworn into office in the same season after Air Force One is taken down and the then president is gravely wounded.

well, and all insight should be passed through him so he will make the most informed decision:

PRESIDENT LOGAN: You tell me everything and I will decide which details are relevant.

BILL BUCHANAN: With respect, Mr. President, we don't have time.

LOGAN: Then talk faster. (Episode 3)

His staff is not a team. They are people working in order to make his presidency effective. It is not about the people, but about the president.

Logan is focused on action, on achievements, on gaining recognition. For him, people would not remember him just by who he was, but because of what his presidency was able to achieve. So he considers that no cost is too high to leave his legacy to the country. He begins season five in the last moments before getting a treaty signed with the Russian president. He focuses so much on getting this achievement that he does not let other events get in the way of this signing. Logan explains in one episode that he had spent too many political and economical resources to make that happen (Episode 11). Even an imminent terrorist attack that could certainly kill many people is not enough to get his attention away from the signing. He says that no threats would have him succumb and get sidetracked (Episode 2).

Logan wants to be recognized during his presidency, not just after his mandate is over and people are able to make an overall evaluation of it. He seeks media recognition that will eventually lead to public recognition (Episode 6). Nothing should get in the way of his accomplishments being perceived as perfect. Any faulty judgment by his administration or any wrongdoing should be swept under the rug (Episode 6). By not having an open relationship with the media, Logan is less inclined to be affected by possible accusations or criticism (Episode 18). He shares information only in a way that

directly benefits him. His decisions are articulated in a way to maximize benefits to him, not necessarily the country as a whole (Episode 8). In a conversation with his wife, it is possible to notice that Logan's concerns are about his own well-being:

PRESIDENT LOGAN: You have to stop asking questions, you have to stop talking about this to everyone. Never again. Martha, do you realize how traumatic this would be for the country if people were to find out?
MARTHA LOGAN: Oh, yes, we're worried about the country. (Episode 19)

Logan's need for recognition makes his ethical guidelines quite blurry. In order to achieve his set goals, he is permissible with actions that would be considered unethical or plain wrong, including the murder of another former president (Episode 1) or having someone else get the blame for his mistakes (Episodes 9 and 17). His perspective is very Machiavellian, inasmuch as the end justifies the means. He is not concerned with how his staff will achieve the results, as long as his goal is met (Episodes 1 and 8) and properly dealt with (Episode 3). Logan wants to be aware of everything that is happening and to be sure that his staff is doing everything possible to make him a successful president (Episode 12).

President Logan's family follows the expected description of a presidential couple: although there is no mention whether they have kids or not, they are a seemingly happy white couple, both good looking, worried by their appearance (Episode 4); they form a good and effective team (Episode 7) and are great hosts to their visitors (Episode 9). The couple follows the white hegemonic frame of how the first couple is presented by the media: he is the powerful, strong, leading man while his wife is the happy woman next to him, who is always by his side in any circumstance. Martha Logan is the stereotypical first lady (aside from the fact that she takes medication): she is a kind

housewife (Episode 9); she helps him in anything he needs (Episode 7); she's there for him in tough moments (Episode 13); she strives not to embarrass him (Episode 17); and she understands and is okay with the demands of his job:

PRESIDENT LOGAN: Can you forgive me?

MARTHA LOGAN: You acted like the President of the United States.

PRESIDENT LOGAN: Yes, I did. But you wanted me to be your husband first.

MARTHA LOGAN: Can't pretend that I didn't. But... I still love you as much as I always did.

PRESIDENT LOGAN: Marty...

MARTHA LOGAN: Shhh... There will be plenty of time for us later. You have to get back to work. The country needs you more than I do. (Episode 12)

Even when she finds out the truth about Logan's involvement with the events of the day, although she says that she hates him, she feels she can't leave him or tell people what happened. The show perpetuated the frame that a first wife always sticks by her husband and is actually submissive to her husband's influence and power. They are the only presidential couple shown in candid moments, including kisses (Episode 18) and even having sex (Episode 23) – though scenes only show before and after it happens.

Logan's relationship with his wife Martha reinforces the frame of male superiority, even though she is presented as his only liability, and the only one who gets him to lower his guard during the season. He loves his wife (Episode 10); he wants to have her as the perfect first lady next to him (Episode 23). But he lowers his guard without losing his power. Although Martha succeeds in seducing Logan in order to stall his flight departure (Episode 23) and is the only one who gets him to confess to everything he has done throughout the season (Episode 24), Logan makes it clear to her that he is the one in charge, the one with the most power, and any possible misbehavior on her part would make him take decisive actions that would be better for him than for

her. One of his possible actions includes committing her to a psychiatric institution so she is away from the public's eye and not a problem for his presidency (Episode 24).

