Gender Stereotypes in Media Coverage of Female Gubernatorial Candidates

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Introduction

Despite living in a country historically dominated by men, women in the United States have made significant progress toward more equitable treatment. Women have particularly made significant strides in political participation, but they have yet to shed the images stereotypically associated with women in power.

These stereotypes, often enforced by the media’s coverage of politics, have prevented any woman from achieving the ultimate political position of President of the United States. While other democracies have successfully elected a female head of state, Americans have yet to witness the emergence of a viable woman presidential nominee.

The absence of a female presidential candidate in the United States likely has something to do with the media’s treatment of female candidates. When American voters desire information about political candidates, they frequently turn to the media. This reliance on news outlets puts the media in a powerful position to influence who citizens ultimately decide to support in an election. With an increasing amount of women running for political office, numerous studies have attempted to document how the media cover female candidates. The blatant disparity in the number of male politicians compared to female politicians has led many researchers to hypothesize that media coverage varies based on a candidate’s gender. Initial studies confirmed this assumption, finding evidence that women’s campaigns received inferior treatment and unequal coverage when compared to their male opponents. More recent studies have revealed a shift in these historic results, as researchers observed a growing trend toward equitable coverage for both genders. Despite this improvement, women still remain
underrepresented in government. New studies suggest that the tone of media coverage has more significance than its quantity, and women continue to face discrimination when it comes to the quality of their coverage.

The next section reviews the prominent literature that focuses on female candidates and the type of media coverage they receive. With women making up a relatively small percentage of candidates, some of the research discussed here must makes observations from only a handful of campaigns. A greater number of female candidates must emerge before the literature on this subject can form more definitive conclusions (Cook 1998). Based on the current research, it appears that women have made substantial progress into the realm of politics but continue to face certain setbacks. The type of obstacle may have changed, but the end result continues to retard women’s political progress. If women want to improve their representation in government, female candidates will have to recognize and surmount these barriers. Looking ahead to the most revered office of the presidency, women must work to overcome inequitable media treatment if they ever want to mount a serious presidential campaign.

Literature Review

While no section of the Constitution requires an even distribution of gender in the government, the limited number of women holding elected office in the United States directly undermines the democratic value of equality. Many Americans take pride in the democracy of their country, and have faith that the political system will provide accurate representation of the population (Kathlene 1995). With only a few women politicians holding office, the system fails to numerically represent the female population in
America. In addition to providing representation, female politicians help to assure the legitimacy of the government. The presence of women representatives exemplifies the notion that all citizens have an equal opportunity to take part in policy making (Thomas 1998). The number of women participating in politics through elections has significantly improved, in spite of the imbalance of male and female politicians. Exit polls from the 2004 presidential election revealed that women surpassed men 54 percent to 46 percent in turnout (CNN.com). With more women than men casting their ballots, it remains a question as to why more female candidates have not yet emerged.

Looking to history for a possible explanation, the inability to accumulate sufficient funds has often marred the campaigns of women. Female candidates have struggled to raise money and develop a concrete campaign finance foundation necessary to win an election (Watson 2003). Fund-raising plays a crucial role in a campaign, enabling candidates to improve their name recognition and increase their credibility as potential leaders (Witt et al. 1994). Heldman et al. (2000) discovered a positive relationship between a voter’s perceived viability of a candidate, and the candidate’s ability to raise money. Female candidates have historically come up short in terms of campaign finances, but recently the trend has improved in their favor. New figures show that many women have now caught up to, or even surpassed, the amount of money that their male opponents raise (Burrell 1998). Exceptions to this pattern do exist depending on the type of campaign. Elizabeth Dole credited her recent failed presidential campaign to an inability to raise substantial funds (Clift and Brazaitis 2000). Yet statistics suggest that the majority of women running for office actually outspend their male counterparts (Farrar-Myers 2003).
The ability to raise money does not always translate into political success, as women still remain outnumbered in politics. The limited number of female candidates mounting political campaigns implies that additional obstacles must exist despite improvements with campaign fund-raising (Handlin 1998). Some authors have blamed aspects of the current American political system for limiting the success of women (Aguiar 2003). Favoritism towards the incumbent complicates the campaign of any person trying to break into political office. The growing presence of an incumbency advantage specifically effects female candidates, whose late arrival to politics often makes them the challenger in a campaign. The theory behind the incumbency advantage states that incumbents (due to qualities like name recognition, resource accessibility, and media exposure) have a significant edge in an election over a challenger (Cronin and Genovese 2004; Cook 1998; Aguiar 2003). The deficiency of female politicians currently holding office prevents many women candidates from ever experiencing such an advantage. The incumbency advantage thus presents one barrier to political success that is not directly based on gender differences (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Darcy 1994). Nevertheless, as long as women candidates remain shut out of political office, they will repeatedly have to deal with the challenger disadvantage.

Other scholars view the absence of female candidates as developing well before the actual campaign. Rather than obstacles arising in the months leading up the election, these researchers suggest that the problem lies in the lack of women who even attempt a campaign in the first place. This feeble pool of candidates exists due to the fact that many qualified women have no desire to run for office (Fox 2003; Bledsoe 1990; Burrell 1998). The ambition and drive that has brought numerous women success in professional
careers tends to dry up when it comes to politics (Fox 2003). With a scarcity of female mentors to admire, potentially qualified women have trouble visualizing themselves as viable candidates for political office (Falk and Jamieson 2003; Handlin 1998; Naff 1995). If qualified women cannot see fellow women campaigning for office, it solidifies the belief that females do not belong in government positions (Naff 1995). The combination of these factors discourages potentially viable candidates from running for office, simply to avoid the perceived discrimination.

**Stereotypes**

For those women who do decide to become political candidates, the media coverage they receive may determine the success or failure of their campaign. The presence of sex stereotypes in the media constitutes the main theoretical explanation underlying the differences in media treatment between men and women (Kahn 1994a; Alexander and Andersen 1993; Kahn 1996; Williams 1998; Dolan 2004). Stereotypes often already exist in the minds of voters, leaving it up to the media to either confirm or disprove these preconceived notions (Braden 1996; Kahn 1996). A stereotypical frame of mind generally causes people to assume that all female candidates possess the same characteristics and that they will all act in a uniform manner.

Voter surveys have enabled researchers to isolate particular characteristics that citizens attribute to candidates depending on their gender. When faced with a hypothetical female candidate, Gordon’s (2001) experiment revealed that respondents perceived the woman as more compassionate, honest, and moral than the hypothetical male candidate. Huddy and Terkildsen’s (1993) survey went even further to show a connection between the respondents’ preference for masculine personality traits and what
they determined to be a “good” politician. Dolan (2004) similarly had a group of voters evaluate characteristics, and found that they frequently associated qualities such as experience, leadership and competence with men. The subjects then went on to rate these characteristics as more important in politics compared to traits commonly linked to women (Dolan 2004). If voters tend to correlate specific personality traits with each gender, it increases the likelihood that they will employ these stereotypes when determining who to support in an election.

Assuming stereotypes do exist in the media and in the minds of voters, scholars have various theories as to what conditions cause gender stereotypes to be used. Kahn (1996) views stereotypes as mechanisms that voters and the press use to simplify the differences between those running for office. When the media fails to provide sufficient information about the candidates, citizens will rely instead on these shortcuts to assist in their decision making process (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Iyengar et al 1997; Dolan 2004). Dolan (2004) suggests that voters use two forms of gender stereotypes: one that relates to a female candidate’s personality (gender-trait stereotypes), and one that makes assumptions about how she will make policy decisions once in office (gender-linked stereotypes). Both forms ultimately serve the same purpose of providing voters with criteria for evaluating female candidates. Gender stereotypes may also originate from the media itself, arising as a result of the confusion that often surrounds the task of reporting on a woman running for office (Witt 1994). Unable to concretely determine where woman belong in politics, the media (and eventually the voters) will use stereotypes as a short cut to categorize female candidates.
While many voters appear to utilize gender stereotypes, the actual effect these generalizations have on an election seems to depend on the campaign environment. Under some circumstances the stereotypes associated with a female candidate hurt her chances for election, while other times they seem to help her (Kahn 1994a; Kahn 1996; Cook 1998). Female stereotypes that positively correspond with the central themes of the election will strengthen a woman’s campaign, while those that clash with the major issues will weaken it (Kahn 1996). Women therefore may embrace or deny certain stereotypes depending upon the factors surrounding the campaign. Reviewing the content of campaign ads, Williams (1998) found that women tend to emphasize their femininity when electoral conditions favor it (i.e. the “Year of the Woman” in 1992). On the other hand, if the campaign environment does not favor women, female candidates will instead try to portray themselves as individuals, separate from the stereotypes associated with their gender (Williams 1998).

