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Breaking News: A Woman is Running

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BREAKING NEWS: A WOMAN IS RUNNING

AN HONORS THESIS

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

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Bridget F. Cummings

April 14, 2014

PROJECT TITLE:

Breaking News: A Woman is Running

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Abstract

As women are still underrepresented in legislative offices, it is important to examine the road it takes for them to get there. Many scholars have explored gender bias in the media when covering female candidates for elected office. Fowler and Lawless (2009) uncover bias in media coverage of candidates between 1990 and 1997 in *Looking for Sex in All the Wrong Places: Press Coverage and the Electoral Fortunes of Gubernatorial Candidates*. This paper replicates the method used by Fowler and Lawless (2009) to examine gubernatorial candidates between 2008 and 2014. The independent variable in my research is the gender bias in news coverage of candidates. The dependent variable in my research is successful candidacy. In order to identify any gender bias in news coverage of candidates, I will code articles from the most widely read newspapers in the gubernatorial candidate's state for personal traits coverage, women's issue coverage, personal background coverage, political background coverage, action coverage, and position coverage. By comparing my research with Fowler and Lawless, I find that many differences in the way male and female candidates are portrayed in newspaper articles can still be seen today. Using both female versus female and male versus female races, my findings suggest the possibility that females garner different coverage depending on the gender of their opponent. In addition, I find that females with the same experience as a male candidate are less successful in a gubernatorial race from 2008-2014. These findings suggest that, at the aggregate level, women receive a different type of media coverage than men and this may have an impact on the female candidate's success.

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 6 |
| Female Governors and Candidates | |
| Literature Review | 7 |
| Level of Office | |
| Variables | |
| News Medium | |
| Fowler and Lawless (2009) | |
| Use of Fowler and Lawless (2009) | |
| Method and Data | 20 |
| Choice of News Medium | |
| Method Replication | |
| Development of Coding Scheme | |
| Data Set | |
| Findings and Analysis | 24 |
| Comparing 1990-1997 with 2008-2014 | |
| Female versus female Races and Female versus male Races | |
| Vote Share and Candidate Quality | |
| Conclusion | 32 |
| Work Cited | 36 |

Illustrations

Figures

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | The Number of Mentions of Each Type of Press Coverage Garnered by Male and Female Candidates 2008-2014 | 25 |
| 2 | The Average Number of Mentions of Each Type of Press Coverage for Females in Female vs Female Races and Female vs Male Races 2008-2014 | 28 |
| 3 | Average Difference in Vote Share (Between Women and Men) and Female Candidate Quality | 31 |
| 4 | Average Difference in Vote Share (Between Women and Men) and Male Candidate Quality | 31 |

Table

| | | |
|---|----------|----|
| 1 | Appendix | 41 |
|---|----------|----|

Introduction

Female Governors and Candidates

The first female governor was Nellie Tayloe Ross, a Democrat from Wyoming, who served from 1925-1927. Ross was picked by Democrats to run after her husband died. There have been few female governors since this trailblazer. Today, nearly half of states have never had a female governor. Throughout American history, thirty-five women have served as governors in twenty-six states. In 2004 and 2007, the country saw the largest number of women serving simultaneously as governors: nine (Women Candidates 2014). All women running in an open-seat or as a challenger lost in the 2014 election with the exception of Gina Raimondo, who succeeded in her race for an open-seat in Rhode Island. All four female governors who ran for reelection were successful in 2014 (2014 General). The record number of women who filed their candidacy for state Governor was thirty-four in 1994. The largest number of primaries won by female candidates was in 1994 and this record has not been beaten in the past twenty years (History 2013). The lack of parity among men and women serving as state Governors is evident throughout history.

This under-representation of women in political leadership is an important area of study. Fox and Lawless (2005) point out that “women’s presence in our political institutions bears directly on issues of substantive and symbolic representation” (5). Because they make up half of the population, it is difficult for women’s interests to be fully represented if they are not serving in office at an equal number to men. By serving as elected officials, they are empowered to mobilize constituents, bring to the attention of the public issues that are important to them, and take action on policy priorities. In order to encourage this type of civic engagement for children, it is important that young girls and boys grow up with more inclusive ideas about who can lead.

Women's presence in public office allows them to serve as role models for more females to run. In addition, this area of study is especially important when comparing the United States to other countries. According to a study done by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2015), the United States is ranked 72nd in the world for women serving in national parliaments. Other countries are able to engage more women in politics and it is important that the United States follows their lead. It is essential that our country strive for parity among men and women serving in office.

As women are still underrepresented in legislative offices, it is important to examine the road it takes for them to get there. There are many possible explanations for the lack of women serving as elected officials. It may be the voting process, money, bias in the electorate, a lack of women running in the first place, or the structure of the legislative bodies. One widely studied explanation for the unequal representation of men and women in legislative offices is bias against women candidates in the media, particularly the news media. My proposed research question is, "Does the news media differentiate between male and female candidates in their coverage of campaigns for elected office?"

Literature Review

A great deal of scholarship has established the importance of news coverage for the success of women running for elected office (Banwart, Bystrom, and Robertson 2003; Fowler and Lawless 2009; Kahn 1994). Flowers, Haynes, and Crespino (2003) demonstrate the ability of the public to learn substantive information about candidates through news coverage. Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber (2013) point out that previous research "predicts that challenges to women who seek political office may be amplified by the quantity, the tone, and the issue focus of news coverage" (716).

Impact of News

Issues are framed by the news in a way that can affect the outcome of a race for a candidate. The media will narrow its coverage to the most viable candidates by observing who is winning and who holds a newsworthy position. In addition, candidates structure their message so that it frames the nature of message transmission (Flowers, Hayes, and Crespin 2003, 261-263).

Scheufele and Tweeksbury (2007) explain the three models of political communication: framing, agenda setting, and priming. They define framing as “how an issue is characterized in news reports that influences how it is understood by audiences” (Scheufele and Tweeksbury, 11). Journalists are able to discuss certain aspects of a candidate and explain complex issues more narrowly through framing. Agenda setting is described as the “strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences” (Scheufele and Tweeksbury, 11). Depending on status in a race, the news may choose to focus on one candidate more than others. Scheufele and Tweeksbury demonstrate how priming occurs when people’s standards for political evaluations of leaders and governments is influenced by news content (11). This means that mass media can shape the considerations that people take into account when assessing candidates.