Logan feels so confident that, unlike the other presidents in this analysis, he never shows signs of wanting, or even needing, Jack Bauer's assistance. In this season, there is no necessity on the part of the president for Bauer to step up and become the savior of the country. In fact, Logan and Bauer are put on opposite sides. From their first scene together, Logan is against Bauer's participation on solving that day's problems:

JACK BAUER: What is that, sir?

PRESIDENT LOGAN: You. The fact that you're alive presents problems for both of us.

JACK BAUER: Yes, Mr. President. I accomplished what I set out to do, which was to identify and locate David Palmer's killer. I would like to stay until the nerve gas is retrieved. After that, I give you my word I will simply disappear again.

PRESIDENT LOGAN: All right. I think that would be best for the good of the country. (Episode 6)

While the other presidents are aided by Bauer and rely on him, Logan is presented as being opposite to Bauer. Considering that Logan is the President of the United States, the most powerful man, Bauer is not conceived as the hero during this season, but actually as carrying out a personal vendetta. They are framed as antagonists of each other. The season becomes not about Bauer rescuing the country from imminent danger, but about trying to take down an elected president, focusing more on his personal reasons than any actual mistakes that Logan might have made that would endanger the presidency or the country. Bauer is transformed into a mad man looking for revenge for his murdered friends. Logan's opposition to Bauer hits a climax in the season finale, when Bauer kidnaps him after figuring out Logan's involvement in Palmer's assassination. In

this dialogue, Logan is not as much the antagonist as he is the victim of Bauer's instability:

JACK BAUER: Right here, right now, you are going to face justice! And make no mistake about this, this is personal. And if you think for a second that I am scared to put a bullet in your brain, you don't know me. I'm going to ask you one last time. Who are your co-conspirators? You have until the count of three, or I will kill you. One...

PRESIDENT LOGAN: You'll make me a martyr, I'll go down in history with Lincoln, and Kennedy, but you'll go down with John Wilkes Booth and Lee Harvey Oswald. Is that what you want?

JACK BAUER: Two!

PRESIDENT LOGAN: You're a man of honor. How can you assassinate a president of the United States in front of the entire world? If you love your country, you won't pull the trigger.

JACK BAUER: Three!

PRESIDENT LOGAN: You can't do it, can you? No, Jack, it's all right. Jack, it's all right. It's all right. It's right that you can't. I'm the president. (Episode 24)

Logan brings a more cynical perception of the presidency by assuming that all that occurred – all the blurry lines that were crossed for the good of the country – were acceptable. From his portrayal, the presidency is not something heroic or simple, but filled with cruel and real decisions that have to be made by the president. These decisions are not necessarily considering the good of the country, but Logan's need for power and respect as well. Even though in several occasions ethical lines were crossed, Logan believes that he is a good president. And other characters contribute to this perception. Martha Logan points to him that he has “dealt with more crisis today than any other president in an entire term” (Episode 17). Graem Bauer recognizes that he has done a “remarkable job” (Episode 19).

This season shows a different perception of politics and the presidency as compared to the other presidents in this analysis, where the president is more power driven and filled with ethical blurry lines. Logan deals with stressful situations, makes

unpopular decisions, and protects the presidency from falling apart. And while protecting Americans' interest, he does not forget to make sure that his own interests are met as well. From his depiction, politics is not focused on the wellbeing of the people or the country, but focused on increasing one country's supremacy over another and at the same time improve – or at least maintain – the president's power in relation to his administration, his country and the world.

Charles Logan is a character that fits the current political hegemony. He is a white male, happily married to a loving first lady, surrounded by other white male politicians to run the country. The white male supremacy frame in politics is maintained up until the end of season five and the following seasons. After all Logan's attempts to cover up his actions fail, he is shown being taken into custody by federal marshals. By the end of this season, the audience is led to believe that justice will be made, but instead of being publically prosecuted and convicted of his crimes, in the following season the audience finds out that his deeds were hidden from the general public. In season six, it is explained that his conviction was kept a secret, he served a house arrest sentence, and later received a pardon from the new president. His political power is placed above truth and justice. His condemnation is not made public because politics is not necessarily an open environment. Logan was protected by his own kind – other white male politicians – to cover up all the misfortunes that happened.