The way women respond to stereotypes varies depending on the circumstances of the campaign, as no two elections will encounter the same issues, events, or political environment. The demographics of the voters particularly effect vote choice and make the conditions surrounding each campaign unique (Leighley 2002). Dolan (2004) suggests that one must consider the impact of a citizen’s political party, level of education, and ideology when evaluating voter behavior. A candidate’s gender interacts with these additional characteristics, and may not have as much of an influence when taken by itself (Dolan 2004). The stage of the campaign and the number of days remaining before Election Day represents another aspect of the campaign environment that may influence the effect of stereotypes. Between the primaries and the general
election, Banwart et al (2003) found that female candidates tend to face greater media bias, despite relatively equal amounts of coverage. The presence of stereotypes will therefore vary depending upon which portion of the campaign researchers choose to analyze.

Based on the intricacies of the campaign environment, scholars have disagreed about whether women should try to eliminate stereotypes completely (Handlin 1998), or if they should instead accept and focus on the ones that put them in the best light (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1991). Under the assumption that gender stereotypes will arise, scholars have offered various suggestions as to how women should deal with negative generalizations. On the one hand, women candidates could strive to present an image where they possess a combination of male and female qualities, in attempts to satisfy both types of voter preferences (Alexander and Andersen 1993). Women could alternatively chose to focus on creating a powerful communication strategy that emphasizes their strengths and enhances their credibility, with the hope that voters will look beyond any gender stereotypes that suggest weakness (Bystrom 2003; Beasley 1997). Bower (2003) similarly stresses the importance of a female candidate’s public discourse, suggesting that a woman must make it her priority to create a more persuasive image than her male opponent. Regardless of how a female candidate chooses to deal with stereotypes, many women face criticism from the media and voters if their break from traditional gender traits appears too planned or insincere (Bystrom et al 2001). Successful female candidates must keep all of these considerations in mind, and try to strike a balance between overcoming negative stereotypes and still adhering to positive ones.
Many researchers acknowledge that a variety of gender stereotypes exist, but some do not believe that stereotypical generalizations have a harmful impact on a campaign. Researchers have found that in some cases voters’ perceptions of women candidates as outsiders have actually helped their campaigns. Female candidates exemplified the notion of change in 1992, bringing many women success by appealing to voters who similarly wanted a transformation in government that year (Lake et al 1997). When comparing coverage between male and female candidates, Ann Gordon (2001) additionally found that each gender received equal attention for a majority of issues (with the only exceptions being economic and military ones in favor of the men). Bystrom et al’s (2001) research also showed that women generally received the same quality of coverage in comparison to their male opponents. The only example of a persistent stereotype occurred when Bystrom found that the media continued to make reference to a female candidate’s primary role as a wife or mother. But dwelling on these stereotypical roles of women may have greater impact on political campaigns than Bystrom suggests. Utilizing this gender framework, the media validates the perception that women belong in the home, caring for their family (Handlin 1998). Running for office while simultaneously caring for young children runs the risk of evoking the image of a woman abandoning her family in an attempt to achieve political success (Clift and Brazaitis 2000; Handlin 1998). The isolated presence of a stereotype such as this may be minor, but the affect on the female candidate’s campaign could still be significant.

Media Coverage

While the impact that sex stereotypes have on a political campaign remains debatable, most authors do tend to agree that the media has a fundamental ability to
influence a voter’s electoral decision. As an increasing number of candidates rely on the media to reach their voters, news outlets have developed a powerful role in American politics (Vavrus 2002). The public’s reciprocal dependence on the media to obtain their political information further enhances the capacity of the media to influence a voter’s judgment of candidates (Iyengar and Kinder 1991; Dolan 2004). Faced with infinite amounts of information, voters frequently resort to “satisficing”, where they come to a decision after only a few considerations (Miller and Krosnick 1997). This process makes news outlets even more influential, as the media determines for many people the few issues they will consider when forming opinions (Miller and Krosnick 1997). The role of the media increases in national and statewide races, where voters have little direct contact with candidates and thus develop a greater dependence on the media for information (Kahn 1994b).

With such a large portion of citizens turning to the news for their political information, the media’s treatment of gender differences will likely have a significant impact on voters. In terms of the amount of coverage between genders, recent studies have reported that some female candidates actually receive the same quantity of coverage (if not more) when compared to their male opponents (Kahn 1995; Smith 1997). Numerically speaking, Banwart (2003) found that women candidates received more newspaper coverage than men in the 2000 elections. While this appears to be an improvement from simply ignoring female candidates, Banwart (2003) concedes that the tone of the coverage did not make women appear any more viable. Media coverage of women tends to highlight and pronounce the gender differences that distinguish them from male candidates (Braden 1996). While differences will naturally exist between
candidates of either gender, the media’s focus on gender makes the sex stereotypes even more apparent (Ladd 1997). Media coverage of Elizabeth Dole during the pre-primary stages of her presidential campaign emphasized her gender and made numerous references to her appearance (Clift and Brazaitis 2000). Dole additionally had to deal with a negative media slant that frequently labeled her the “loser” despite favorable poll results (Anderson 2002, Bystrom 2003, Heith 2003). The effects of the media forced the Dole campaign to deal with unexpected criticism, which quickly diminished her chances as a viable candidate (Heldman 2000, Anderson 2002).

The media’s ability to frame stories has had an equally powerful influence on the coverage of women candidates. Iyengar and Kinder define framing as the “subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment and choice problems”, and the term “framing effects” as the “changes in decision outcomes resulting from these alterations” (Iyengar and Kinder 1991, 11). The media relies on the use of frames to simplify the presentation of a complex story, but many times these frames end up limiting new ideas and perpetuating stereotypes instead (Witt 1994). Designating the 1992 elections as “The Year of the Woman” represents one of the most widespread uses of frames that have affected women running for office. The meaning behind this label had mixed results on the electoral success of female candidates, depending on the political context of the individual races (Norris 1997; Vavrus 2002). On the one hand, the “Year of the Woman” frame depicted women in a positive light, almost celebrating their presence in politics (Jamieson 1995; Kahn 1996). At the same time the title drew attention to the fact that women do not typically participate in politics (Jamieson 1995; Braden 1996). By condensing women’s role in politics to one significant year, female
candidates risked being viewed as a “flash-in-the-pan phenomenon”, where they might disappear just as quickly as they arose (Vavrus 2002, 93).

In addition to having the ability to frame political stories, the news media can also choose to align itself closer to one candidate’s message over another’s. Kahn (1994) found that the media typically appeared more responsive and supportive of the male candidate’s message. Female candidates’ campaign messages contrarily become lost in the deluge of political information, following the theory that messages that contradict stereotypes do not receive much media attention (Mills 1997). If the media tends to place a greater emphasis on the message of male candidates, then the public will naturally become more informed about what these candidates have to say. This leaves female candidates to face a vicious cycle where they cannot receive substantial coverage without name recognition or high poll results, but alternatively need media coverage to achieve both of those criteria (Braden 1996).

Female candidates face further limitations when the media covers them as abnormalities in the historically male dominated election environment. Banwart’s (2003) observations of mixed-gender Senate and gubernatorial races in 2000 found the press tended to assign women the “other status”. Jamieson (1995) similarly noted that media coverage depicted men as the norm, and women as the “other”. Framing women as the exception to the political norm encourages the public to view female candidates as unusual and less viable contenders. Placing additional emphasis on the gender of women candidates ignites skepticism in the minds of voters about where female politicians belong. Framing women as anomalies or designating them “token status” ultimately decreases the chances that citizens will accept them as potential representatives.
(Schroedel and Mazumdar 1998; Braden 1996). As a result, many voters will support the presence of women on the ballot, but will not take female candidates serious enough to actually vote for them (Cook 1998).