Level of Office

Scholars have researched news media coverage of women candidates by studying many different levels of office, including local, state, and national. While presidential elections provide scholars with a broader range of data from the national media, there are more women candidates in statewide elections and thus more cases to be studied at state and local levels

One body of scholarship focuses on female candidates for a presidential bid. Burns, Eberhardt, and Merolla (2013) explored perceptions of Sarah Palin as 2008 vice presidential candidate. Fletcher and Kapur (2008) research the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* portrayal of 2008 presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. Similarly, Ritchie (2013) looks at Clinton's campaign and the gender stereotypes of its media coverage. A content analysis in the *New York Times* of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin is examined by Meeks (2013). Miller and Peake (2013) also look at coverage of Sarah Palin's vice-presidential campaign and researches the press effects, public opinion, and gendered coverage of that campaign. Pamela Walsh (2009) compares the newspaper coverage in Detroit of vice presidential candidates Joseph Biden and Sarah Palin. Differentiating their research from the large number of scholarly works that cover the 2008 campaign, Heldman, Carrol, and Olson (2000) examine Elizabeth Dole's bid for the Republican presidential nomination. Meeks (2012) compares the print media coverage of two female presidential candidates and two female senatorial candidates. She analyzes the news coverage of Elizabeth Dole, Claire McCaskill, Hillary Clinton, and Sarah Palin from 1999 until 2008 as each competed in two elections in that time period. Many of the scholars who analyzed presidential bids found that female candidates garnered more gender label coverage than their male competitors. They saw that the media frames influenced perceptions of the female candidate's feminine and masculine traits.

Other scholars examine print media coverage of female candidates and office holders for congressional offices. Gershon (2013) does a multi-methodological study of the nature and the implications of the media's treatment of Anglo, Latina, and African American congresswomen. Gershon concluded out that minority congresswomen face a unique set of barriers in holding elective office as they are a small proportion of the legislative body (1). Likewise, Lee (2013)

analyzes Midwestern congresswomen's self-presentation. Arbour and College (2013) and Minozzi (2014) study the campaign messages of House and Senate campaigns. Specifically, they look at races from 2000 to 2004 and develop a measure that determines if candidates have a reputation on certain issues that have developed over time (Arbour and College 2013). Overall, most of the research on females running for congressional office finds the media uses differential treatment when covering men and women and Anglo congresswomen and Latina or African congresswomen.

Many scholars examine the print media coverage of women candidates for both gubernatorial and senatorial offices. Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber (2013) discuss the way female candidacy shapes the coverage of Senate and Gubernatorial races. They hypothesize that female candidates may face great challenges establishing their qualifications because of the type of personal trait coverage they garner. Similarly, Hendren (2005) conducts a content analysis of print media coverage of six male and female candidates for statewide elective office. Jalalzai (2006) examines newspaper coverage of gubernatorial and senatorial candidates running between 1992 and 2000 and compares findings with Kahn's (1994) research to see how media coverage differs depending on candidate gender and the type of office sought. Kahn's work differs from Jalalzai's study as it includes television ads in addition to print media. Jalalzai finds that newspaper coverage of candidates has become increasingly gender-balanced. Adding to the collection of scholarly work on statewide elections, the media's portrayal of female candidates in statewide campaigns in 1994 is examined by Smith (1997). Aside from Jalalzai's findings, research on the senate and gubernatorial level of candidacy found that female candidates are more likely to garner trait coverage and less likely to garner issue coverage.

Other bodies of scholarship focus solely on female candidates in either gubernatorial or senatorial races. Kahn and Kenney (2002) look at newspaper coverage of Senatorial campaigns in the United States. They look for slanted information in favor of the endorsed candidate on the editorial page. The reason that Kahn and Kenney chose to study Senate races is that Senate campaigns generate more coverage in local press. The authors point out how most metropolitan newspapers must cover only Senate races because their readers are from different House congressional districts (383). On the other hand, Windett (2014) examines female gubernatorial candidates from 1978 until 2008 in both primary and general elections. Sullivan (1998) also conducts research on governor's races and analyzes media coverage of California gubernatorial candidate, Dianne Feinstein's, 1990, 1992, and 1994 campaigns. Kahn and Kenney find that newspaper coverage of campaigns is affected by editorial positions. Windett and Sullivan both conclude that the gender of the candidate influences the strategies each candidate will attempt on the campaign trail.

An important element of this topic is gender-office congruency. Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber (2013) attempt to fill the neglected research gap in the level and type of office women seek. Specifically, they use empirical research to examine "whether the type of office women seek, in conjunction with the gender of their opponents, may influence the focus of news coverage" (Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber, 717). Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber hypothesize that news stories about gubernatorial races will garner more trait coverage (relative to issue and horse race coverage) than news stories about senate races (717). The authors explore trait coverage as mentions of a candidate's gender, children, marital status, personality, and physical attributes (Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose and Weber, 716). They come to this hypothesis because gubernatorial contests are more trait-based contests. Kahn (1994) and

Schaffner (2005) also explore how the level of office can impact coverage. They explain that state executive office races involve more domestic issues like education and health care at which women are stereotypically thought to be skilled. Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber point out that news coverage of gubernatorial races may be more trait-oriented than senate races because voters may think differently about the importance of personal traits (717). Overall, these authors find that gender-office congruency is an important aspect of this research and women are less likely to garner issue attention in gubernatorial campaigns.

Variables

There are many different ways to study the news media coverage of female candidates. Arbour and College (2013) look at how a candidate's reputation is developed through campaign messages and conclude that when a candidate has developed a reputation on a certain issue he or she is more likely to highlight that issue to voters than a candidate who has not developed this reputation (1022). Burns, Eberhardt, and Merolla (2013) also look into campaign messages when they examine feminine and masculine stereotypes of Sarah Palin by studying the framing of her campaign's information and conclude that she benefited most when perceived as high on both masculine and feminine traits (687). While analyzing press coverage of women candidates for statewide office, Kahn (1994) uses political advertisements of candidates as an independent variable and establishes that there is a difference in the press treatment of male and female candidates that may hinder women when they seek statewide elective office (154). Bauer and Krupnikov (2014) also look at advertisements when they explore the relationship between candidate gender and negative campaign ads. They find that women may face added constraints but gender stereotypes are highly dependent on campaign context. On the other hand, Minozzi (2014) studies race competitiveness and salience as independent variables to determine what

issues candidates campaign on. All of these scholars found that the campaigns' portrayal of women candidates is an important independent variable in the success of women running for office.

