

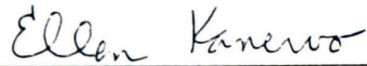
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DO ALL POLITICAL CANDIDATES RECEIVE THE SAME MEDIA
COVERAGE? AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT OF
GENDER IN FOUR NORTHEASTERN 1998 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS

MELISSA ANN WOOTEN

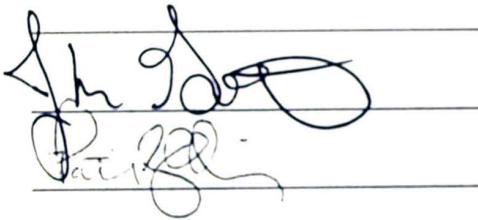
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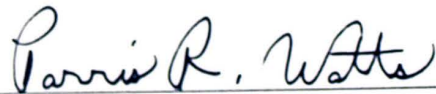


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COVERAGE? An Analysis of the Differential Impact of Gender in Four
Northeastern 1998 Gubernatorial Elections.**

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

Austin Peay State University

Melissa Ann Wooten

May 2000

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mom

Mary Nell Wooten

for her guidance, understanding, and love.

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ABSTRACT

The news media play a central role in today's political campaigns. The media can influence how citizens think about politics and elections and how they feel about candidates. By covering male and female candidates differently, the media may influence the success of female candidates. This study examines the possibility that male and female gubernatorial candidates are covered differently in the media. A content analysis was conducted on the newspaper coverage of four 1998 gubernatorial elections. The quantity and substance of coverage were investigated. The substance of the coverage examined horserace, issue, and image coverage. The analysis showed that male and female gubernatorial candidates receive the same amount and type of coverage in the media. The results of this analysis of gubernatorial elections suggest that the pattern of press coverage is consistent for both male and female candidates. This would indicate that both male and female candidates are seen as equally viable candidates in the media.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Most people are not directly involved in politics, and, as a result, their perceptions of the political world are shaped largely by the news media's representations (Lippmann, 1922). The news media's ability to shape voters' perceptions of political reality is fairly strong especially during electoral campaigns where citizens rely heavily on the news media for their political information (McCombs, 1997). Since the news media are such a central force in today's political campaigns, they can be extremely potent in influencing how citizens think about politics and how they evaluate political candidates. Because of limited amounts of space, the news media are very selective in deciding which stories to cover and where to place the stories. As a result, some stories are deemed more newsworthy than others and some political candidates may receive more media coverage than others.

It is important to note that only a small percentage of public officials and political candidates are women. However, the number of women running for political offices and their overall chances of winning are increasing. Nonetheless, of particular concern are the ways male and female political candidates are portrayed by the media and the amount of coverage that they receive. Previous research about large elections indicates that female and male political candidates are covered differently in the media (Kahn, 1991).

A majority of the research that has been done on female political candidates and the media focuses on sex stereotypes and the perceptions voters have of male and female political candidates. These stereotypes may provide a signal to voters of a candidate's presumed policy preferences and effectiveness (Norris, 1997; Entman, 1989). A fair amount of research has also been done on the politicization of males and females. Males have traditionally been viewed as being more politically oriented than women (Cirksena, 1996). To distinguish what is considered newsworthy, research must examine what sets the public agenda and how politics play a part in it. The concerns of the general public may set the political agenda, and the media are active players in outlining the political agenda. As a result, political candidates are likely to receive more political coverage if they support or are strongly against an issue that interests the general public (Erbing, Goldenberg, and Miller, 1980). Also, if male and female candidates are covered differently in the media, the news media may influence the success of female candidates for public office. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate if there are differences in the way newspapers cover male and female political candidates and whether the placement of articles or the quantity and substance of the articles make a difference in the type of coverage.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since most individuals are not directly involved in politics and political campaigns, they are dependent on the media for information. News organizations are selective in what they cover and as a result they tend to shape rather than mirror the political landscape. This is especially important during electoral campaigns where people rely almost exclusively on the media for political information. If the media differentiate between male and female candidates in their coverage of campaigns, this difference may influence the decisions of voters and their perceptions of the candidates (Hitchon & Chang, 1995; Kahn, 1994; Kahn, 1991). Persons with low political interest are more likely to be influenced by the media to change political attitudes, and the amount of media attention devoted to particular issues determines the degree of public concern for these issues (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Kazee, 1981; Erbing, Goldenberg, & Miller, 1980). The media impact (both content and exposure) will be accentuated by voters' exclusive dependence on the news media for information, and will be diluted somewhat by voters' interpersonal contacts (Erbing, Goldenberg, & Miller, 1980).