Generalizations from the media have further hindered female candidates with the assumption that the few women running for office represent the entire female population. Anderson (2003) found that media references to Dole constantly cited her as the woman candidate for president, above everything else she stood for. This generalization blurs the line between female candidates and the feminist movement. When the press makes the assumption that a public figure such as Dole symbolizes all women, those who do not support her suddenly appear to lack loyalty to their gender (Handlin 1998; Vavrus 2002). The use of this stereotype puts even more pressure on female candidates to succeed, as many citizens view their campaigns to be symbolic of all women (Ferraro 1993). Any failures that female candidates experience strengthen a negative perception of women’s presence in politics, and unfairly affect future candidates as well (Braden 1996).

While many scholars have observed patterns of negative stereotypes in the coverage of female candidates, others believe media treatment of women has improved. These researchers have found that the quality of news coverage has become more equal between the two genders, with only a few exceptional cases that continue to hinder women. Looking at statewide campaigns, Smith (1997) found no glaring differences in the coverage of male candidates versus female candidates. He did note however that any exceptions to these findings occurred at the expense of the women, not the men. Susan Carroll’s (1997) research revealed that major papers no longer dwell upon a woman’s family or her appearance, as they had done so often in the past. But like Smith, Carroll
found exceptions, recognizing that women continue to face the problem of being excluded from receiving any media coverage in the first place. The coverage itself may not contain obvious stereotypes, but the lack of coverage altogether continues to present obstacles for female candidates.

**Differences Between Levels and Types of Office**

The quality and quantity of media coverage for female candidates will often fluctuate depending on the level of political office being sought. Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) conducted an experiment that found that women received more favorable coverage and voter support for local level offices, compared to national or statewide ones. Male candidates contrarily have the advantage of running competitively at all three levels. Masculine characteristics are viewed favorably at the national and state levels, and the lack of female characteristics has little effect at the local level (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). Women only have the opportunity to run a competitive campaign at the local level, and do not have a particular advantage at any of the three levels of office. These factors have prompted many women to only undertake campaigns for local offices, where more equitable media treatment exists (Fox 2003). Fox’s research found that the disadvantages female candidates face discourage many qualified women from running for office altogether. In the event that they do decide to run, female candidates migrate towards local offices, where they stand a greater likelihood of success (Fox 2003). The disproportionate number of women at the local level compared to state and national offices directly reflects the varying eligibility pool of women candidates in relation to the level of office (Darcy 1994). Women recognize that they will face more obstacles at higher offices, leading well-qualified and ambitious women to shy away from political
campaigns that go beyond the local level (Duerst-Lahti 1998; Bledsoe 1990). With the already small number of female candidates hovering around local offices, the chances diminish that a woman will ever make it to the presidential level. These women lack the national political office positions that many male candidates have used as a stepping-stone to the presidency. Duerst-Lahti (1998) refers to this trend as the pipeline effect, where a politician’s previous experience in one elected office provides the credentials needed for higher offices.

The gubernatorial office exemplifies the pipeline effect, as many governors have made the transition to a presidential campaign. Four of the past five presidents emerged from the governor’s mansion, illustrating how important a gubernatorial position can be in providing the experience and publicity needed for a presidential hopeful (Weir 1999; Falk and Jamieson 2003; Stambough 2003). For this reason the media’s treatment of female gubernatorial candidates can shed light on how the media may respond to a female presidential candidate. When compared to other offices, scholars vary on whether or not female gubernatorial candidates receive better or worse media coverage. Kahn (1994b) reported that while the media differentiates between male and female candidates, the distinctions are less dramatic for gubernatorial campaigns, and more dramatic for Senate ones. This disparity may arise from the fact that Senators have to deal with the “male” issues of foreign policy and national security, while governors focus more on “female” topics, such as education and healthcare (Kahn 1994a). Kahn (1994a) additionally noted that these stereotypes have frequently helped women candidates succeed in their quest for governor. Weir (1999) disagrees, offering alternative evidence that voters perceived a good governor to be one who possessed male characteristics (thus
giving men the advantage in a gubernatorial campaign). Differences in media treatment also occur for the reason that issues tend to receive most of the focus in gubernatorial campaigns, while horserace information receives more attention in senatorial ones (Kahn 1995).

**Beyond Media Coverage: Proposals for the Future**

Throughout American history, many women candidates have faced, and will continue to face, setbacks on their quest for political office. Acknowledging the inevitability of these obstacles, several authors have made suggestions as to what can be done to improve female candidates’ chances of electoral success beyond dealing with the media. The combination of finding credible candidates and locating winnable seats will increase the chances of a positive campaign experience (Duerst-Lahti 1998). Political parties must also play a more influential role in women’s representation in government, as it is the party in other democracies that is usually responsible for creating a ticket with women candidates on it (Aguiar 2003). Political parties in the United States should attempt to recruit more female candidates for higher office, rather than assuming they should fill positions on the local level (Bledsoe and Herring 1990).

A more long term plan should include recruiting professional women to engage in various forms of political activism, with the hope that their experiences will make them more likely to consider running for office down the road (Duerst-Lahti 1998). The creation of the White House Project in the late 1990s “aims to advance women’s leadership in all communities and sectors, up to the U.S. presidency” (whitehouseproject.org). Convincing more female oriented public interest groups to endorse women candidates would also help by providing these candidates with much
needed financial support (Handlin 1998). Once the number of women in office increases, it is important that they do not settle there, but instead continue to strive to occupy important policy making positions (Schroedel and Mazumdar 1998). Equal representation may be the initial goal, but participation in the formation of policy will insure that women become a fundamental part of the American government.

While more women today attempt campaigns for political office, female candidates remain scarce at high levels of government. The literature reviewed here covers the research and theories that have attempted to depict the relationship between the media and sex stereotypes. The media certainly has a powerful effect on the outcome of a political campaign, but the explanations depicting the coverage of female candidates for higher offices have remained variable. In an attempt to analyze the presence of stereotypes in campaigns for executive office, the media coverage of four distinct gubernatorial campaigns have been selected for examination. By coding the content of newspaper coverage for these four campaigns, I hope to develop a better understanding of which stereotypes continue to exist, and how they correspond to various elements of a political campaign.

**Methodology**

Media treatment of female candidates has likely influenced the absence of women running for the ultimate executive office position of the presidency. To most accurately analyze the role of the media in a presidential election featuring a female candidate, an ideal research design would document the treatment of women in these campaigns. Unfortunately only one woman, Elizabeth Dole, has mounted a serious presidential campaign in recent history. A study of her campaign alone would produce an isolated
case study that would not offer the ability to make concrete generalizations. In an effort to compare media treatment of a variety of campaign types and parties, an alternative political office had to be selected to serve as a proxy for analyzing a presidential campaign.

With four of the past five presidents holding the office of governor prior to their presidency, gubernatorial campaigns share several similarities with presidential ones. One can assume that an increase in the number of female governors would similarly increase the chances of a woman running and winning the presidency. Both offices represent executive positions where voters select one person to independently govern a large area. While governors and the president deal with many of the same policy issues, some may argue that national security and foreign policy has become more important at the national level than at the state level following September 11th. In attempts to limit the differences here, two of the campaigns analyzed came from prior to 2001 while two came after that year.

When selecting which gubernatorial campaigns to study, diversity of cases was the most important factor. The four campaigns had to include candidates who differ in terms of gender, party, and incumbency or challenger status. The first campaign took place between a male and a female candidate, Judy Martz and Mark O’Keefe, in Montana during the 2000 election year. Martz won the open seat over O’Keefe, providing an example of a Republican beating a Democrat. The second campaign also occurred in 2000 and featured Jeanne Shaheen running as a female Democrat incumbent against the male Republican challenger Gordon Humphrey. Shaheen won this election to become the governor of New Hampshire, representing a second example of a victory by the
female candidate. The third campaign, a race between the female candidate Jimmie Lou Fisher and the male candidate Mike Huckabee, took place in Arkansas in 2002. Fisher lost the race as the Democratic challenger, while Huckabee won a second term as the Republican incumbent. The final campaign featured an unusual contest between two women candidates: Republican Linda Lingle versus Democrat Mazie Hirono. This open race occurred in Hawaii in 2002, with Lingle winning the seat over Hirono.