One independent variable used by multiple scholars is the frequency of coverage in a newspaper. When examining the media's treatment of minority congresswomen, Gershon (2013) considers the frequency of coverage. Gershon analyzes the average number of articles a candidate receives, average number of name mentions, and average number of challenger name mentions and finds that frequency of coverage may be related to district factors as minority women are more likely to run in less competitive races that garner less campaign coverage or fewer editorial endorsements (704-706). Smith (1997) also considers the frequency of coverage in newspaper articles by examining the mean column inches and the percent of days with headline mention (73). Smith concludes that systematic gender-based patterns are not always disadvantageous to women and are not as prevalent as previous years (71). Jalalzai (2006) looks at the quantity of coverage by considering the total number of paragraphs published divided by the number of weeks between September 1 and Election Day (617). Jalalzai points out that quantity of coverage is important because the media has the ability to influence how recognizable a candidate's name is when covering the candidate (616). However, Jalalzai acknowledges that the quantity of coverage is not as important as the quality of coverage a candidate receives.

Another independent variable is the endorsement of the major newspaper in a candidate's district. Kahn and Kenney (2002) study the effect of the endorsement decision of a newspaper on the coverage of incumbent Senators. They look at how information on the non-editorial pages can be slanted in favor of the candidate endorsed on the editorial page. This is usually seen

through the tone of the coverage of the endorsed candidate by the newspaper. Kahn and Kenney point out that “one of the essential elements of an impartial press in the United States is the wall of separation between the editorial pages and pages devoted to the news” (381). Gershon (2012) considers whether or not congresswomen are endorsed by a newspaper because the endorsement can be seen as a way to build and maintain voter support.

Many scholars conduct a content analysis of the type of newspaper coverage a candidate receives. Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose and Weber (2013) operationalize this coverage with multiple variables. They look at whether an article is a horse race/strategy piece, an issue story, or a candidate trait story (Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose and Weber, 717). Gershon (2012) conducts a content analysis of the type of newspaper coverage and considers the primary topic of the articles. She looks at whether the topic is the campaign, issues, legislative activities or district activities. In addition, Gershon studies the tone of the coverage (705). Heldman (2005) considers whether the newspaper coverage is a positive, negative, or neutral portrayal of the candidate. Heldman, Carroll, and Olson (2000) explore the percentage of traits used in describing a candidate, which were positive, neutral, and negative. Also, the authors look at the percentage of in-depth stories about a candidate that mention appearance, personality traits, and aspects of family life (Heldman, Carroll, and Olson 2005, 325). Jalalzai (2006) researches horserace coverage, viability, and issue attention exploring issue attention, by examining female and male coding in news stories. Female coding is mentions of childcare, unemployment, welfare, poverty, healthcare, education, women’s minority rights, gun control, drug abuse, and the environment. She uses male coding as mentions of foreign policy, international issues, defense, economics and finance, agriculture, and crime. Gender-neutral coverage issues are campaign finance reform, transportation, gambling, and religion (Jalalzai, 622) and concludes

that there is no statistically significant differences between coverage of men and women. Meeks (2012) also investigates masculine versus feminine issues. First, Meeks explores masculine and feminine labels. Meeks codes feminine issues as discussions on education, health care, reproductive rights, and women's issues such as equal rights or pay. Masculine issues are discussions on military/defense/war, crime, foreign affairs, and economy. Lastly, Meeks points out the gender traits. Masculine traits are discussions about the candidate's leadership, rationality, decisiveness, aggressiveness, and independence. On the other hand, feminine traits contained a discussion on the candidate's compassion, emotionality, honesty, congeniality, and altruism (Meeks, 63-64). Meeks concludes that women receive more news coverage and the gendered gap in coverage was prevalent for issue and trait coverage. In general, scholars who use content analysis found differences between coverage of men and women and Anglo and Latina or African women.

Many scholars looked to control variables when assessing news media coverage of candidates. Jalalzai (2006) points out that "it is essential to control for candidate status because incumbents may receive additional coverage just by carrying out their official duties" (615). Each race Jalalzai examines is divided into a type that controls for candidate sex and status. They are separated by man incumbent versus woman challenger, man incumbent versus man challenger, woman incumbent versus man challenger, woman incumbent versus woman challenger, man versus man in open-seat race, man versus woman in an open-seat race, and woman versus woman in an open-seat race. After this, the races are coded as competitive or uncompetitive (Jalalzai, 610-611). Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber (2013) also use election-level control variables. The authors identify incumbency versus open-seat status along with the length of time an incumbent running has been in office. Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and

Weber also consider contest-level factors. This helps them distinguish whether a male or female is running and whether it is a gubernatorial race or senate race (718). Smith (1997) used dummy variables in his regression to control for whether the race was open or not and what the sexes of the candidates were (73). Additionally, Kahn and Kenney (2002) control for competitiveness in their analysis of news media portrayal of candidates (383). Overall, these scholars found that when a control variable is held constant, they are better equipped to analyze the relationship between certain independent and dependent variables. In many scenarios, the authors controlled for the type of newspaper, timing of the race, type of race, and type of candidate in order to reveal gender bias in coverage of candidates.

News Medium

Most scholars utilize print media as the news medium to analyze media's portrayal of candidates. Jalalzai (2006) explains that "newspaper coverage is generally analyzed because newspapers tend to include more stories on state-level elections than television" (609). Most research covers statewide campaigns and newspapers are an accessible tool to find data. Goldenberg and Traugott (1987) point out that newspapers contain more information about statewide campaigns than from television. Differentiating from most of these scholars, Ritchie (2013) looks at online media. Ritchie explains that "research has shown that television, radio, and print media coverage of American political candidates has consistently relied on gender stereotypes that undermine the campaigns of women politicians. However, portrayals of female candidates in online media remain largely unexplored" (102). In addition, Sullivan (1998) researches campaign television advertisements of a gubernatorial candidate. Sullivan looks into the shift in media of communication from print to electronic sources. Kahn (1994) examines televised political advertisements along with content in newspapers. In general, scholars found

that the use of print media yields the largest and most accessible amount of coverage of candidates in statewide elections.