At the same time, the show also challenges this political hegemony. Logan's presidency is framed as a failure, and just as the other presidents in this analysis, Logan was not an appropriate choice to run the country. Instead of presenting a white male politician as the best possible alternative, the show frames him as yet another faulty

option for the presidency. Logan frames a white male presidency in the end as just as flawed and inapt as any other sort of presidency. He frames hegemonic masculinity in politics as out of control and unethical, becoming as yet one more sources that may feed the cynicism people already have towards politics.

Logan does not follow the heroic frame that most white presidents have on fiction. He does not aim to save the country from imminent danger. What guides Logan's presidency – and the season as a whole – is striving for power and recognition without making personal sacrifices. While the other presidents in this analysis have more deliberations over what they would be willing to do for the good of the people or sacrifices they may have made in order to get where they are as a sign of humility, Logan does not present such concerns. He is focused on himself first. By the end of the season, Logan fails in developing a successful presidency. All his greed for power and unethical actions get the best of him and he ends the season being arrested.

Allison Taylor – Season Seven

The framing of President Allison Taylor on season seven follows the same lines of news media frames of women that have been discussed in the literature review. In many instances, she is shown with signs of fragility or even as a victim, putting her in opposition to the expected characteristics of the romance frame used when describing candidates. Out of the three presidents in this analysis, she is the one with the most screen time dedicated for dealing with family issues, in concordance to the family frame that is used in women politicians. This family frame leads to embedded frames that suggest a woman's inability to maintain a family while being president. Taylor is the only one who debates the toll that the presidency took on her life and how difficult it is

for her to be a professional and a mother at the same time. Although the show was praised for having a woman president as a character, her overall framing serves to give more strength to media frames that posit women as incapable of being proper presidents.

Taylor is framed as a humanitarian president, who puts not only her own people, but also the well-being of other countries before any political agenda, following the same lines as President Palmer on season two. She is shown deliberating over how any possible decision can affect the lives of thousands of American soldiers as well as the population from Sangala (Episode 1). For her, her presidency's humanitarian approach does not diminish the country's strength against other countries, but in fact increases it and points to the known U.S. leadership compared to the rest of the world (Episode 5). The reason she became president was not because of ambition to have power – something that is framed as negative in women, but because of the political influence she could have in making the world a better place and saving oppressed nations:

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: When I took the oath of office, I swore to myself, and to the American people, that this country would continue to be a force for good in this world. We're a nation founded on ideals, and those ideals are being challenged today. Now how we respond will not only define this administration, but an entire generation. And not just Americans, but Sangalans, and anyone else who looks to us for guidance and strength. (Episode 6)

Just like President Palmer, and contrary to President Logan, members in Taylor's administration are shown on more occasions directly having strong opposition to her way of running the country. It implies that her own administration does not entirely trust her, giving the audience the perception that women are not as trustworthy in making presidential decisions. One example is her secretary of state, Joe Stevens. He doesn't see her humanitarian approach with good eyes:

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: We will not be blackmailed, Joe, and we will not be held hostage. This country does not negotiate with terrorists.

SECRETARY STEVENS: Tell that to the families of the dead! Do you have any idea what the public reaction will be when word gets out that these are acts of terrorism? Brought about by your reckless foreign policy? I can guarantee there will be a call for your impeachment...

CHIEF OF STAFF KANIN: That's enough, Joe.

SECRETARY STEVENS: I will not stand by and let this happen.

(Episode 6)

For him, her decision-making is not the most appropriate, nor does she have the strength to make tough decisions, no matter what her policy states. He thinks that her lack of good judgment would surely lead her to face an impeachment.

Instead of following the individualistic frame, in which the president is shown as the one who makes the ultimate decision, the one who runs the country, Taylor is framed on several occasions doubting herself and her ability to appropriately run the country. Whenever she does succeed in enforcing her power, she then apologizes for being tough on her staff (Episodes 1 and 13). She is worried about how her decisions now may affect the country's future. And on certain moments, she doesn't know what to do, or what decision to take, as seen in this discussion with her husband Henry Taylor:

HENRY TAYLOR: What are you going to tell him?

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: I don't know.

HENRY TAYLOR: The American People elected you because they trust your judgment, Allison, and they're going to trust you to make the right call on this, too.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: I don't know what the right call is.

HENRY TAYLOR: The right call... is whatever you decide it is.

(Episode 4)

In fact, in many instances she forgets that she is not just a regular citizen (Episode 8) or that her life is not as simple as the others and that she holds the most powerful position in the worlds, such as when she sees her daughter in danger after being kidnapped at the White House:

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: That is my daughter out there. Do you understand? I already lost my son. Have you any idea what it's like to lose a child?