After selecting the four campaigns for the analysis, I began to accumulate articles leading up to the election. Lexis-Nexis served as the basis for the search, providing a significant portion of articles from the state in which the election took place. The media database website Newslink.org provided a supplementary list of all of the additional newspapers in each state. From this list I selected the daily newspapers that had the greatest number of readers in addition to ones that had a sufficient archival service available. For the Montana campaign I used articles from the Billings Gazette, the Bozeman Chronicle, the Montana Standard, the Ravalli Republic, the Helena Independent and the Missoulian. For the New Hampshire campaign I used Foster’s Democrat, the Laconia Citizen, the Union Leader, and the Nashua Telegraph. The Batesville Guard, the Log Cabin Democrat, the Times-Herald, the Southwest Times, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, the Paragould Press, and the Russellville Courier supplied the articles for the Arkansas race, and Advertiser, the Star-Bulletin, and the Maui News were used in the Hawaii campaign.

With September 1st typically perceived as the start of the campaign period, I searched for any article printed between the first of September and the day prior to the election that included the female candidate’s name. Because I wanted to focus my study
specifically on the coverage of women candidates, I only collected articles that included the female’s name. Taking into account the unique nature of having two female candidates in the Hawaii race, one search sought articles containing Lingle’s name, and an additional search located any subsequent articles that only contained Hirono’s name. Only articles that dealt specifically with the campaign were included, eliminating any that may have reported on unrelated events, such as an incumbent conducting daily tasks as governor. Editorial and opinion articles were included in the collection of articles, while letters to the editor were removed. Any article with less than 300 words was also excluded, based on the idea that an article of this length would not have a significant impact on the reader, nor would have ample space to present a clear tone toward the candidate.

The complete collection of relevant articles was then organized according to the date, removing any duplicate Associated Press stories published by more than one paper. If multiple articles existed with the same date, they were arranged with the Lexis-Nexis articles first, followed by the alphabetical list of newspapers as ordered on the Newlink website. After being placed in chronological order, every article was numbered and a sum total determined for each campaign. From here a random number generator available at random.org determined a sample of one hundred articles from every campaign. This random sample of one hundred articles was then ready to be coded based on a number of different variables.

**Coding Technique**

A majority of the coding criteria was factual and straightforward, while other variables required some judgment. The article length was either indicated on the article
itself, or the length was estimated by counting the average number of words per line and multiplying that number by the total number of lines in the article. The number of words per article was then recoded into groups of “300 – 449 words,” “450 – 599 words,” “600 – 749 words,” and “750+ words”. This method of recoding condensed the article lengths into more manageable categories for analysis. When trying to determine if an article contained a candidate of primary focus, marginal notations marked the subject of each sentence in the article. A sentence either mentioned the Republican candidate, the Democratic candidate, neither candidate or both candidates. After documenting each sentence, the candidate who had a majority of sentences (determined as 2/3 or more) was then concluded to be the candidate of primary focus. If neither candidate had a clear majority, then the candidate of primary focus was coded as “Both”.

Coding for the tone of the article used a similar notation mechanism to determine the overall feel of the article. Labels of positive, neutral or negative described the tone of each individual sentence in the article. Positive articles therefore consisted of sentences that depicted the candidate in a favorable light, had no negative or counter arguments from the opponent, or had less than 1/3 of the article coded as negative. Negative articles contrarily had a majority of unfavorable coverage toward a candidate, or included a significant amount of criticisms from the opponent. Neutral coverage existed when the article lacked any emotional value from the author. An article was also coded as neutral if a candidate was initially portrayed positively or negatively in the first half of the article, but was then given even time to counter these original remarks and portray the candidate in the opposite manner. A majority of articles fell into this neutral category, as reporters frequently attempt to present articles in an objective manner.
Determining the tone of the headline towards each candidate occurred in a fashion similar to that of the article tone. Each headline was coded as either positive, neutral, negative, or no mention. Because headlines often simply state the facts of a situation, the type of verb used in the article heading helped to guide the coding of the tone. For example, when an organization “praised” a candidate, the headline was coded as positive toward that candidate. If an organization “blamed” a candidate, then the headline was viewed as negative. A headline that included a neutral verb, such as “says”, was coded as neutral regardless of the subject matter. As with the tone of the article, a majority of headlines fell into the neutral category in accordance to the objective nature prominent in newspaper reporting.

After determining the tone of the article and the headline, the next criteria looked at the primary focus of the article. An article that depicted events attended by the candidates, such as political debates, fell into the “Campaign Events” category. An article that dealt mainly with the candidate’s platform or campaign message was coded as “Policy/Issues”. “Horserace Coverage” seemed to dominate the majority of articles, and included anything that focused on who was winning or losing according to the polls, how much money had been raised, the content of campaign ads, and candidate attacks toward each other. Articles that provided an extensive personal background or depicted a “day in the life” of the candidate were labeled as “Profile” articles. “Editorial/opinion” articles were coded accordingly, as were “Scandal/Crisis” ones.

Turning to the content within the article, four potential indicators of stereotypes depicted the various subject matter present in the article. The first criteria looked at how frequently an article allowed each candidate to speak for him/herself through the use of
quotes. When determining the number of times an article directly quoted each candidate, only full sentences qualified as a quote. The only inclusion of partial sentences occurred if the sentence formed an independent clause that was only one or two words away from being considered a complete sentence. The second criteria examined the number of references made to a candidate’s appearance and included any mention of hair, dress, makeup, or overall look. The third indicator counted the number of mentions of family per article. This measure included any reference made to a candidate’s family member, in addition to any mention of the candidate as a mother, father, sister, brother, etc. The final variable looked at the number of mentions of a candidate’s gender in each article. This included any direct mention of the candidate as male/female or man/woman, as well as depicting qualities of the candidate as masculine or feminine. In the Hawaii campaign that included two women, several articles referenced both candidates together as “women”. In these circumstances, the reference made to both candidates was counted once for each candidate. After all articles were coded according to these terms, the content of the article was recoded into either “No Mentions” or “Mentions”. Because only a few mentions of appearance, gender, and family existed in each campaign, recoding these variables provided results more suited for analysis.

**Statistical Analysis**

Following the coding of the articles, the data was analyzed through SPSS in order to determine the relationship between a number of variables. Potential relationships were analyzed through the use of measures of association and by the comparison of means.
Both the quantity and the quality of newspaper coverage were analyzed in order to determine the presence or absence of stereotypes within the articles.

**Article Content: Number of Quoted Sentences**

If stereotypes do exist within newspaper coverage and the media does treat female candidates differently and less equitably than male candidates, I would assume that a comparison of article content would illustrate this difference. Looking at the number of direct quotes present in the articles, I hypothesized that the female candidates would have a smaller number of quotes than male candidates. If the news media does not perceive women as serious candidates for political office, then they would be less likely to quote them as frequently in an article. The article may still mention the female candidate, but may paraphrase her comments rather than including them verbatim.

Turning to the statistics, the mean number of female quotes was 2.48 sentences per article, in comparison to male candidates being quoted 2.91 times. The t-test produced a value of 1.937 (df = 299), and had a significance of .054. While this significance level does not reach the .05 level, I believe we can still be confident that there is a significant difference between the means. It thus appears that the candidate’s gender influences whether or not a reporter includes direct quotes from the candidate.

In order to assure that an alternative variable did not effect the number of quotes, subsequent comparisons outside of gender were included. Looking at the effect that party may have, the mean number of quotes between Democrats and Republicans was also calculated. Democrats receive an average of 2.74 quoted sentences per article, while Republicans had a mean of 2.44 sentences. The t value between these two means was
1.641 (df = 399), with a significance level of .102. This suggests no difference between the parties with respect to the number of quotes per article.

An additional comparison of means looked at the difference between the number of quoted sentences for incumbents versus challengers. Challengers had a mean of 2.50 quoted sentences per article, while incumbents only had 2.02 sentences per article. I suspect that this difference arose because challengers represent new subject matter for reporters, whereas incumbents have been the focus of numerous articles in the past. This difference may lead reporters to feel that they need to pay particular attention to the challenger in order to put him/her on a level playing field with the incumbent. The difference of means here produced a t-test value of 1.914 (df = 199) and had a significance of .057. These results suggest that the incumbency or challenger status of a candidate may have a relationship with the number of quoted sentences per article.