Fowler and Lawless (2009)

Fowler and Lawless (2009) uncover bias in media coverage in their research on gubernatorial races in the 1990s. By coding more than 1,300 newspaper articles for 27 gubernatorial races in which a female candidate held a major party nomination between 1990 and 1997, Fowler and Lawless uncover a gap in most research on this topic as they consider position taking and action claims as a way to assess gender differences in media coverage. By considering patterns of communication, they are able to look at the impact of how candidates' presentation of themselves manifests into reports on candidates' political statements (521). They hypothesize that coverage of women will emphasize "appearance, personality, roles as mother and wife, political viability and experience, and advocacy for 'women's issues'" while coverage of men will focus on "professional backgrounds, credentials, and prior office-holding experiences" (Fowler and Lawless, 521).

The authors develop a dataset with 27 races. Fourteen of the races were open seats, three involved female incumbents, and six produced female governors. None of these races involved two women opposing each other. The articles came from the most widely circulated newspaper in the candidates' state and were compiled through Lexis-Nexis, Dialog, and microfiche. These articles were published in the two weeks following the primary and the two weeks prior to the general election. Due to strong partisan overtones, this dataset does not include editorials, op-ed columns, or letters to the editor (Fowler and Lawless, 522).

Fowler and Lawless distinguish between action mentions and statements about positions. Action mentions include a claim that the candidate has done something specific or a quote of the

candidate asserting to have undertaken a particular task or goal. In addition, action mentions may include statements about specific programs a candidate promises to implement when elected or noteworthy achievements in private life. The authors distinguish statements about positions as candidates' opinions about issues or critiques of their opponents' beliefs (Fowler and Lawless, 523).

Additionally, Fowler and Lawless consider content variables including conventional measures of sex differences on four dimensions. First, they track references to gendered personal traits such as appearance, mannerisms, personality, and marital and parental status. Second, the authors keep track of references to women's issues such as health, education, child welfare, and family policy. Next, Fowler and Lawless count references to personal background attributes including professional, economic, and family connections. Last, they count mentions of political background and prior office-holding experience (Fowler and Lawless, 523).

The authors find that gendered content did not predict differences in male and female candidates' performance at the polls. However, they find the gendered content estimated the disparity in votes at the aggregate level (net change), indicating an influence of gendered institutions. Comparing action and position coverage, the authors found a dramatic gender difference as women received more coverage than men for their positions and men were nearly twice as likely as women to receive action coverage. Fowler and Lawless point out that this leads to a perception of men as "doers" (Fowler and Lawless, 523). After controlling for the characteristics of the contest, state, and newspaper, a candidate's sex did not predict the majority of the measures of newspaper content. The authors found that it was not significant in predicting coverage of personal traits, personal background or political background. They were surprised to find that coverage of men contained more "women's issues" than coverage of women did.

Fowler and Lawless find that the institutional pull of incumbency is strong as inexperienced candidates received more attention to their personal traits, women's issues, and personal background (, 525). The authors conclude, "the overall pattern of news coverage of races involving male and female gubernatorial candidates, however, reveals at least modest direct and indirect gender disparities" (Fowler and Lawless, 525). They find there is an impact of gendered contextual effects on vote share and evidence to prove women are disadvantaged in gubernatorial elections overall. When considering press coverage and electoral success, the authors find that after controlling for press coverage and contextual effects, female gubernatorial candidates consistently fared worse than men. They find that there are non-observable influences related to a candidate's sex that impact performance and outcome (Fowler and Lawless, 526).

Use of Fowler and Lawless (2009)

Many scholars use the work of Fowler and Lawless. Windett (2014) utilizes Fowler and Lawless (2009), Kahn (1994), and Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) as examples of analysis of newspaper coverage which shows how newspapers are biased in their coverage of women candidates and that newspaper coverage lacks focus on actual policy positions of women candidates (Windett 2014, 636). Lawrence and Rose (2013) also use Fowler and Lawless as an example of the methodological innovation that is used to have a better understanding of the interaction of women candidates and the media. They explain Fowler and Lawless' understanding of how greater attention to political context will bring scholarly payoffs when considering women candidates and the media (2009, 685). Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber (2013) also address Fowler and Lawless' explanation of an emerging consensus among scholars to focus on political context. They also point out Fowler and Lawless' emphasis on level and type of office women seek as contextual characteristics (716). Fox and Lawless (2011)

also address their previous work when explaining the bias that researchers continue to uncover in electoral politics. They point out that Fowler and Lawless (2009) examine how campaigns show that gender stereotypes affect media coverage negatively. In general, these scholars find that Fowler and Lawless' methodology is useful for further research; their awareness of political context is important.

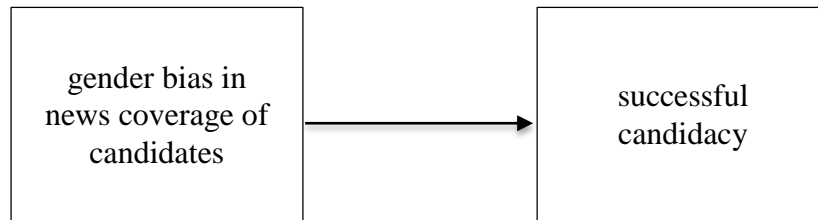
Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber (2013) use Fowler and Lawless' (2009) electoral competition control variable. They explain Fowler and Lawless' explanation that competition leads to a higher overall volume of election news (717). Lastly, Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber (2013) look to the natural logarithm of circulation that Fowler and Lawless use. They explain how the circulation can control for media penetration, which can influence the volume and characteristics of campaign coverage (Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose, and Weber, 719). Fowler and Lawless' use of control variables is utilized by these authors in their research analysis of campaign coverage.

Hayes (2011) analyzes newspaper's portrayal of candidates and has similar findings of Fowler and Lawless (2009). He finds that sex did not shape coverage portrayals of candidate traits. Hayes concludes that media did not portray male and female candidates according to their gender stereotypic roles. Hayes uses Fowler and Lawless to reveal similarities between findings of the past and his own findings about candidate traits.