Women comprise approximately one half of the general population but make up an astoundingly small percentage of candidates for office (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross 1996; Kahn, 1994). Of the 25 women who ran for U.S. Senate between 1984

and 1990, only two succeeded. In 1984 and 1986, women candidates won election to the U.S. Senate less frequently than male candidates. Male incumbents were reelected 84% of the time, while female incumbents won reelection 50% of the time. Twenty percent of the male challengers, but none of the female challengers, ran successfully. In the open races, men won 56% of the time and female candidates were only successful 25% of the time (Kahn, 1992). A majority of the research examining the infrequency of females running for political office has focused on sociological factors such as women's socialization and on contextual factors such as incumbency seat rather than on the voter response to candidates. Many times women choose not to run for a political office because they believe that their chances of winning the election are slim (Bernstein, 1986). Also, many voters associate leadership with masculinity and this has made women skeptical of being accepted by voters (Dabelko & Herrnson, 1997).

Women are politicized differently from men. Politicization, as traditionally defined, is a concept that takes into account individuals' growing awareness of politics as a distinctive realm of human experience and their development of the necessary motivation to participate in politics (Owen & Dennis, 1992; Newton, 1988). Although women now vote in national elections at the same rate as men, it is apparent that women are socialized into a less politically active role than men and are reluctant to run for office. Even though women are running for political office in increasingly larger numbers than in the past, they often run for local offices rather than state or national political offices. Past research suggests that men and women are

substantially different “political animals.” Not only have women participated less in politics than males, but they have been less knowledgeable and less interested in politics generally (Hayes & Makkai, 1996). Because of children’s socialization to traditional gender roles, adult women tend to be less psychologically oriented to political matters than men (Garlick, Dixon, & Allen, 1992; Bennett & Bennett, 1989). Citizens who do not believe that the current set of electoral choices allows for effective representation of their interests do not become engaged in the electoral process and can affect true representation, since many times people who represent women’s interests do not run because they believe that their chances of being elected are small (Koch, 1997).

Structural differences between males and females might be another explanation as to why fewer women run for political office than men. Women are often over-represented in groups that are relatively uninvolved in electoral politics, groups like the economically disadvantaged and less educated. However, differences between men and women do disappear as education increases; turnout by women is greater than by men among the highly educated (Cirksena, 1996; Kazee, 1981). Women’s daily responsibilities and life situations can affect whether or not they can run for a political office. Often motherhood and taking care of a family can reduce a woman’s participation in politics (Cirksena, 1996). Furthermore, women often have inadequate access to political resources and are open to stereotyping by voters (Bernstein, 1986). Also, they fail to gain the support of political organizations and activism groups (Sreberny- Mohammadi & Ross, 1996).

The media can help women who have not been socialized to think of themselves as politically competent. This may happen when information about women becoming more politically involved is available in the news (Cirksena, 1996). The media play an especially important role in setting the political agenda. The political agenda can be defined as the concerns of the general public (Erbing, Goldenburg, & Miller, 1980). Citizens who rely on newspapers for their political information are only exposed to what the paper and its owners and executives believe is newsworthy. The placement of news stories can determine their associated value in the public agenda and can produce strong effects on viewers' evaluations of issues and their perceptions of national leaders (Hayes & Makkai, 1996). Previous research has offered consistent findings that male candidates tended to be more likely to possess leadership abilities and competence and were rated higher on "men's issues" such as crime, defense, and terrorism, and women were regarded as more compassionate and ethical and were rated higher on "women's issues," or also referred to as "compassion issues," and "conscience issues" such as education, welfare, the elderly, and minorities. Men's issues were often rated as more important than women's issues (Dabelko & Herrnson 1997; Hitchon & Chang, 1995; Koch, 1997).