JACK BAUER: Madam President, I am genuinely sorry, but I cannot let them take you. There's nothing you can do for her now.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Do you have children, Jack?

JACK BAUER: I have a daughter.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Could you do what you're asking me to do? Just stand by and watch her butchered?

JACK BAUER: No, ma'am. But I am not the President of the United States. (Episode 12)

Also opposing the individualistic presidential frame and the romance frame, she becomes a victim herself when she is held hostage when Sangalans take over the White House (Episode 12). Taylor reinforces the traditional expectations of women. She has nothing to do with the rescue of the White House. In this situation, she is not in action trying to save the others, but in fact reinforcing feminine perceptions of fragility and inability to act against danger, and the opposition of masculinity as heroic whereas femininity as defenseless. Her daughter and she are safe because of "a lot of brave people" (Episode 13), in which she is not included. In fact, she is just as fragile and shaken as her daughter is, qualities that do not coincide with those wanted in a president:

CHIEF OF STAFF KANIN: Thank God you're all right. How you feeling?

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Like I just woke up from a nightmare. It was unbelievable, Ethan. (Episode 13)

President Taylor has a great dependence on the assistance of other men to help her run the country, again going against the individualistic frame. She states that her Chief of Staff Kanin is an important piece of her administration, an "invaluable advisor" and an "even better friend" (Episode 15). Taylor frames her political agenda as belonging to him as well. She explicitly states her dependence on him by the end of the season:

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: I've lost my family. I've lost everyone.

CHIEF OF STAFF KANIN: Not everyone.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Then you'll take back your letter of resignation?

CHIEF OF STAFF KANIN: If you want me to.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: I do. I need your help, Ethan, and I need it now.
(Episode 24)

In fact, their relationship is the most informal as compared to the other presidents of this analysis. Her chief of staff gets to call her by her first name, something that is not accepted by the other presidents from 24. This informality diminishes her authority as people make sense of her character while reminding the audience of the character's femininity. It forms a narrative of women's authority as being more informal or less imposed, the opposite of what is expected of men. By calling her by her first name, Kanin is not putting her in the higher position that she belongs, but treating her as equal to him.

The other man that Taylor really needs to help her throughout the day, and to truly save the country, is Jack Bauer. As was seen in season two and contrary to season five, Bauer steps up as the hero character in the story. Taylor puts herself aside and lets Bauer be in charge of saving the country. Although they have recently met, Bauer convinces her that she can trust him – putting them in opposing frames, he as the male hero and she is the woman needing assistance:

JACK BAUER: You can trust me. Right now everyone believes that Agent Walker is dead, and I have no status at all. Which means that Dubaku's spies cannot track us because officially we don't exist.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: You resigned from government service, and the Senate regards you as having been a renegade agent. How am I supposed to know where your loyalties really lie?

JACK BAUER: With all due respect, Madam President, ask around.
(Episode 8)

Taylor lets Bauer have access to all necessary resources from her government to do whatever is necessary (Episode 20). Bauer is the one who saves Henry Taylor, the

president's husband (Episode 9). Even after President Taylor reluctantly issues Bauer's arrest (Episode 11), Bauer still manages to orchestrate President Taylor's rescue inside the White House and save her from the terrorists from Sangala (Episode 13). And she is "deeply grateful" to all he does for her (Episode 18). In these situations, we can see reinforcements of the opposition between femininity and masculinity in the presidency. Without Bauer, it would be impossible to save the country, since she is presented as being incapable of doing it herself.

Taylor's family has a great part in her overall story. The president and her husband share a tender yet conflictive relationship. Although they are presented initially as a happy couple that is beyond any gender bias, with a wife having the important job and the husband happily assisting her in her work, throughout the episodes, their relationship develops in a way that frames Taylor as not having any control over her family and not truly having them by her side. While her husband seems helpful to her, he develops his own agenda. He in fact hires a private investigator to uncover the real reason behind their son's death (Episode 7) and even goes missing after going rogue trying to find more information about the case (Episode 8). The same goes for her daughter, who turned her back against her mother after President Taylor fired Olivia during the presidential campaign. Even after Olivia Taylor comes back she still has her own agenda that does not match the president's agenda. She gets Kanin fired as revenge (Episode 15) and has Jonas Hodges killed for being involved in her brother's death (Episode 21). Her family does not understand or does not seem to care – as contrasted to Logan's family – that their actions might have an impact on the president's life and

administration. They are not supportive of her work and do not make any willing sacrifice in support of her career.