Method and Data

I expect there will be a difference in the news coverage of female candidates and male candidates running in gubernatorial races. I also hypothesize that this difference will influence whether or not the candidate is successful in their bid for gubernatorial office. I will attempt to

study the relationship between these ideas. The independent variable in my research is the gender bias in news coverage of candidates. The dependent variable in my research is successful candidacy.



Choice of News Medium

This study examines major state newspapers because their coverage is typically more accessible and relevant than that provided by television advertisements. National television networks only provide minimal coverage of individual gubernatorial races and the local stations offer less coverage than newspapers. If I cannot find the most widely distributed newspaper in a state, I will use the widest circulation online substitutes (Fowler and Lawless 2009, 532). I will find newspaper articles on Access World News and Lexus Nexis Academic Universe through the College of St. Benedict and St. John’s University library system.

Method Replication

This thesis will replicate the method of content analysis that Fowler and Lawless use. Fowler and Lawless are cited as an example of work that examines the relationship between gender and news media. Their method is the first to consider position taking and action claims as a way to assess gender differences in media coverage. In addition to revealing any gender bias in newspaper, this method takes into consideration the different ways to control for the type of race and newspaper.

Development of Coding Scheme

In order to measure the news coverage of candidates, this paper considers many different factors. When coding a newspaper article, this study will observe personal traits coverage (number of references in an article to the candidate's personal attributes, such as appearance, mannerisms, personality, and marital status and parental status), women's issue coverage (number of references in an article about "women's issues"), personal background coverage (number of references in an article to the candidates' professional or economic background, or political relatives), political background coverage (number of references in an article to the candidate's political background), action coverage (number of references in an article to the candidate's past accomplishments or statements of intended action), and position coverage (number of references in an article to the candidate's opinions or statements of general support or opposition). This paper will also observe the difference in vote share between women and men (percentage of the two party vote received by the woman minus the percentage of the two party vote received by the man), Republicans and Democrats (percentage of the two party vote received by the Republican minus the percentage of the two party vote received by the Democrat). Characteristics of the candidate, such as sex (woman (1) or a man (0)), political party (Democrat (1) or Republican (0)), candidate quality (indicates the candidate's level of previous political experience ranging from none (0) to incumbent governor (5)), open seat (open seat (1) or not (0)), primary month (indicates calendar month of the primary), coverage right before the election (indicates whether the article immediately follows the primary (1) or comes just prior to the general election (2)), whether it is a female or male incumbent, and Republican or Democrat incumbent. This paper will look at the difference between the candidate's quality between men and women (indicates whether the woman has more experience (1), the same

amount of experience (0), or less experience (-1) than her male opponent). I will also look at the difference between candidate quality between Republicans and Democrats (indicates whether the Republican has more experience (1), the same amount of experience (0), or less experience (-1) than his/her Democratic opponent). This thesis considers characteristics of the state, such as the percentage of women in state legislature and normal vote (percentage of the vote that went to the Republican gubernatorial candidate in the previous three elections). Characteristics of the newspaper, such as presidential election year and total number of paragraphs in the article will be researched. Additionally, the difference in women's issue coverage (total number of references to women's issues that a female candidate received minus the total number of references to women's issues that a male candidate received in a given race) will be observed. Lastly, this paper will measure the difference in position coverage (the total number of references to women's opinions or statements of general support or opposition that a female candidate received minus the total number of such references a male candidate received in a given race). These measurements were found in the appendix of Fowler and Lawless (2009, 529-531).

Data Set

Over 360 newspaper articles for ten gubernatorial races were coded. These gubernatorial races all occurred between 2008 and 2014 and all had a female candidate who had a major party endorsement. These races were identified through researching each state's elections from 2007 to 2014 and only races containing at least one woman running with a major party endorsement were examined. This data set differs from that of Fowler and Lawless (2009) because it includes fewer races but two races with female versus female and they have only male versus female. Because there were not any gubernatorial races in 2007 involving woman candidates, this data set covers a seven-year period while Fowler and Lawless look at races in an eight-year period.

At least one race from each year in this period was chosen; half of these races were successful for the female candidate and seven were open seat races. None of the female gubernatorial candidates in the races were incumbents running for reelection. According to *National Geographic*, three races were in the southwest region, 5 five were in the northeast region, and two were in the southeast region of the United States (*National Geographic* 2014).

Content analysis of newspaper articles provided a unique data set. The total number of searched articles was 861. The total number of articles I coded was 362. I did not consider any editorial articles or opinion pieces. In order to determine whether an article was an editorial or opinion piece, I looked at the section the article came from or found a reference in the article stating that it was an editorial or opinion. Most of the newspapers I analyzed were found in Access World News, however, I used Lexis-Nexis when I could not find a newspaper in Access World News. I found the most widely circulated newspaper of each state from the Mondo Times, a worldwide news media guide (Mondo Times 2015). I did all content coding using the appendix of Fowler and Lawless (2009). In order to determine the quality of the gubernatorial candidates, I used the same type qualifications for each candidate in order to remain consistent.¹