The results of these comparisons lead me to believe that the number of quotes per article is influenced by the gender of the candidate and the candidate’s status, but not political party. I suspect that political party represents one of the most obvious differences between candidates, as almost every major election occurs between candidates of competing parties. With reporters striving for objectivity, equal treatment towards candidates of each party likely becomes one of their main goals. Differences in a candidate’s gender or candidate status do not occur as frequently as differences in party, as few women run for office and the presence of open seats eliminates the incumbent versus challenger factor. I would think that this would cause reporters to be less conscious of remaining objective in terms of these two categories, and may subsequently lead to an unequal number of quotes per article.
Article Content: Number of References to Appearance

The next component of article content looked at the number of references made to each candidate’s appearance. If the media uses gender stereotypes and treats female candidates differently than male candidates, I would suspect that the articles would discuss the appearance of women more than men. Comparing the means between genders, there were .06 references per article to the female candidate’s appearance, as opposed to .01 references per article made to the male candidate’s appearance. A one-sample t-test of these two means found the value of t to be $-11.333 \, (df = 299)$, with a significance level of .000. This result suggests a significant difference and that the null hypothesis can be rejected. While references to a candidate’s appearance did not occur very often, they were more often made about the female candidate than the male.

Turning to the difference between Democrat and Republican candidates, references were made to a Democrat’s appearance an average of .05 times in comparison to a mean of .04 references for the Republican candidate. This relationship had a t-test value of $-0.777 \, (df = 399)$, and a significance level of .438. The number of references made to appearance with respect to a candidate’s political party is therefore not significant. A similar conclusion arises when looking at the status of the candidates in relation to mentions of appearance. References were made to the incumbent’s appearance .05 times per article, while the challenger’s appearance received a mention .03 times. The value of the t-test was $.421 \, (df = 199)$, and the significance level of .674 indicates no difference. These statistics show that although references to the appearance of a candidate occurred only occasionally, the means differed the most in terms of the candidate’s gender.
Article Content: Number of References to Family

With gender stereotypes typically suggesting that women belong in the home, references made to a female candidate’s family would likely illicit these connotations in the minds of voters. If gender stereotypes do exist in print media coverage, I would hypothesize that articles would make more references to the familial role of female candidates over male candidates. Results actually showed the opposite, revealing an average of .23 references made to the male candidate’s family, while only an average of .12 references made to the female candidate’s family. A one-sample t-test produced a t value of 2.586 ( df = 299) and a significance level of .010.

These statistics show a reverse relationship from the hypothesized results, but a unique prominence of the male candidates’ spouses in the Montana and Arkansas campaigns likely effected this relationship. In the Montana race between Judy Martz and Mark O’Keefe, numerous articles focused on the contributions made by O’Keefe’s wife to his campaign. As an heir to the Dayton-Hudson department store chain (which eventually sold the business to the Target chain), O’Keefe’s wife had the ability to make substantial donations that received considerable coverage in the press. In the same year as the Arkansas race between Jimmie Lou Fisher and Mike Huckabee, Huckabee’s wife Janet underwent her own political campaign for secretary of state. Much of the coverage for the governor’s race also mentioned Janet’s political involvement, and speculated about the presence of having two members of the same family holding office in the state government.

The public role that these women played in their spouse’s campaigns most likely increased the number of references per article made to their husbands’ families. Because
these women came from opposite parties (O'Keefe from the Democratic party, Huckabee from the Republican party), I would suspect that a comparison of the average number of mentions of the Democratic candidate’s family to the Republican candidate’s family would produce similar means. The average number of references to family for the Democrat came out to .15 mentions per article, compared to .17 mentions for the Republican. The t-test produced a value of .445 (df = 399) with a significance of .656, showing that a significant difference does not exist with respect to party.

The two campaigns that featured unusually visible spouses also varied in terms of the candidate’s status of incumbency or challenger. I would assume that there would be no difference between references to family and candidate status since the Huckabees were incumbents while the Humphreys were challengers. The family of the incumbent was mentioned on an average of .17 times per article, while the family of the challenger was mentioned an average of .11 times. A one-sample t-test produced a value of −1.408 (df = 199), with a level of significance of .161. This value confirms that a significant difference between these two values does not exist.

**Article Content: Number of References to Gender**

The final analysis of article content looks at the direct number of references made to a candidate’s gender in the media coverage of female candidates. Following the belief that the media emphasizes the gender of female candidates more than male candidates, I would suspect that the articles would highlight the gender of the women more than the men. The mean number of references show that the female candidate’s gender was mentioned an average of .09 times per article, while the male candidate’s gender was mentioned .00 times. The t-test produced a value of −25.910 (df = 299) and a
significance level of .000. Although only a few articles included direct mentions of a candidate’s gender, when references to gender existed they were only made toward the female candidate.

Moving to the relationship of gender references and a candidate’s political party, Democrats had an average of .14 mentions of gender per article while Republicans had a mean of .16. The t-score of this relationship was .318 (df=399) with a significance level of .751. Turning to the status of the candidates, references were made to the incumbent’s gender an average of .06 times per article, while the challenger’s gender was referenced .02 times. A one-sample t-test produced a value of –4.006 (df =199) and a significance of .000. This value suggests a significant difference, although only a small numerical difference exists between the values of .02 and .06. Albeit a small difference, this measure of article content is the second example of a variable that has had a relationship with the status of candidate, as a relationship also existed with the number of quoted sentences.

Article Content: Summary and Discussion

Among each of the four measures of article content, the difference between Democrats and Republicans does not appear to have an influence on the results. Mentions of appearance, family, and gender, in addition to number of quotes per article, seem to occur regardless of what party the candidate comes from. The candidate’s gender, on the other hand, appears to have a relationship with the content of the article and produced a significant difference of means in each of the measurements. In every measurement with the exception of references to family, treatment of the female candidate corresponded to stereotypes that emphasized her gender and appearance more
than the male candidate. While these examples of stereotypes only surfaced a handful of
times throughout the articles, when they did arise they occurred overwhelming toward the
female candidate. A disparity in treatment of female candidates compared to male
candidates also occurred when it came to the direct quotes in each article. Women
experienced a disadvantage of receiving a lower number of quotes than the men. This
inequality prevents female candidates from speaking to readers directly, in their own
words.

While these results suggest that women received inferior coverage in the print
media when compared to men, one exception came in the number of references made to
the candidate’s family. With this measurement more mentions were made of the male
candidate’s family than the female candidate’s. Yet this difference is likely explained by
the public role of these particular male candidate’s wives over the course of the election.

**Tone of Article**

The tone of an article towards each candidate serves as one of the strongest
influences on how a reader perceives those running for office. When comparing the
distribution of tone between genders, both male and female candidates had an even
percentage of a negative articles. Male candidates had more articles with a neutral tone
(87% compared to 82%), while female candidates had twice as many articles with a
positive tone (10% to 5%).
Table 1. Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus by Tone of Article Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone of Article Content</th>
<th>Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>29 (10%)</td>
<td>15 (5%)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>246 (82%)</td>
<td>249 (87%)</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>24 (8%)</td>
<td>21 (8%)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these results seem to depict an advantage for the female candidate, the small number of articles that fell in the positive category (only 29 out of 299) suggests that this perceived benefit will not likely have a significant effect over the course of the campaign.

Number of Quotes Per Article

The media often emphasizes its ability to conduct objective reporting, but equivalent representation of both candidates in an article does not necessarily mean they have received fair treatment. The presence of direct quotes in an article exemplifies one way to compare the coverage between male and female candidates. The number of quotes per article illustrates how often a reporter allows the candidates to speak for themselves. Paraphrasing or summarizing a candidate’s words does not always convey the exact meaning that the candidate intended to express. An article’s inclusion of direct quotes provides candidates with the valuable opportunity to express their message in their own words.

Looking at the number of quoted female sentences per article in relation to the overall tone of the article, I would suspect that articles that depict the female in a negative light would correspondingly include fewer quoted sentences from the female. On the other hand, articles that portrayed the woman candidate in a positive light would include
a greater number of quoted sentences. A test of association between these two variables produced a Tau-b value of -.111 suggesting that a weak relationship existed. The Chi Square value of 9.844 (df = 4) with a .043 level of significance shows that the observed frequencies differ from what would be expected under the null hypothesis. These results show the presence of a weak relationship between the variables, and the contingency table illustrates the distribution of quotes in relation to the tone of the content.