Still, family is framed as being very important to President Taylor. In fact, out of the three presidents in this analysis, she is the one with the most deliberation over her family issues, following the same frames that women politicians deal with in news media. Taylor is constantly presented with double binds. If she maintains her positions as the president, and therefore putting the country first, her family criticizes her for not giving them the right attention or putting them first. On the opposite, if she puts her family before the country, she knows that she would face great criticism. She points that her biggest wish is to have her family back together (Episode 15), as if having a family and running a country are two opposites impossible to coexist.

Although Taylor has great authority with her position, in her interactions with her family she is framed as having less say than her husband, who is framed in family discussions as the one who knows the best solution. Her marriage maintains traditional perceptions of the expectations of the wife and the husband, with him being the head of the family and having authority over her. While she might have more power and authority than anybody else in the country, behind closed doors she loses that position to her husband. As his wife, Taylor should trust him in all instances, including when he believes that their son was murdered (Episode 10). For her daughter, even in matters of the White House, Henry should have a say deciding the final course of action to be taken, although he has no political position in the White House or political background:

OLIVIA TAYLOR: This man murdered your son! My brother. Not to mention hundreds of innocent civilians.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: I don't need you to tell me what he's done.

OLIVIA TAYLOR: Apparently you do.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Olivia, stop it!
OLIVIA TAYLOR: What would dad say? I bet you're afraid to ask.
(Episode 20)

President Taylor is framed as having to explain her actions to her husband (Episode 21). On the season finale, when it is explicit that her daughter committed a crime, Henry still wants to convince her that what he wants should be done and that he knows the right course of action:

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: How could you do this?! Olivia! How could you do something so stupid?
OLIVIA TAYLOR: I'm sorry. I tried to call it off, I swear.
PRESIDENT TAYLOR: It doesn't matter, darling, it happened!
HENRY TAYLOR: For God's sake, Allison, stop yelling at her. Hodges killed our son.
PRESIDENT TAYLOR: I know what he did.
HENRY TAYLOR: Then you know if anyone deserves to die, it's him. All you should be thinking about now is how to protect our daughter.
PRESIDENT TAYLOR: Protect her? How?
HENRY TAYLOR: Destroy that recording. (Episode 24)

President Taylor is the only one who is framed as having concerns about the toll the presidency took on her family and how apparently she can't have both. She was not able to grieve her son's death due to her duties (Episode 1). Her daughter only got back to talking to her because her father was shot and almost killed – and Olivia still holds grudges because her mother did not properly take the time to grieve her son. As a woman, she is the only one who is expected to deliberate over such issues and consider if her position is the best for her family as a whole. For President Taylor's daughter, her role as a mother should be more important to her than her role as president. Olivia and Henry Taylor explicitly point that their family had to pay a high price in order for her to achieve the presidency, including her son's life:

HENRY TAYLOR: Allison, spare me your sanctimony. You're Olivia's mother.

PRESIDENT TAYLOR: I'm also the President of the United States.
HENRY TAYLOR: And your family's already paid a steep enough price for that.
PRESIDENT TAYLOR: What are you saying, Henry?
HENRY TAYLOR: You know exactly what I'm saying. Your job cost our son his life.
PREISDENT TAYLOR: That is a cruel thing to say. I couldn't have done anything to prevent Roger's death. (Episode 24)

By the end of the season, she points out that her presidency cost her her family, and that because she maintained herself in office and acted in the best interest of the country, she lost them by her side (Episode 24). With her character, the audience is presented with the narrative that women cannot have it all, that it is not possible for a mother to maintain a family and have a successful career at the same time. It reinforces the family frame that implies that women should choose one or the other, as if having both is impossible, something that men do not have to deal with.

Just as in President Palmer's analysis on race, President Taylor's presidency on season seven was absent of explicit mentions or discussions of gender, as if such issues are no longer present in the show's reality. Yet, it is possible to point out some frames that are embedded with gendered notions throughout the episodes. When Kanin is forced to resign his post, President Taylor only discusses men as possible replacements (Episode 16). She does not mention a woman as a possibility for that position. Although the country considered her apt to be president, it seems she herself does not consider women fit for working at the White House. All major positions are filled by men – white men. Even when she hires her daughter to work for her as an advisor, it is clear that it is more for personal reasons – in an attempt to reunite with Olivia Taylor – than for her political aptitude (Episode 16).