Findings and Analysis

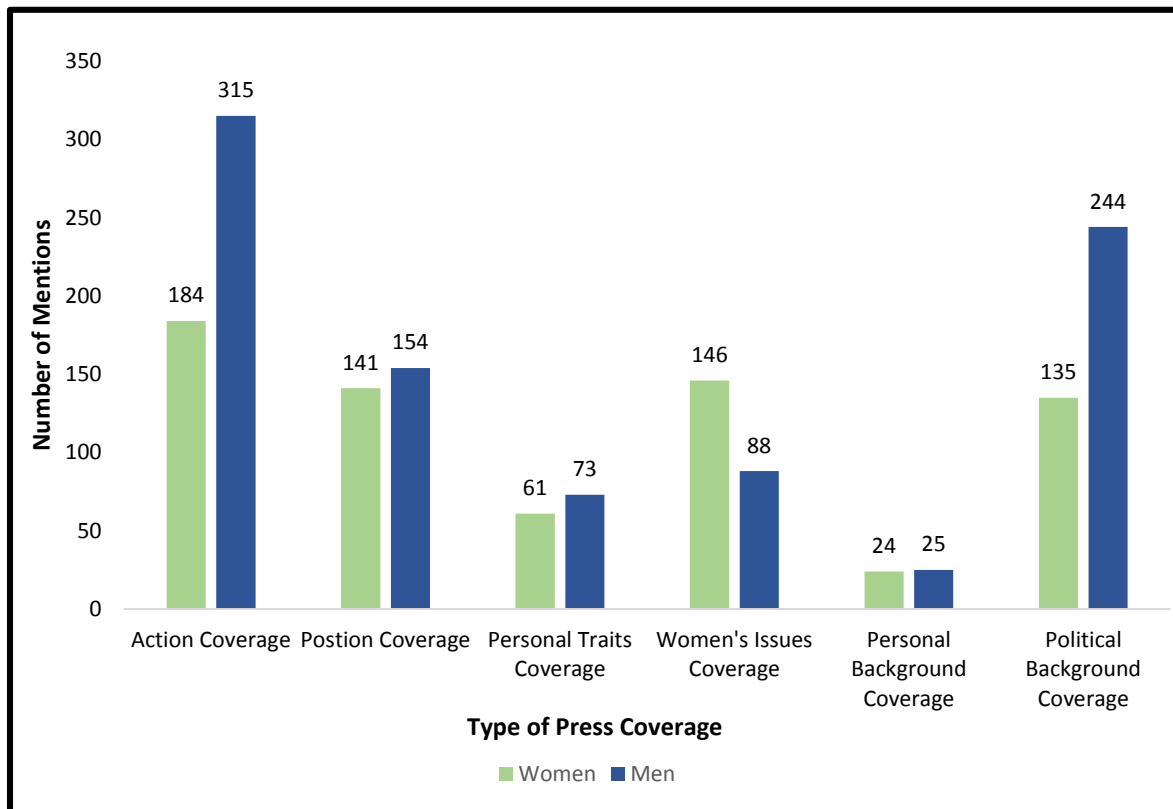
Comparing 1990-1997 with 2008-2014

First, the number of mentions in each type of press coverage garnered by male and female gubernatorial candidates was analyzed by only observing the female versus male races. The sum of each type of press coverage for each candidate was found by adding the primary

¹ For further information see Appendix 1, Table A.

mentions with the general election mentions. After this, the male and female candidates' press coverage was totaled to find the overall number of mentions for men and women (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Number of Mentions of Each Type of Press Coverage Garnered by Male and Female Candidates 2008-2014 (compiled by author).



There are many similarities between the number of mentions of each type of press coverage garnered by male and female gubernatorial candidates that Fowler and Lawless (2009) found and what I found looking in recent years (Figure 1). Both sets of research reveal far more action coverage for male candidates than female candidates. Fowler and Lawless found women

garnered 57.7% of the action coverage that men received. I found that female candidates garnered 58% of the action coverage that men received from 2008-2014. At least at the aggregate level, men are perceived in a more action oriented way than women. Fowler and Lawless explain possible reasons for this stating, “Perhaps reporters selectively screened out women’s past and proposed actions in favor of a more passive portrayal of their issue positions. Or perhaps men running for governor highlighted their actions more aggressively through advertising and public statements” (523).

Another similarity between the two findings is the close number of personal background mentions for both men and women. Fowler and Lawless find men garnered 514 mentions of personal background while women garnered 461 mentions of personal background (90% of the mentions men received). My data suggests that men received 25 mentions of personal background while women received 24 personal background (96% of the mentions men received). While my study yields a much smaller sample size, both do not see major differences in the number of times a man or woman’s professional or economic background, or political relatives are mentioned. This may indicate that the candidates and/or media are placing similar emphasis on personal background for men and women.

There are many differences between the number of mentions of each type of press coverage garnered by male and female gubernatorial candidates that Fowler and Lawless found and what I found. Men received more coverage about women’s issues from 1990-1997 and from 2008-2014 I found female candidates received more coverage about women’s issues. The difference between the amount Fowler and Lawless (2009) found male candidates received (205) than women received (182) is not large. However, I found that women received 146 women’s issue mentions and men received 88 women’s issue mentions. Fowler and Lawless suggest

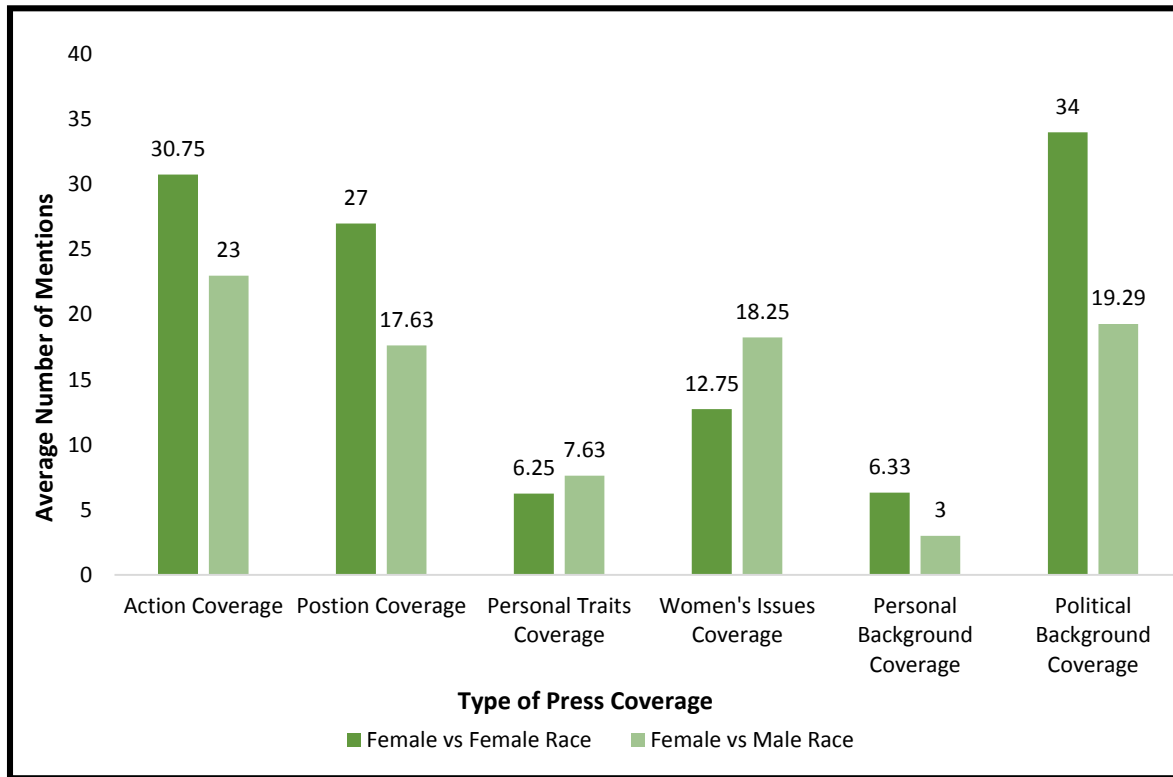
“men adjusted to the presence of female candidates by calibrating their attention to “women’s issues” to match or exceed their opponents—or at least that is how the press reported it” (524). They also mention that women may have lost their advantage gained from focusing on health, education, or children (Fowler and Lawless 524). If this was true from 1990-1997, my data reveals that something may have changed. Perhaps women have begun to take advantage of gains from focusing on women’s issues or the press is less frequently mentioning women’s issues for men as a way to adjust for the presence of a female candidate.