**Table 2. Tone of Content Toward Female Candidate by Number of Quoted Female Sentences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Quoted Female Sentences</th>
<th>Tone of Content Toward Female Candidate</th>
<th>Positive (%)</th>
<th>Neutral (%)</th>
<th>Negative (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Quotes</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>14 (48%)</td>
<td>113 (46%)</td>
<td>19 (79%)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 Quotes</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>10 (35%)</td>
<td>93 (38%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+ Quotes</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>40 (16%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While articles with a positive tone toward the female and those with a negative tone toward the female both mainly contained “No Quotes”, females did have a better likelihood of receiving any number of quotes if the article addressed them in a positive manner. Most of the articles that covered females in a neutral manner (45 percent) contained no quotes from the female candidate. This suggests that even when a reporter portrays the female candidate in a neutral tone, free from any notion of support or disapproval, the female candidate still suffers from a lack of voice.

Looking at a comparison of the number of male quoted sentences in relation to the tone of the article toward the male candidate, a different distribution of results arose.
Table 3. Tone of Content Toward Male Candidate by Number of Quoted Male Sentences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Quoted Male Sentences</th>
<th>Tone of Content Toward Male Candidate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Quotes</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
<td>92 (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 Quotes</td>
<td>4 (27%)</td>
<td>112 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+ Quotes</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>45 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After removing any article that did not mention the male candidate, the total number of articles for this table came out to 285. The distribution here shows that although men still receive “No Quotes” in neutral articles 36 percent of the time, more of neutral articles (44 percent) quote the male candidate between 1-5 times. The variables had a slight relationship with a Tau-b value of –.106, and had a Chi Square of 12.689 (df = 4) with a significance level of .013. These results suggest that even with media coverage of female candidates that depict the candidates in a neutral tone, male candidates still have a greater opportunity to express themselves in their own words through the use of direct quotes.

When determining the effect of party as a factor in the number of quoted female sentences per article, analyses looked at the tone of content towards Democrats and the tone of content towards Republicans. The relationship between the number of quotes and the tone towards Democrats produced a Tau-b value of -.065 revealing the presence of a very weak relationship ($\chi^2 = 14.174$, df = 4, p = .007). Similar results occurred when analyzing the tone of the article’s content towards Republican candidates, as the Tau-b equaled -.096 ($\chi^2 = 15.471$, df = 4, p = .004). These results suggest that the party of the candidate only has a minor relationship to the number of times each candidate is quoted.

The next analysis looked at the number of quoted female sentences in relation to the tone of the article towards candidates of different status. The tone of content towards
the incumbent in relation to the number of female quotes produced a Tau-b value of - .066, suggesting that a very weak relationship existed. The Chi Square value of 19.105 had a significance level of .001, showing that the results varied from what the null hypothesis would have produced. Turning to the number of female quotes in relation to the tone of content towards the challenger, the Tau-b value came in at -.136. Here the Chi Square had a value of 8.322, but the significance of .080 suggested that the relationship did not have significance. The culmination of these results suggests that the number of directly quoted sentences from the female candidate has little relationship with the tone of the article in terms of the incumbent, and no relationship in terms of the challenger.

**Candidate of Primary Focus**

The candidate of primary focus in an article will likely influence various qualities and characteristics of the coverage of the candidate. When authors focus on one candidate more than the other, I suspect that gender stereotypes would effect the type of article written. In terms of the length of the article, I hypothesize that when the female candidate is of primary focus, the number of words per article would be less than when the male candidate is of primary focus. This would offer support for the idea that women receive less coverage than men, and when reporters do cover female candidates, the women are not covered thoroughly.

A contingency table showed a slight association between the length of the article and the gender of the candidate of primary focus.
Table 4. Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus by Article Length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Length</th>
<th>Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300 – 449 words</td>
<td>32 (30%)</td>
<td>10 (16%)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450 – 599 words</td>
<td>29 (28%)</td>
<td>19 (30%)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 – 749 words</td>
<td>20 (19%)</td>
<td>17 (27%)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750+ words</td>
<td>24 (23%)</td>
<td>17 (27%)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most articles that focused on the female candidate, 30 percent out of 105 total articles, fell in the smallest article length category of 300-449 words. This same category contrarily included the least number of male focused articles, only 16 percent of a total of 63. While the distribution among the shortest articles seems to support my hypothesis, the remainder of articles with a female candidate of primary focus had no pattern as to their association with article length. The Tau-c value showed this weak relationship with a value of .125. The relationship had a Chi Square value of 4.849 (df = 3), but the significance level was .183.

The next analysis of the candidate of primary focus and media coverage looked at the effect on the content of the articles. I suspected that when the female candidate was the primary focus of the article, there would be more mentions of the female candidate’s appearance than when the male candidate was of primary focus. This assumption derives from the idea that articles about the female candidate tend to include references to appearance, and thus an article focusing on the female candidate will include the most mentions of appearance. The statistics show that a weak relationship between these two variables existed, as the value of Phi was -.150. The Chi Square had a value of 2.866 (df
= 1), and .090 level of significance which suggests an insignificant relationship. I suspect that the small total number of references made to the female candidate’s appearance may have affected the lack of a relationship here.

**Table 5. Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus by Number of Mentions Made to Appearance of Female Candidate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Mentions Made to Appearance of Female Candidate</th>
<th>Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58 (92%)</td>
<td>63 (98%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When reporters made references to a candidate’s appearance, the mentions were typically made about the female, but the small number of articles in which these references were present made the relationship insignificant.

Based on the results of the above hypothesis, I would suspect that a strong relationship would also fail to exist between articles with the female candidate as primary focus, and the number of mentions made to the female candidate’s gender or family. Like appearance, both of these measures of article content only occurred a handful of times throughout the total number of articles. The presence of only a few cases would decrease the chances that a strong relationship would develop. This expectation held true, as the contingency table of the candidate of primary focus with mentions made about the female candidate’s gender produced a Phi value of - .174. Chi Square had a value of 3.864 (df = 1), and a significance of .049 that suggests that the observed frequencies differed from what the null hypothesis would have produced. The distribution of articles here paralleled the distribution between the articles focusing on the
female candidate and mentions of appearance. In the case of gender, mentions of the female candidate’s gender primarily occurred in articles that focused on the female candidate.

**Table 6. Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus by Number of Mentions of Gender of Female Candidate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Mentions of Gender of Female Candidate</th>
<th>Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Mention</td>
<td></td>
<td>57 (90%)</td>
<td>63 (98%)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or More Mentions</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 (10%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next contingency table looked at article content with respect to mentions of the family. The association between the candidate of primary focus and the number of mentions of the female candidate’s family produced a Phi value of -.310. This value suggests that a relationship exists between the variables, and a Chi Square value of 12.234 (df = 1) with a significance level of .000 shows that the relationship is significant. The distribution between these two variables shows that any mention of the female candidate’s family occurred in articles that focused primarily on the female candidate.

**Table 7. Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus by Number of Mentions of Family of Female Candidate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Mentions of Family of Female Candidate</th>
<th>Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Mention</td>
<td></td>
<td>52 (83%)</td>
<td>64 (100%)</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or More Mentions</td>
<td></td>
<td>11 (17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These results suggest that when an article makes reference to the woman’s family, the female candidate will likely be the primary focus of the article.

The subject of primary focus in the article represents another aspect of article content. Contingency tables were created to see if a relationship existed between the sex of the candidate of primary focus and the subject of primary focus. I hypothesized that when an article focuses on the male candidate, there would be a greater likelihood that the article would deal with policy or issues than when an article focused on the female candidate. This would support the claim that the media portrays men as more viable candidates who have more to say about policy proposals than women. Along these lines, I suspected that articles with the female candidate of primary focus would more likely fall under the category of profile pieces than when the male candidate was of primary focus. This would lend support to the idea that female candidates receive more coverage as anomalies with human-interest stories than as serious contenders for political office.