Just as in news media coverage of female executive candidates, Taylor had more attention paid to her family, especially her family dilemma and how her presidency was a burden to their family dynamic. This season gave more attention than any other season to her family's interactions, giving them less air time to show her acting in office as the president, following news media frames of women's candidates that focus more on family and personal issues than political stands. She questioned more the fact that she had to juggle her political career as president and her role as the mother of the family and was presented as not having the possibility of maintaining both – her career and her family – and in the end failing at both.

Another similarity with Palmer's presidency is the presence of people inside the administration who act against the presidency. As Palmer, she is framed as not being able to put together an appropriate group of people to assist her in managing the country and that people inside her administration consider that she does not know what is best for the country. President Logan, on the other hand, was in charge of the whole situation and had people working for his agenda even if they did not deliberately know. Such frames point that white males have more persuasive power and influence over their staff than others would.

It is important to point out that President Taylor had fewer dialogues than the other presidents and took longer to be introduced during her season, confirming the fact that even in fiction women in politics are given less space as compared to men. While Palmer ended the season in the midst of an assassination attempt and Logan was quietly taken out of office – both strong season ends – Taylor had no big accomplishment in her presidency over the season. Actually, she was shown as grieving the loss of her family

by her side and how the presidency destroyed the family she so cherished to have. Right after that, her day just kept going on, quietly leaving the audience not remembering her as an impressive and remarkable president on the show, but as a woman who dared to put her job before her family and ended up losing it – a cautionary tale to other women who might attempt to do the same.

Implications

From this analysis, it is possible to conclude that at the same time *24* sustains white male politics as the norm – or at least the best possible alternative – it also calls this same norm into question. Although all three presidents are framed with many flaws, their overall presidency still reinforces white male hegemony that is present in current politics. The way these presidents are elaborated on the show is consistent with the frames that media already uses when describing women and African American politicians. The show serves as yet one more voice that points the status quo as the most appropriate. In contrast, Logan's portrayal may become part of the cynicism people have when assessing politics due to his corrupt and power-hungry presidency.

The show calls into question the white masculinity hegemony present in politics without presenting a viable alternative. One way or another, all three characters were ultimately unfit for the presidency. No matter their gender or race, the presidents from *24* failed at their job. While two – Palmer and Taylor – were unprepared and unfit for the presidency, the other – Logan – was too consumed with power and ambition in a corrupt political environment. That means that in the show, even white men are not really fit to run the country. *24* did not create a character that could positively sustain the white male hegemony. None of the characters were a fitting alternative to improve or change the

current hegemony. That way, the show becomes one more voice to increase the criticism citizens already have towards politics by presenting only two possibilities: either an unprepared or a corrupt presidency. With only these alternatives, audiences may be impelled to consider that there is no possible positive outcome from their votes, which would make them less considerate to go out and vote and be involved in politics.

My first research question addressed how the presidency is framed. Throughout the three seasons, the presidency overall is framed as complex and flawed. All three presidencies could be considered failed presidencies. Presidents Palmer, Logan and Taylor in one way or another finished their days/seasons facing some sort of failure. Palmer found out that his own administration did not trust him and was against him. Logan was unable to succeed in his attempt to gain more access – and power – in Russia. As for Taylor, all her attempts to save the country failed – from stopping General Matobo’s atrocities to giving proper justice to what Jonas Hodges did during her season.

The show presents the audience with a closer look at how the presidency functions and how a presidential day goes by in an extremely hectic day. Unfortunately, shows like *24* deliver pessimistic perceptions of the presidency and politics in general, possibly damaging the number of people who are compelled to get out and vote or even be involved in politics. By framing administrations as this flawed, the show perpetuates and feeds the cynicism that Cappella and Jamieson (2008) talk about. Presidential administrations were framed as not trustworthy while not presenting to the audience what a viable option would be, or even pointing out what would be the most appropriate alternative.

Another point is that race and gender are not discussed, presenting a postracial and postfeminist reality. During Palmer's and Taylor's administration there is no mention of their race or gender, or even the impact that having a woman or an African American man running the country could have over the overall political environment. *24* follows the same notion of postfeminism and postracialism present in the media that was previously discussed. The show tries to give the impression that race and gender issues are non-existent or non-relevant and that anyone can be elected for president. The show frames the presidency as free of any sort of discrimination. Gender and racial struggles were disregarded and set aside, giving room to the idea that we all have the same opportunities.

This brings the discussion of the second and third research questions posited about race and gender implication brought by the show. The frames used in *24* for Palmer and Taylor serve to feed even more the already existing concerns that media presents in news frames. In Taylor's case, the frames reinforce already existing media frames that state that a woman cannot do it all and that she will never be as good as a man to run the country. For Palmer, his reliance on Bauer puts him in opposition to the expectations of a president who is a hero and can save the country with his own hands. As Palmer's race is downplayed, he is framed in a way that makes him trying to fit into white norms – and yet fails to sustain these norms. Therefore, African American audiences may feel misrepresented or not represented at all, since although the actor is African American, he is actually playing a white politician.