The number of position coverage that men and women garnered was different for Fowler and Lawless than it was from 2008-2014. Fowler and Lawless found that women garnered more position coverage than men. From 2008-2014, I found that men garnered more position coverage than women. This may indicate a change in either the way the candidates are portraying themselves or the way the media is portraying them. However, position coverage is usually associated with political experience. Female gubernatorial candidates may be more experienced than they were in the 1990’s.

Female versus Female Races and Female versus Male Races

Next, I observed the difference between female versus female races and male versus female races. To do this, I found the average number of mentions of each type of press coverage for females in these races (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The Average Number of Mentions of Each Type of Press Coverage for Females in Female versus Female Races and Female versus Male Races 2008-2014 (compiled by author).



The comparison between female versus female races and female versus male races in Figure 2 reveals how the media may portray females differently based on the gender of the two candidates. The biggest difference between the female versus female races and female versus male races is revealed when looking at the average number of political background coverage. Females in female versus female races saw an average of 34 mentions about political background while females in female versus male races saw an average of 19. This may signify a difference in the way a female discusses her background (personal or political) or the way the media discusses a female's background based on who her opponent is. In female versus male races, it may be preferred to discuss the candidates' professional or economic background, or political relatives rather than the candidate's political background. Perhaps the political background is

needed more in a female versus female race because the candidates need to justify their political viability. Another possibility is that the absence of a male in the race yields more time for the women to discuss their political background or the media to cover their political background.

Another differentiation that is seen in Figure 2 is the average number of position mentions. Female candidates in female versus female races on average garnered 19 more mentions about their positions on issues. Fowler and Lawless point out that “women will use the relational strategy of position taking, while men will focus on credit claiming for action” (2009, 521). Perhaps when female candidates are challenging a female candidate, they focus more on their position rather than when they are up against a male candidate who tends to be credit claiming. The media may focus on the female candidate’s statements of support or opposition rather than past or future actions when there is not a male candidate in the race. It is important to consider the way that candidate quality interplays with position taking. If a candidate is very experienced, he or she will have many past accomplishments to speak to and may have an understanding of how to express their future intentions. The male candidates in my data set had a higher candidate quality than the female candidates. This could lead to the dialogue of the race involving more position mentions than action mentions.

On average, a female candidate in a female versus female race garnered more overall mentions than a female candidate in a female versus male race. According to Figure 2, female candidates in female versus female races received far more coverage in every category except women’s issue coverage and personal trait coverage. In these two categories, female candidates received close to the same average amount of coverage in both types of races. This is an important finding for female gubernatorial candidates. According to my findings, newspaper articles will focus more on details about the female candidate than other factors in the race when

she is up against another female. Since candidates may look to mentions in the newspaper as a way to increase name recognition and allow the public to get acquainted with them, they may benefit more as a candidate in a female versus female race.