In exploring the media's effects on the political agenda, it is also important to look at the ways that reporters and editors "frame" their stories and how this can affect readers' perceptions of an issue. Frames are the 'maps' or internal story patterns that reporters and editors draw for their readers. News frames exist at two

levels: as mentally stored principles used for information processing and as characteristics of the news text (Entman, 1991). News frames are contrived from and are personified in the keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasized in a news narrative. Terkildsen and Schnell (1997) suggested that framing is important to look at whenever an issue can be presented in multiple ways which may potentially influence how people think about an issue. By providing, repeating, and thereby reinforcing words and visual images that reference some ideas but not others, frames work to make some ideas more salient in the text, others less so, and some not at all. The words and images that comprise the frame make one basic interpretation more readily detectable, comprehensible, and memorable than others (Entman, 1991). Frames can alter the information on which citizens' decisions are based. Consequently, in political campaign coverage, print news frames help people construct corresponding discourse models by providing them with conceptual building blocks of campaign interpretations (Rhee, 1997). The framing approach emphasizes that news framing is mediated by the way in which people use social knowledge and prior experience in news reception. People may not passively react to news frames. Rather, they may actively construct meaning in news stories based on their social knowledge (Rhee, 1997; Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997; Entman, 1991).

Preliminary findings of content analyses of news coverage indicate that men and women political candidates are covered differently by reporters, and experiments have shown that differential coverage changes voters' perceptions of a candidate's viability. Just as assessments of a candidate's viability and issue positions influence

citizens' vote choice, so do judgments about a candidate's character. Positive and/or negative media coverage of a political candidate can affect his or her chances of winning an election (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982). Even when female political candidates overcome early barriers and secure their parties' nominations, female nominees are covered differently in the media from male political candidates (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). A number of reasons can help account for the difference in media coverage of male and female political candidates. First, gender differences in news coverage can reflect stereotypes that people hold about male and female candidates. Research on sex stereotypes suggests that people rely on gender schemas or prototypes to process information in gender relevant terms. When people are exposed to deficient or ambiguous information, they rely on their gender schema to fill in the gaps. A schema can be defined as a mental representation of a category that provides a network of cognitive associations that guide an individual's processing of category related information. If we apply this research to the political arena, we would expect voters to use a gender cue to distinguish between equivalent male and female political candidates. Previous work in political science concluded that people do use sex stereotypes when evaluating equivalent male and female candidates (Hitchon & Chang, 1995; Kahn, 1992; Sigelman & Sigelman, 1984; Bem, 1981). Gender can be one central element relevant to the way the story is presented and interpreted (Norris, 1997; Baxter & Lansing, 1986). Reporters may stress a female political candidate's compassion while emphasizing a male political candidate's competence. Reporters, like other voters, might believe that certain

personality traits are more characteristic of women, while other traits are more characteristic of men (Kahn, 1994). Hence, the gender of the reporter covering a story can influence the type of story that is written. Findings of previous research show that female reporters are more likely than male reporters to cover races with women candidates. Female reporters also discuss “female” issues more often than male reporters in their campaign coverage (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991).

Differences in news coverage of male and female candidates may also be driven by organizational incentives active in news organizations. News people rely on standards of newsworthiness when selecting among potential news items. And, since female political candidates are somewhat rare, they may be regarded as especially newsworthy and may receive more attention than their male counterparts (Kahn, 1994).

Since variations in the quantity of news coverage can influence recognition rates of candidates, gender differences in the amount of press attention can have important electoral consequences (Hayes & Makkai, 1996). If reporters and editors regard female candidates as less viable and thus less important than their male counterparts, then female candidates may receive less news exposure (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Nonetheless, if female candidates receive more attention in the press, then voters may have an easier time recognizing these candidates. This advantage in recognition may be an important resource for female candidates since voters rarely support a candidate they don't recognize (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991).

Because the amount of media coverage a candidate receives can be directly related to voters' recognition of the candidate, gender differences in press attention can be consequential. The participants in each race must be taken into account when talking about the amount and type of coverage a candidate receives. There are several types of races: male incumbent vs. female challenger; male incumbent vs. male challenger; female incumbent vs. male challenger; female incumbent vs. female challenger; male vs. male in an open race; male vs. female in an open race; and female vs. female in an open race (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Past research has shown that the type of race that a candidate is involved in can be directly related to the attention that the candidate receives in the media. For example, differences in coverage of male and female incumbents may lead participants to believe that the male incumbent is more viable and stronger and that female incumbents are more compassionate. Research on the differences between male and female challengers has produced no evaluation differences (Kahn, 1992; Bernstein, 1986).