The second part of this hypothesis had some merit, as 7.4 percent of the articles that focused on the female candidate were designated as profiles compared to only 3 percent of the articles focusing on the male candidate. In terms of articles dealing with policy/issues, articles focusing on female candidate fell in this category 29 percent compared to only 23 percent of articles that focus primarily on the male. But overall, the association between the candidate of primary focus and the subject of primary focus showed no statistical relationship.
Table 8. Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus by Primary Focus of Article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Focus of Article</th>
<th>Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Events</td>
<td>15 (14%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy/Issues</td>
<td>32 (30%)</td>
<td>15 (24%)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horserace</td>
<td>39 (36%)</td>
<td>36 (57%)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profiles</td>
<td>8 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial/Opinion</td>
<td>6 (6%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandal/Crisis</td>
<td>8 (7%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The value of Lambda came in at .000, showing that no relationship existed between the variables. Chi Square had a value of 9.303 (df = 5) and a significance level of .098, suggesting that the null hypothesis could not be rejected. Despite these weak statistics, an interesting distribution of articles developed that suggests a relationship may still be present in this table. In terms of horserace coverage, articles focusing on the male candidate fell into the horserace category much more often than the articles focusing on the female (57% compared to 36%). Articles about campaign events, profiles, and editorial/opinions contrarily contained over twice as many articles focusing on the female candidate versus the male. While men have more articles in the horserace category and women have more coverage in policy/issues, without looking directly at the content of these articles it cannot be determined if this distribution helps or hinders female candidates.

The final analysis that looked at the effects of the sex of the candidate of primary focus compared this variable to variables that measured the tone of the article. If the media truly portrays female candidates unfairly with its coverage, I suspected that articles that had the female candidate as the primary focus would also have a negative tone of
content toward the female. This relationship did not actually exist, as the Lambda value came out to be .000. The Chi Square of 29.394 (df = 2) had a significance level of .000, suggesting that the frequencies observed here differed from what would be expected under the null hypothesis. Looking at the headline of the article in relation to the candidate of primary focus, a weak relationship did actually exist. The Lambda came out to be .096, and a Chi Square of 28.284 with a significance level of .000 showed that this relationship was significant. In terms of the tone of the headline toward the female, more headlines depicted the female in a positive manner than when the male candidate was of primary focus. Further, a majority of headlines (81 percent) when the male candidate was of primary focus did not even mention the male candidate in the headline. Female candidates contrarily received no mention only 37 percent of the time.

**Table 9. Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus by Tone of Headline Toward Female Candidate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone of Headline Toward Female Candidate</th>
<th>Gender of Candidate of Primary Focus</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Female: 7 (11%) Male: 0 (0%)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Female: 28 (44%) Male: 11 (17%)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Female: 5 (8%) Male: 1 (2%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Mention</td>
<td>Female: 23 (37%) Male: 52 (81%)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female: 63 Male: 64</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This suggests the media may not see male candidates as worthy of headline mentions, while the unusual presence of a female in a political campaign garners them more presence in the headlines.
Sex of the Reporter

The sex of the reporter writing the article represents another element that may effect the media coverage of female candidates. On the one hand, female reporters may have more sympathy toward women candidates, considering they likely had to overcome similar aspects of gender stereotypes to reach their current positions. This feeling would then lead to more favorable coverage of female candidates. On the other hand, female reporters may come across more critically toward female candidates in an attempt to have their writing taken more seriously, and to avoid appearing too partial toward their own gender.

In order to determine if there was any relationship between the sex of the reporter and the presence of gender stereotypes, I first looked at the association between female reporters and whether or not there were references made to the female candidate’s gender. A contingency table showed that both male and female reporters mentioned the female candidate’s gender only 5 percent of the time. The Phi value here came in at - .013, suggesting that a very weak relationship existed between the two variables. The Chi Square value equaled .044 ( df = 1) with a significance level of .833. These results suggest that the sex of the reporter has only a very minor relationship with whether or not the article included references to a candidate’s gender.

Similar results occurred when looking at the relationship between the sex of the reporter and whether or not the reporter made references to the female candidate’s family. Once again both male and female reporters made a similar amount of references to the female candidate’s family (7 percent by female reporters compared to 8 percent by male
reporters). These variables also showed a very weak relationship, as the Phi value equaled .024 ($\chi^2 = .139, df = 1, p = .709$).

A very weak relationship also occurred when looking at the sex of the reporter and the number of mentions made to the female candidate’s appearance. Phi came in at .011 to show that only a very minor relationship was present, and the Chi Square equaled .028 (df = 1) with a significance level of .866. As with the previous analyses, the percentage of references made to the female candidate’s family were relatively equivalent, as reporters of each sex made mentions of the candidate’s family only 4 percent of the time.

The final test focusing on the potential influence of the sex of the reporter dealt with the number of quoted sentences per article (regrouped into “No Quotes,” “1-5 quotes,” and “6+ quotes”) from the female candidate. As with the previous contingency tables, the statistics here showed a very weak relationship between the variables. Tau-c had a value of .006, showing that only a very slight relationship existed. The Chi Square equaled 1.264 (df = 2), and had a significance level of .531 that made it impossible to reject the null hypothesis. These series of tests suggest that the sex of the reporter has neither a positive nor a negative effect on the media coverage of the female candidate. Reporters of both sexes appear to make references to the female candidate’s appearance, family, and gender about the same number of times. These results suggest that when stereotypical references are present in media coverage, the sex of the reporter only has an extremely minor relationship with these variables.
Presence of “Female” Issues

The next series of relationships looks at the effect that the presence of female issues in an article has on the coverage given to female candidates. After initially listing the major issues discussed in each article, these issues were recoded as either a typically perceived “female issue” or what is generally seen as a “male issue”. The male issues included crime, economy, labor/jobs, and taxes, while the female issues were identified as education, the environment, gay rights, and healthcare. I would hypothesize that the greater number of female issues present in an article, the shorter the article length. This relationship would adhere to the idea that women receive less favorable coverage than men, seeing that the issues that play to their favor would receive fewer mentions than the ones considered “male issues”.

This proposition did not hold true in the statistical results, as the articles with the most female issues also tended to have a greater number of words.

Table 10. Total Number of Female Issues by Number of Words Per Article

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Words Per Article</th>
<th>Total Number of Female Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300–449 words</td>
<td>8 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>450–599 words</td>
<td>23 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600–749 words</td>
<td>12 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750+ words</td>
<td>12 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When an article did not include any female issues, 41 percent of the articles had a length of 450-599 words (the 2nd smallest grouping of article lengths). When an article discussed one female issue, most of these articles (29 percent) fell in the largest word count category of 750+ words. Articles that contained two female issues overwhelmingly
occurred between the 600-749 words category and the 750+ words category, with 46 percent in each. Pearson’s R for this relationship came in at .163, suggesting that a weak association does exist. The Chi Square equaled 15.397 (df = 6) and had a significance level of .017, showing that the relationship here has significance. While these results go against the original hypothesis, it might be the case that female issues are not usually the first to be discussed, and thus only show up in longer articles when the reporter has more time to get around to including them.

The next possible relationship looked for an association between the number of female issues and the candidate of primary focus. I hypothesized that an article containing female issues would similarly have the female candidate as the primary focus. This would show that female issues only receive attention when the article is already focused on the female candidate, and lack any mention in articles not focusing on the female. Instead, the results of the contingency table suggested that the amount of female issues had no relation to the candidate of primary focus. When the female candidate was of primary focus, 64 percent of the articles contained no female issues. Among articles that contained one female issue, 70 percent occurred when the female candidate was of primary focus. This relatively even distribution of female issues among articles that focused on the female candidate and those that did not show that a relationship between the two does not exist. The value of Pearson’s R shows a weak relationship of .034 between the variables, but a Chi Square of 1.864 (df = 2) and a significance level of .394 suggest that the observed frequencies did not differ from what you would expect to see under the null hypothesis. These statistics suggest that whether or not an article includes female issues has little to do with which candidate the article focuses on.
The final contingency table looked at the number of female issues in an article in relation to the tone of the content toward the female candidate. If an association exists here, I would think that the more female issues present in an article, the more positive the tone would be towards the female candidate. Over the course of a campaign, this relationship would lend support for the idea that female candidates have a greater likelihood of winning an election when female issues play a significant role in that election. If female issues lead to a more positive tone toward the female candidate, this relationship would offer support for the idea that women have a better chance at winning an election when they participate in a campaign that emphasizes “female” issues. As with the above tests, only a slight relationship exists between these two variables. Pearson’s R came out to be .062 to exemplify this weak relationship. The value of Chi Square equaled 2.444 (df = 4) with a significance level of .655, suggesting that the null hypothesis could not be rejected. This lack of a strong relationship here most likely occurred because a majority of the articles had a neutral tone toward the female candidate, while the handful of positive and negative articles were randomly distributed in relation to the number of female issues present.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of newspaper coverage in these four gubernatorial campaigns provides valuable insight into the treatment of female candidates by the media. The results did not show any glaring dependence on gender stereotypes, but the few exceptions to these results occurred at the expense of the women. While the gender of the candidate only had a slight influence on the measurements of article content, gender
was generally more influential than either party or candidate status for the majority of variables. One exception occurred in the number of mentions of the candidate’s gender, where the incumbency or challenger status of the candidate did have an affect on the results. The only other exception arose when looking at the number of references made to the candidate’s family, where the results fell higher on the side of the male candidate due to the unique nature of the race.