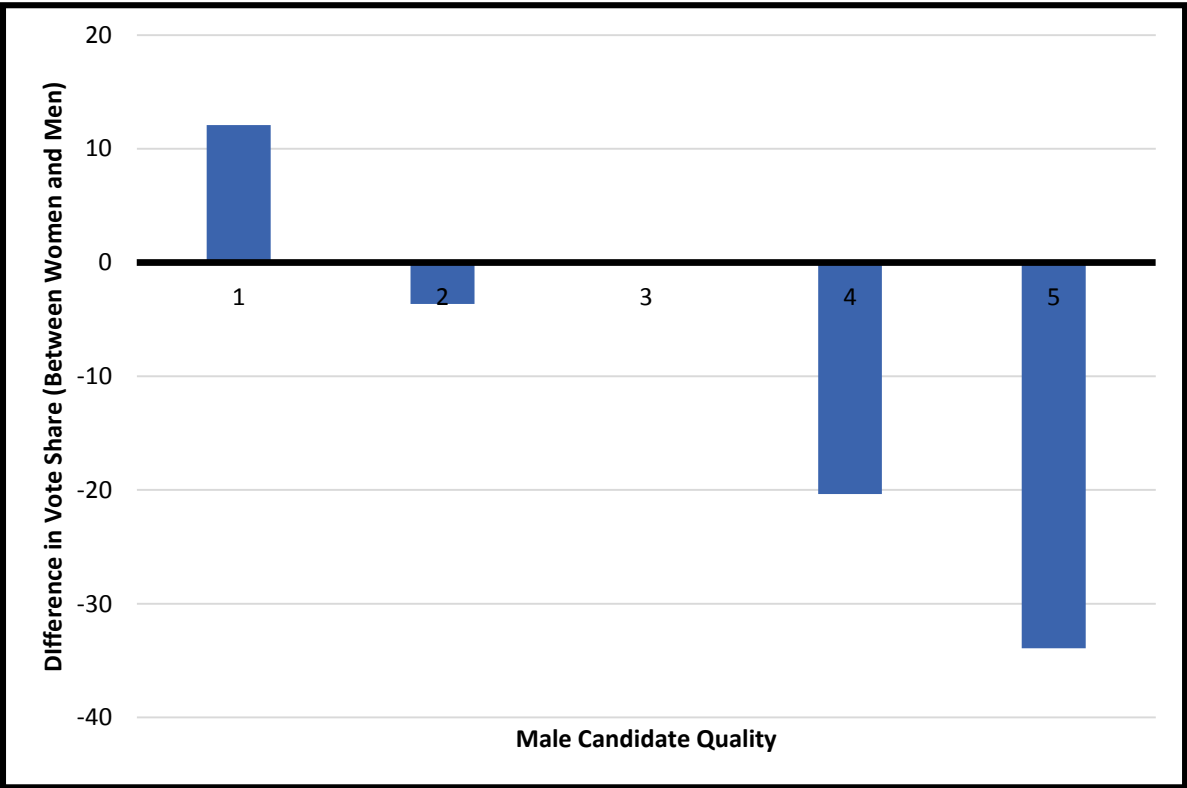
Vote Share and Candidate Quality

I then looked at the relationship between vote share and candidate quality. I wanted to see if there was a difference in how this relationship looks for male candidates versus female candidates. In order to calculate this, I found the average difference in vote share between women and men for each candidate quality. I did this for both men and women. The average difference in vote share (between women and men) and female candidate quality can be seen in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 3: The Average Difference in Vote Share (Between Women and Men) and Female Candidate Quality (compiled by author).



Figure 4: The Average Difference in Vote Share (Between Women and Men) and Male Candidate Quality (compiled by author).



The average difference in vote share (between women and men) and candidate quality is seen for both male and female candidates in Figures 3 and 4. The figures seem to be mirror images of each other. To begin, the average vote share for candidates with a quality of one is very different for female (-47.92) and male candidates (12.08). The female candidates that had little experience fared much worse, on average, when considering the difference in vote share than the male candidates with equal experience. This trend continues as the quality of the male and female candidates increase. The average vote share for male candidates that had an experience of four was -20.34 while the average vote share for female candidates that had an experience of four was 3.39. The male candidate did much better than female candidates with the same experience. This is important as it leads to the possibility that despite experience, women are still facing obstacles that prevent them from winning. Perhaps there is a gender bias in society or institutional structures since this data reveals that it is not a lack of experience that leads to women performing worse in a gubernatorial race than men.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the media's treatment of female gubernatorial candidates. I began with an aim to study the relationship between gender bias in the media and successful candidacy in gubernatorial races. I replicated the work of Fowler and Lawless (2009) using less than half of the amount of data the authors collected in the 1990's. Unfortunately, time restraints prevented me from collecting a large enough sample size to run a regression. A regression would have allowed me to conclude with a more definitive answer for how gender bias in the media impacts election outcomes. However, I was able to analyze my data set and determine aggregate-level conclusions.

The methods of Fowler and Lawless proved useful for my research. I was able to replicate the content analysis that Fowler and Lawless conducted by referring to their appendix. My own interpretation of candidate quality was the only aspect of my research methods that did not come directly from these authors. The six categorical types of press coverage that Fowler and Lawless used in their research were still relevant for my updated work.

My findings reveal many things about how female gubernatorial candidates are portrayed by print media. For the past two and a half decades, male candidates are portrayed with action language far more than female candidates in gubernatorial races. In addition, men and women have been receiving a roughly equal number of mentions about their personal background. However, since research was conducted in the 1990's, women garner more mentions about women's issues than men. In addition, more men are receiving position coverage than women from 2008-2014. The opposite was found by Fowler and Lawless (2009) from 1990-1998.

Another important finding is that women, on average, receive more mentions in most types of coverage when they are against another woman rather than a man. Specifically, females in a female versus female race garner more mentions of their political and personal background coverage and more action and position coverage. This is important since females running against each other as major party endorsements is a new phenomenon. It is important that we investigate the way these elections unfold and attempt to identify the ways females are disadvantaged or benefit from the scenario. Based off my findings, it is possible that women are able to take the role that men have been historically portrayed as: an action oriented leader with a political background worth mentioning in an article.

My findings show the possibility that candidate quality is not a factor in why women lose races. From 2008-2014, female candidates that had little experience fared much worse, on

average, when considering the difference in vote share than the male candidates with equal political background. This is important as we try to understand the experience women have running for public office. Women may not be able to rely on their political quality as a candidate if they are up against a man with similar political experience. According to my findings, a male with a candidate quality of 2 fares about the same as a woman with a candidate quality of 4.

This research could be advanced to include a larger data set with more races. With more cases, a regression could be run to examine more differences between the findings of Fowler and Lawless. This would allow an analysis of the effect of candidate quality of men and women's position coverage for candidates in the past seven years. In addition, one could explore the types of press coverage gubernatorial candidates receive using negative binomial regression coefficients like Fowler and Lawless did from 1990-1997.

There were only two races involving a female candidate opposing another female candidate in a gubernatorial race. It is important to continue analyzing these types of races as they occur. It would be helpful to obtain a larger data set of female versus female races in order to compare with female versus male races. There is very little research done by scholars to examine races that involve two females as major party endorsed candidate. Assuming that this type of race continues to occur, it is important that we understand its impacts.

Even though there was about the same number of races involving female major party candidates during the period Fowler and Lawless conducted their research and the period covered by this research (from 2008-2014) there are many reasons we should be optimistic. The United States saw its first female versus female gubernatorial races. These races are one of the best ways for a woman to get elected and for the public to get acquainted with the idea of women serving as leaders in public office. Additionally, my research yielded a relatively equal number

of mentions for men and women about personal traits and personal background. It is reassuring to see that articles are not focusing on the female candidate's family life or appearances more than that of a male candidate.

The research surrounding the lack of parity among females and males in gubernatorial races yields many possible explanations. Fowler and Lawless (2009) uncover bias in media coverage of female candidates from 1990-1998 and their work is still cited in discussions about the media's portrayal of female candidates today. My work seeks to update their research and discover what has changed since the 1990's while investigating the new occurrence of females running against females.

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Appendix

Table 1

| Candidate Quality | Experience |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | Teacher |
| | Lawyer |
| 2 | District Attorney |
| | Mayor |
| | State Legislator |
| 3 | State Treasurer, Secretary of State, State House, Congressional Candidate |
| | Speaker of the State House, President of the Senate |
| | General Treasurer |
| 4 | Lieutenant Governor |
| | Attorney General, Supreme Court |
| 5 | Incumbent |