Previous research has also examined the substance of the coverage of political candidates. Differences in the substance of coverage of male and female political candidates may be due to organizational incentives operating in news rooms or they may be due to pervasive sex stereotypes (Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991). Recent research in the field of voting behavior suggests the importance of three types of campaign coverage: horserace, issue, and trait coverage. Because of the prevalence of horserace coverage (who is ahead or behind in the polls or who has the stronger campaign organization) it is important to examine whether there are differences in

the amount and substance of horserace coverage for male and female political candidates. Since female candidates have traditionally been less viable than male candidates, the press may focus more intensely on horserace issues when covering women (Kahn, 1994; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Bartels, 1987). A content analysis conducted by Kahn (1994) showed that the press did focus more on the horserace when covering female candidates. Twenty- seven percent of all articles written about female U.S. Senate candidates discussed the horserace, while only 21 percent of the articles about male candidates mentioned horserace issues.

Another important factor in evaluating the substance of coverage is the coverage of issues. Attention to issues in the news may vary for male and female candidates, with reporters discussing policy less frequently for female candidates because viability concerns take priority (Cirksena, 1996; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996). The tendency of the press to play down issue concerns for women is remarkably consistent (Norris, 1997). There are three possible explanations for this problem. First, newspeople may believe that women are less competent at dealing with major issues of the day, so their views on the issues are considered less newsworthy. Next, consideration must be taken into account for the amount of space allocated for discussion of issues, since journalists may choose to emphasize other campaign news when covering a story. Third, coverage of issues for women may be less extensive since women may talk about issues less frequently in their campaigns (Norris, 1997; Kelly, Williams, & Fisher, 1994; Kahn, 1992).

Just as assessments of a candidate's viability and issue positions influence citizens' choice, so do judgments about a candidate's character. Voters may be more likely to evaluate the personality of candidates if trait information is readily accessible during campaigns (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982). In political advertisements, female candidates for governor talk about their personality traits more often than male political gubernatorial candidates. A 1994 study showed that women discussed their personal traits in 55% of their advertisements, while male candidates talked about their traits in 49% of their advertisements (Kahn, 1994). Information about a candidate's personal character is more common in campaign advertisements than in news coverage (Hitchon & Chang, 1995). Kahn (1991) found that personality traits of Senate candidates received very little coverage. Only 5% of the paragraphs written about the Senate races mentioned personality traits. The amount of trait discussion was fairly stable with incumbents, challengers, and candidates in open races receiving approximately the same amount of coverage.

The political messages of newspapers are significantly associated with the substantive political attitudes of their readers (Entman, 1989). Endorsement of political candidates by newspapers and news organizations can directly influence voters' perceptions of candidates and a candidate's chances of winning an election. Women are poorly represented at the top of news organizations (Hayes & Makkai, 1996). As a result, male newspaper editors might not give the same editorial endorsement that a female editor might give (Entman, 1989). Likewise, a male editor might not place an article the same as a female editor. In a study by Dabelko and

Herrnson (1997) of campaigns for the House of Representatives, they found that just over one-fifth of all female candidates reported receiving the endorsements of the local media as opposed to 35% of all males. An explanation of this might be the “old boys network” operating between politicians and journalists. Editors or newspaper officials might endorse a friend or someone in return for a political favor (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross, 1996).

Drawing upon the research cited above, the following hypotheses were developed for analysis in this study:

H1: Female gubernatorial candidates receive less news coverage than male gubernatorial candidates.

H2: Female gubernatorial candidates do not receive the same type of coverage as male political candidates.

h1. Male gubernatorial candidates receive more horserace coverage than female gubernatorial candidates.

h2. Female political candidates receive more image and trait media coverage than male gubernatorial candidates.

h3. Male gubernatorial candidates receive more substantive issue coverage than female gubernatorial candidates.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A content analysis of four 1998 gubernatorial races that included female candidates was conducted to assess potentially significant differences in the news coverage and placement of articles of male and female political candidates. Four gubernatorial races in the Northeastern part of the United States were examined. The races from the Northeastern part of the United States were chosen because they would accurately represent races and states that had a mixture of male and female politicians. Research was conducted on the governor's races in Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, and Maryland. A content analysis was done on the largest newspaper in the capital of each state. The newspaper from the capital of each state was chosen because the governor's office and state political offices are located in the state capital and these papers would likely provide much information about the state's gubernatorial election.

For each race examined, a content analysis was conducted on the Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday editions of the newspaper from October 4-30, 1998, and all of the papers from November 1, 1998, until election day, November 3, 1998. See Appendix A for a list of the newspapers and gubernatorial races that were analyzed.