While these results do not suggest extraordinary disparities in the treatment of women candidates compared to men, they do show that gender continues to have a role in the coverage of females. The four cases analyzed here constitute a small sample, yet represent a variety of political campaigns. Gender affected the article content in all of these different campaigns, suggesting that similar results would occur when looking at additional gubernatorial races. The effect of gender observed here is additionally interesting due to the fact that women candidates won two of the three campaigns that placed a female candidate against a male candidate. The success of these women may have occurred because the campaign environment did not include many gender stereotypes. Gender may therefore have a stronger relationship to the coverage of female candidates when women do not win the election.

Looking beyond gubernatorial campaigns to the presidency, the extraordinary amount of media treatment surrounding this race will most likely magnify the effects found in gubernatorial campaigns. Women running for governor continue to represent a minority of those attempting to achieve political office, but they do have the advantage of not having to break down the gender barrier for the very first time. The so-called glass ceiling was broken cautiously in terms of the governor’s office, with the first female
governor achieving the position due to the death of the sitting governor, her husband (Rutgers CAWP). A woman has yet to move into the presidency, and this first step will remain the most important as well as the most difficult.

As women continue their quest for equality in political office, a candidate’s gender will remain one of the most visible factors. Voters may never reach a time where they become completely oblivious to the sex of the candidate, but ideally they will one day be able to view the difference of genders in the absence of stereotypes. The powerful role of the media will continue to make it an important component in the way citizens evaluate candidates, and the presence of stereotypes here will inevitably lead to an emphasis on stereotypes in the minds of voters. Ultimately it remains up to the American voters to break through the final barrier and elect a woman to the presidency. While the United States has moved toward greater equality of genders, the monumental event of selecting the first Madame President will not occur unless the media can present fair coverage and an equal depiction of all female candidates.
### Variables and Coding Technique for Content Analysis

<p>| <strong>Sex of Candidate of Primary Focus</strong> | The subject of each sentence in an article was determined to be the “Male” candidate, “Female” candidate, “Both” candidates or “Neither” candidate. If one of the candidates was the subject of a majority of sentences, that candidate was designated as the candidate of primary focus and the sex of the candidate was coded accordingly. If neither candidate had a clear majority, then the candidate of primary focus was coded as “Both” and the sex of the candidate was left blank. |
| <strong>Party of Candidate of Primary Focus</strong> | If an article had a candidate of primary focus (as determined by the above criteria), then the party of that candidate was recorded as either “Democrat” or “Republican”. If no candidate of primary focus existed, then the column was left blank. |
| <strong>Past Political Experience of Candidate of Primary Focus</strong> | If an article had a candidate of primary focus (as determined by the above criteria), then the political experience of the candidate was coded as “Never Held Office,” “Held Office Other Than Governor,” or “Current Governor”. |
| <strong>Type of Campaign</strong> | The type of campaign was determined by the gender and status of the two participating candidates, and was coded as “Male Incumbent vs. Female Challenger,” “Female Candidate vs. Female Candidate (Open Seat),” “Female Candidate vs. Male Candidate (Open Seat),” or “Female Incumbent vs. Male Challenger”. |
| <strong>Political Leaning of State in 2000 Presidential Election</strong> | The political leaning of the state was determined by which candidate received the electoral votes from that state in the 2000 Presidential Election. |
| <strong>Status of Candidate Who Won the Election</strong> | The status of the candidate who won the election was coded as “Female Challenger,” “Female Incumbent,” “Female Candidate (Open Seat),” “Male Challenger,” “Male Incumbent,” “Male Candidate (Open Seat)”. |
| <strong>Party of Candidate Who Won the Election</strong> | The party of the candidate who won the election was listed as either “Democrat” or “Republican”. |
| <strong>Length of Article</strong> | Article length was coded in terms of the number of words per article. If the word count was not included with the article, then the average number of words per line was determined and multiplied by the total number of lines in the article. |
| <strong>Type of Newspaper</strong> | The type of newspaper was based on which kind of newspaper initially published the story, and was coded as “Wire Service,” “National,” “Major City,” “Local,” or “Other”. |
| <strong>Number of Days Before Election</strong> | The number of days before the election was determined by counting the days from the date that the article was published until the day of the election. |
| <strong>Day of the Week</strong> | The day of the week was the day on which the article was published. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sex of Reporter</strong></th>
<th>The sex of the reporter was coded as either “Male”, “Female”, or “Unknown” (used if the name of the author did not clearly indicate the sex of the reporter, or if the name of the author was not listed on the article).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone of Content</strong></td>
<td>The tone was initially determined in relation to the Female Democrat, Female Republican, Male Democrat, or Male Republican present in each campaign. Each sentence was labeled as “Positive”, “Neutral”, or “Negative” depending on how the candidate was portrayed. If any category had a majority (more than 2/3), then that was designated as the overall tone of the article. In the case of mixed articles where one candidate was portrayed in both positive and negative terms, one category had to dominate 2/3 of the coverage in order for the article to be coded in that direction. Articles that lacked this 2/3 majority or evenly depicted the positive and negative aspects of a candidate were labeled as “Neutral”. The tone of the content was later recoded and regrouped in terms of the tone toward all females vs. males, and the tone toward all Democrats vs. Republicans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tone of Headline</strong></td>
<td>Each headline was coded as either “Positive”, “Neutral”, “Negative” or “No mention” depending on how the candidate’s name was featured in the headline. The type of verb used in the headline helped to indicate the tone, with verbs like “praised” coded as positive, “blamed” as negative, and “says” as neutral. The tone of the headline was also recoded and regrouped according to the tone toward all females vs. males, and the tone toward all Democrats vs. Republicans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate Name Mentioned in Headline</strong></td>
<td>If a candidate’s name was mentioned in the headline, it was coded as “Female Democrat,” “Female Republican,” “Male Democrat,” or “Male Republican.” A headline that referenced both candidates was coded as “Both,” and those with neither candidates as “Neither.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Focus of Article</strong></td>
<td>Articles were classified according to the primary focus of the content. “Campaign Events” articles depicted events attended by the candidates, “Policy/Issues” articles dealt with the candidate’s platform or campaign message, “Horserace Coverage” articles focused on aspects of the campaign that effect who was winning or losing the race, “Profile” articles looked at the personal lives of candidates, “Editorial/Opinion” articles included articles that had a clear argument toward one candidate, and “Scandal/Crisis” articles dealt with any type of public predicament the candidate faced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues Mentioned in Article</strong></td>
<td>Each issue discussed in an article (more than a brief mention of the word) was listed accordingly. Issues were later recoded as either “Male” or “Female,” based on the criteria that “Male Issues” generally include crime, economy, labor/jobs, and taxes, while “Female Issues” include education, the environment, gay rights, and healthcare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Times Article Directly Quotes Each Candidate</strong></td>
<td>A direct quote existed when the reporter included the candidate’s own words as a complete sentence. Partial sentences were only counted if the sentence formed an independent clause that was only one or two words away from being considered a complete sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of References to Appearance of Each Candidate</strong></td>
<td>References to a candidate’s appearance consisted of any mention of the hair, dress, makeup, or overall look of the candidate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Mentions of Family/ Role in Family of Each Candidate</strong></td>
<td>Mentions of family included any mention of a candidate’s family member, in addition to the candidate’s role as mother, father, sister, brother, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of References to Gender of Each Candidate</strong></td>
<td>References to gender occurred any time an article specifically described the candidate as male/female, man/woman, or masculine/feminine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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