The lack of overt gender and race discussion also brings implications. By framing reality as postracial and postfeminist and not focusing on the impact that the election of a

woman or an African American man would have in the country's political environment, such portrayals do not allow audiences to assess over the deeper significance of such elections or even develop a more critical assessment of diversity in the Oval Office. At the same time that race and gender are not discussed, Palmer's and Taylor's opposition from the hegemonic understanding of politics and their failures and inaptitude during their mandate can have greater influence in how audiences make sense of different people running for office.

Taylor and Palmer's difference and contrast from the norm is indirectly proposed and highlighted by the environment they are put in. They end up being framed as not belonging in that environment by their contrast to the majority: they are framed as humanitarians, maternal (in Taylor's case), victims, not ambitious, opposing the frame of other Caucasian political characters in the show – and in real life. By contrasting these characters' difference from the norm it is actually showing how they do not belong in that environment. By framing them in a postracial and postfeminist reality, Palmer and Taylor's failures are blamed on their personal weaknesses and unpreparedness, not considering any discrimination due to their race or gender that they might have dealt with throughout the season.

The show maintains the understanding of politics as a white men's world. In all three seasons *24* presents an administration that is mainly white, no matter who is in office. All chiefs of staff were white men. All vice-presidents were white men. Even the protagonist of the show – who works for the president – is a white man. Yet, it also sustains the notion of politics as a corrupt environment. All seasons dealt with some sort of corruption inside the administration, mostly coming from Caucasians. As *24*

perpetuates the status-quo in politics, it also serves to increase political cynicism by showing politicians as corrupt and power-driven who are more considerate of their own ambition and power than of the wellbeing of their voters.

From this analysis, it was possible to perceive that the frames used by the news media that were previously discussed are also present in fiction storylines. This discussion is pertinent to Entman's (2004) cascade model, as it becomes part of how media embeds certain frames into society. Even more so since *24* becomes part of the same voice that perpetuates wrongful or degrading frames of women and African Americans, helping these frames become even stronger and more convincing. Presidential portrayals like the ones in *24* follow the same parameters as the frames used by news media, having effects not only on the present perception of politics but in its future developments. Considering that television shows may lower audience's guard or critical processing of information, if compared to news, such effects may be even more profound. Audiences can be more influenced in how they make sense of other possibilities when voting for presidents. Since audiences do not usually critically assess fictional dramas, they may conclude that if even in fiction women and African Americans are not able to run a country, such possibility must not be considered for the reality. As for women and African Americans, they may feel misrepresented or not actually represented at all. It can be implied that while they are present, they are not truly included in the political process, with characters being used as mere puppets to white hegemonic norms.

Although years after President Palmer's days on *24* the U.S.A. finally elected an African American to office in 2008, and many outlets discussed Palmer's character as

opening its audience to consider an African American to office, through this analysis I am compelled to agree with Vaughn's (2012) critique that Obama did not get elected because of Palmer, but more so in spite of it. Instead of opening a positive critical evaluation of the possibility of an African American or a woman to be elected for president, the show presented to its audience how these people were not prepared to take such position. Since women have not had a chance yet to run the country, my hope that the show's effect on the consideration of women for office has not been even more damaging.

Conclusion

This thesis has analyzed the presidential frames presented in the television drama *24*. The applicability of framing even in fiction media points to the importance that any message content can have in how people make sense of issues, or more specifically, how certain states of mind are perpetuated. Authors such as Entman, Falk, Cappella and Jamieson, among many others previously cited, have presented the impact that media frames can have on the political process – from the people elected to how the voters interact with politics as a whole. Furthermore, this thesis presented and explained how framing theory can be applied in all areas surrounding media productions, not necessarily only news media. Although the theory is rich, there is still room for much development in the theory.

In order to discuss framing theory in an area that has not been given as much attention, this thesis has applied the theory to fictional media. The show *24* was chosen as a great source from which the discussion of presidential framing in fiction could be assessed. Through the analysis of three presidents in the show – David Palmer, Charles Logan and Alyson Taylor – it was possible to add to the discussion of the implications that race and gender bring to the assessment of presidential characters in fictional television. This thesis showed that although at first the show seems to bring new options for the presidency, after a more profound assessment, the show posits Palmer and Taylor as unfit for office and Logan as unethical and power-hungry. The show both increases the cynicism that people may develop against politics and damages a more proper consideration of women and people of color to be elected president.