The newspaper was the medium that was chosen to be examined for both practical and substantive reasons. To begin with, newspapers are routinely saved on microfilm making them accessible for analysis. Also, there is considerable evidence that newspapers carry more information about state and local campaigns than do local television news programs. Furthermore, Westlye (1991) explains that, compared with local broadcast news, “newspapers present an amount of information that more closely approximates what campaigns are issuing” (p. 261).

The content analysis examined the quantity of coverage and the substance of the coverage of male and female gubernatorial candidates. To begin the content analysis, the quantity of the coverage was examined. The number of sentences devoted to the candidate and the number of headlines mentioning the candidate were the units of analysis. Any items that mentioned the candidate in the newspaper were coded, excluding picture captions and cut lines. Information about campaign contributions was also not coded.

Next, the substance of the campaign coverage was analyzed. The substance of the coverage was coded based on horserace, image issues and substantive issues. Horserace coverage could be defined as any mention of who is ahead or behind in the polls, or who has a stronger campaign organization. An example of horserace coverage could be, “Among likely voters, support for King, who is one of three independents in the five-way race for the Blaine House, was pegged at about 61 percent.”

The substantive issue or policy coverage of each candidate was also coded.

Policy coverage includes any mention of a candidate's policy preference or stand on issues, for example, "On the issue of teachers salaries, LaMarche, a former teacher, said she would favor a sizeable increase."

Image or trait coverage was also analyzed to determine if male and female political candidates received the same type of newspaper coverage. Any reference to a candidate's character or personal traits would be described as image coverage. An example of image or trait coverage would be, "For most of the past eight years, Pat LaMarche has not eaten on Thursdays. She takes the money she would have spent on food and gives it to the homeless shelter."

The intercoder reliability, the extent of agreement among coders, of the content analysis was 95% agreement on the sentences in the news articles that mentioned policy issues. Additionally, the sentences mentioning images or trait issues also had 95% intercoder reliability. Coverage of the horserace in the news articles examined had 96% intercoder reliability.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF CONTENT ANALYSES

QUANTITY OF CAMPAIGN NEWS

Media coverage of male and female political candidates may differ in a number of ways, but one potentially important difference is the sheer quantity of news coverage. The results of the content analysis of the quantity of newspaper coverage that candidates receive suggests that women receive more press attention than their male counterparts.

As indicated in Table 1, each male gubernatorial candidate received an average of 119.5 sentences devoted to them during the period that was coded, while each female gubernatorial candidate had an average 126 sentences where they were mentioned in the articles. Additionally, the female candidates had 28 mentions in headlines and the male candidates received only 25 mentions. However, a t-test comparing these means shows no statistically significant difference in the average number of statements made about female candidates versus male candidates ($t = 0.452$; $p > .05$). The data do not support the hypothesis that male candidates receive more coverage than female candidates.

Table 1. News Coverage of Gubernatorial Candidates**FEMALE GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES**

	HORSERACE	ISSUE/POLICY	IMAGE/TRAIT	OTHER	TOTAL QUANTITY
Sauerby	12 (15%)	27(34%)	11(14%)	30(38%)	80(101%)
Kennelly	11(10%)	36(33%)	42(38%)	21(19%)	110(100%)
York	21(10%)	56(26%)	86(40%)	51(24%)	214(100%)
LaMarche	4(4%)	27(27%)	67(67%)	2(2%)	100(100%)
TOTAL	48(10%)	146(29%)	206(41%)	104(21%)	504(101%)

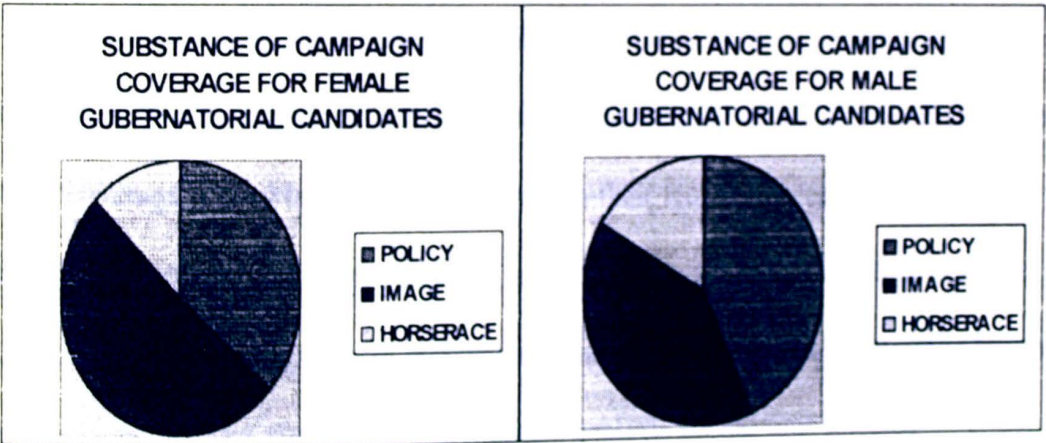
MALE GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES

	HORSERACE	ISSUE/POLICY	IMAGE/TRAIT	OTHER	TOTAL QUANTITY
Glendening	14(16%)	26(31%)	15(18%)	30(35%)	85(100%)
Rowland	13(11%)	42(37%)	26(23%)	34(30%)	115(101%)
Almond	23(9%)	67(27%)	92(37%)	67(27%)	249(100%)
King	7(24%)	14(48%)	5(17%)	3(10%)	29(99%)
	57(12%)	149(31%)	138(29%)	134(28%)	478(100%)

SUBSTANCE OF CAMPAIGN NEWS

Media coverage of candidates and campaigns not only affects a candidate's recognition rates, but also determines the quality of information available to voters. By investigating the substance of news in gubernatorial elections, it is evident what voters are likely to learn during campaigns. If the substance of news coverage varies with the gender of the candidate, then the voting criteria used by citizens is also likely to vary for male and female candidates. Figure 1 summarizes the different types of coverage accorded male and female gubernatorial candidates.

FIGURE 1.



HORSERACE COVERAGE

Because female gubernatorial candidates have traditionally been less viable than male candidates, one might believe that the press would spend more time

discussing the viability of the female candidate. In contrast, the results of the content analyses show that horserace coverage is more prevalent for male candidates. As the data in Table 1 indicate, male candidates received an average of 14.25 sentences which mentioned the horserace compared to female candidates that had an average of 12 sentences devoted to the horserace. Additionally, a t-test shows no significant variation in the coverage of the horserace for male and female gubernatorial candidates ($t = -0.469$; $p > .05$). The hypothesis that male political candidates receive more horserace coverage than female political candidates is not substantiated based on the findings.

ISSUE AND POLICY COVERAGE

Proportionally, issues received about three times as much coverage as the horserace. The findings concluded that male gubernatorial candidates obtained more news coverage related to issues and policy than their female contenders. Male candidates received an average of 37.25 sentences devoted to issues and policies. Additionally, female candidates received a mean of 36.5 sentences mentioning issues and policies. Table 1 shows the results of this analysis for the four selected gubernatorial races. However, a t-test indicates that there is no significant difference in the issue and policy coverage of male and female candidates ($t = -0.056$; $p > .05$);

therefore, the data do not support the hypothesis that male candidates would receive more substantive issue coverage. 21

IMAGE AND TRAIT COVERAGE

The results of the candidates' image and trait coverage, in contrast with the findings of horserace and policy coverage, suggest that female political candidates receive more image and trait coverage than male political candidates. As illustrated in Table 1, female candidates received on average 51.5 sentences discussing image and trait issues while male candidates only had 34.5 sentences about issues and traits, on average. Discussion of a candidate's image and trait information accounted for the majority of news coverage that candidates, both male and female, received. However, a t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in the issue and trait coverage of male and female gubernatorial candidates ($t = 0.667$; $p > .05$). Therefore, the results fail to support the hypothesis that women would receive more image coverage.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The coverage of gubernatorial elections in the news is quite volatile; some contests receive intense scrutiny in the press and other races are largely ignored. Variation in coverage also occurs for candidates; some candidates receive more coverage than others in the news. Since there are systematic variations in the coverage of candidates, then certain traits, for example, a candidate's gender, may make that candidate incessantly advantaged or repeatedly disadvantaged.

Although this study found variations in both the amount and type of coverage that male and female candidates receive, these differences were not statistically significantly different. The results of this study do not substantiate the first hypothesis: Female gubernatorial candidates receive less news coverage than male gubernatorial candidates. The results revealed that on average, male candidates received more coverage than female candidates, but, a t-test showed that the findings were not significant. Future research on a larger sample of races should be conducted to conclude if there is a notable difference in the coverage of male and female gubernatorial candidates. A similar study by Kahn (1992) found that the news media do differentiate in their coverage of male and female candidates in the quantity of their coverage of statewide campaigns. The differences were more dramatic in U.S. Senate races, but differences were also evident in gubernatorial contests.