The elements here discussed brought light to how white male hegemony has been implemented and imbedded in the political world and how media frames have been detrimental on the possibility of other members of society, more specifically women and African Americans, to have an equal and fair chance in achieving the presidency. As the show presented a postfeminist and postracial world, it continued to frame femininity and blackness as the opposite to effective executive leadership. If white masculinity is the norm, femininity and blackness are presented as never being appropriate in politics. Further, white masculinity was associated with power, ambition and ultimately corruption. As other races and gender were pointed and unfit, the status quo was questioned as being corrupt. Ultimately, the hegemony presented and developed by the show can influence the cynicism people already have towards current politics. As it shows the development of political work, it does not present any likeable alternative that would decrease cynicism and increase people's will to get involved in politics.

Following Entman's (1993) process for analyzing frames in media, I defined the problem of how presidents are portrayed in television dramas and I identified the embedded white male hegemony present in the fictional drama *24*. Although the show failed in framing the presidency in any positive light, I consider that there are ways to positively frame the presidency and influence how people make sense of politics. Television shows must develop presidential characters that are effective at their job while at the same time acknowledging and representing their racial or gender history. Television has the opportunity to present alternative views on the presidency that can be strong and successful to its audience – getting the audience away from the perception of politicians as either corrupt or unfit. Television can also become a starting point in

developing a more positive outlook and perception of the presidency. Proper television characters can also impel the population to seek better alternatives to real-life presidencies. Previous struggles by women and African Americans must not be set aside. Audiences need to be influenced in accepting women and African American histories. The presence of successful presidential characters can become the starting spark for the population to let go of degrading frames that damage politics and to become a truly democratic nation.

I faced some limitations in the development of this thesis. The fact that only one television show was discussed presents a sample view of how presidents are framed in fiction. There is the necessity of the study of other shows in order to get a more robust understating of how fiction frames the presidency as a whole. *24* presents a limitation in itself as a show since it describes only one day in the life of these characters. The lack of greater development of the characters' whole presidency can be considered a limiting view on their overall persona. Finally, my view as a foreign researcher brings different views from what Americans would understand from the framing of the characters. As a Brazilian, my country's political history brings great weight to my own cynical assessments when considering politics.

This research also brings the challenge of defining blackness and whiteness as well. For the purpose of this analysis, I focused on such terms in the political environment. I have considered whiteness as the unspoken norm that has been majorly present in politics that is seen through elected presidents as well as how media has dealt with these presidents. In contrast, I considered blackness in this analysis as one's awareness of African American history and willingness to truly represent African

Americans and use their own frames instead of trying to fit the white norm implemented by white politicians and the media in order to be accepted. As this is a personal understanding of what these words mean, other researchers and readers may have different understandings, which limits the comprehension of discussions here presented. One final limitation is the lack of discussion on the contrasts of the analyzed presidents in comparison to the terrorists of each season. Since I focused solely on the presidential frames, this analysis had no room for the discussion of how the terrorists were framed as well. If such frames had been discussed, it would have been possible to further discuss how presidential individualistic frames impacted the show in relationship to how the terrorists were framed. Furthermore, this contrast would also enrich the discussion of postfeminism and postracialism present in the analysis, assuming that this relationship may assist in understanding the gendered and racialized norms at work in framing the presidency.

There are many possible future directions that this research can take. The scope of the analysis could be broadened either by studying all seasons from *24* and developing a complete understanding of how the show framed the presidency. A critical assessment of other shows from different periods of time could also bring new discussions over the understanding of the development and evolution of presidential media frames. This study could also be applied to fictional presidents portrayed in films as well and develop a comparison between the different mediums.

The presence of different characters leaves me hopeful that the discussion of diversity is beginning, although audiences – and media alike – need to be better aware of what is currently being aired or written and consciously look for ways to break

hegemonies and frames that prohibit women and people of different races from being properly framed and discussed and have a fair chance to run for the most powerful position in the country. The mere presence of diverse presidential characters is not enough to present the audience with the understanding that the current political frames must be broken. There is a need that these characters present a reality that is an improvement of the status quo and that gender or race does not have an impact in how they perform their job.

Just as media has perpetuated and reinforced the status quo, outlets and critics need to work together to develop and sustain new frames that are helpful to those outside the norm – up until this norm no longer exists. A race against the clock is not necessary, but the sooner it happens, the sooner a truly democratic society will emerge.

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