Nonetheless, the findings of this research would suggest that there is a move toward 23
truly equal coverage of male and female gubernatorial candidates by newspapers.

The content analysis found that there is no significant difference in the type of media coverage of male and female gubernatorial candidates, thus, finding the second hypothesis null. By examining the substance of coverage for gubernatorial candidates, we can see what types of information people are likely to learn about candidates during campaigns. When looking at horserace coverage, there was no significant variation in the coverage of male and female candidates. Therefore, voters may perceive both male and female candidates to be viable candidates. Previous research by Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) found that female candidates are often seen as not as competitive as their male counterparts by the press, and this attention to the horserace may lead voters to develop more negative assessment of female candidates.

Just as assessments of a candidate's viability influence citizens' vote choice, so do judgments about a candidate's character (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982). In races for governor, the attention given to personality and image traits is similar for female and male candidates. The media may find a female candidate's image and trait information equally as newsworthy as that of a male candidate.

When covering policy and issues, the media do not differentiate in their coverage of male and female gubernatorial candidates. Previous research has shown that female candidates receive less coverage devoted to issues than male candidates, and they may be seen as less viable than their male opponent. A similar study by Kahn (1994) on issue coverage of male and female candidates found that male

candidates receive more issue coverage than female candidates. Kahn offered three possible explanations for why male candidates receive more issue coverage than females. First, reporters may believe that women are less competent in dealing with major issues, so their views on these issues is viewed as less newsworthy. Second, the space allotment for the discussion of issues may be reduced by news people who may prefer to emphasize other types of campaign news when covering women. Finally, coverage of issues for women may be less extensive since women may talk about issues less frequently in their campaigns.

It is important to point out that while the results showed a variation in the coverage of male and female candidates based on the percentage of coverage received by each candidate, a t-test revealed that the findings showed that the difference was not significant. Future research of gubernatorial campaigns should examine a larger sample of races from all across the country. This will more accurately determine if there is a difference in the coverage of male and female candidates and if the location of the race is a factor in the coverage received. In addition, the treatment of male and female candidates by the press in other statewide elections should be looked at to determine if there is a contrast in the coverage of male and female candidates for other public offices.

While these results conclude that the media do not differentiate in their coverage of male and female candidates, future research might look at other factors in addition to gender that might impact the media coverage that a candidate receives. First, the competitiveness of the race and whether the candidate was the challenger

or the incumbent could have an impact on the coverage a candidate in the news. 25

Additional research should be conducted to discern the difference in the treatment of candidates in these types of races. Second, the gender of the reporter should also be taken into account, especially in regards to the coverage of issues. Female reporters may tend to place more emphasis on “female” issues while male reporters tend to focus more on “male” issues. Because reporters may not be consistent in the coverage of male and female candidates, the ramifications could prove negative in terms of the voters’ assessment of a candidate.

The results of this analysis of gubernatorial elections suggest that the pattern of press coverage is consistent for both male and female candidates. This would indicate that both male and female candidates are seen as equally viable candidates in the media and their overall chances of winning an election would be the same. Drawing upon this conclusion, a candidate’s gender does not play an important role in the amount or type of media coverage that a candidate receives.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

<u>State</u>	<u>Candidates</u>		<u>Newspaper</u>
Connecticut	John Rowland (I)	Barbara Kennelly (Ch)	<i>Hartford Courant</i>
Maine	Angus King (I)	Pat LaMarche (Ch)	<i>Kennebec Journal</i>
Maryland	Parris Glendening (I)	Ellen Sauerbrey (Ch)	<i>The Capitol</i>
Rhode Island	Lincoln Almond (I)	Myrth York (Ch)	<i>The Providence Journal</i>

I = Incumbent

C = Challenger

VITA

Melissa Ann Wooten was born in Clarksville, Tennessee on April 18, 1975. She attended school in the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System and graduated with honors from Northeast High School in 1993. Following graduation, she entered Middle Tennessee State University and in December 1996, received a Bachelor of Science degree in Public Relations with minors in political science and marketing. She enrolled in Austin Peay State University in August of 1997, and in May of 2000 received a Master of Arts degree in Corporate Communication.

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