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Female Gubernatorial Candidates in Purple States: A Case Study of New Mexico and Arizona

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Abstract

This research serves to determine how the political ideology of Republican female candidates, in conjunction with political and cultural factors, affects the outcome of gubernatorial elections. An analysis of two 2010 gubernatorial races, taking place in New Mexico and Arizona, will use a case study approach to test the hypothesis that no single aspect of a candidate will ultimately decide the outcome of an election. This paper will also use an alternative ideology score to compare candidates, in addition to examining the history of female politicians. The findings support the hypothesis that one factor does not unilaterally determine an election.

Introduction

As the American electorate continues to elect diverse candidates on the national level, it is important to highlight the progress of state-level candidates. My research focuses on gubernatorial elections, particularly Republican female candidates. The implication of researching a topic with seldom-prior exploration, which will be further addressed in the literature review section, means there is little scholarship to ground my analysis. In search of further information, I independently gathered a dataset on female gubernatorial candidates from 2002, 2006, and 2010. These three election cycles were chosen to avoid overlap with the presidential elections, which have the potential to skew state-level elections (Campbell 43). The dataset of gubernatorial candidates illustrated a trend in female Republicans winning elections, particularly during the

2010 cycle (for a complete breakdown see appendix 1). These findings highlight the questions: how does the political ideology of female Republican gubernatorial candidates affect their chance of election and what role do political and cultural factors play?

In order to analyze the outcome of gubernatorial elections that involve Republican female candidates, it is imperative that key terms be defined to establish a standard of usage. There are notable differences between political factors and cultural factors. While they will both be used to evaluate the candidates, political factors refer specifically to the candidates' previous occupations, political party affiliation, and the candidates' state's political climate, i.e. the dominant party in the state legislature and history of governors. Cultural factors refer to a candidate's family history, socioeconomic status,

ethnicity, race, and education level. It is also important to distinguish the meaning of a cultural constant. This term will be mentioned when describing the choice to use New Mexico and Arizona as the case study states for this project. A cultural constant, in this situation, refers to the fact that the two states bordering each other, are not directly affected by views of the east or west coast, and have similar political discourses. Additionally, New Mexico and Arizona are both considered purple states – or as it is more commonly referred to during presidential elections, swing states – because neither has a single political party that is dominate.

A study from the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) recently indicated that female candidates and politicians have been viewed, historically, as more moderate than their male counter

parts (Timm 1). Though this theory is persuasive, it lumps all female candidates together and influences the voters' perceptions of candidates. Realizing this, my paper focuses on determining how the political ideology of Republican female candidates, in conjunction with political and cultural factors, affects the outcome of gubernatorial elections. An analysis of two gubernatorial races will reveal the complexities of female candidates, establishing that no single aspect of their candidacy determines success in an election.

In order to test this hypothesis, I will first provide the reader with a literature review that examines pertinent scholarship, which will be broken into two categories: media coverage of female campaigns, and external factors of female candidates' campaigns. Then the following section will illustrate an overview of the research design by explaining both the particulars of the case study approach and the steps taken to create an alternative ideology score. Thirdly, an analysis of the case study will be presented and the final conclusion will be drawn.

Literature Review

The scholarship relating to female gubernatorial candidates is limited, making a comprehensive analysis of the topic challenging. Consequently, the literature has been divided into two categories: media coverage of female campaigns, and external factors of female candidates' campaigns.

The first category specifically addresses issues of gender and media during an election cycle. The majority of academic literature regarding female candidates uses this approach to analyze differences in candidates based on their sex, which provides an important baseline for my research.

Two articles, "Does Gender Make a Difference? An Experimental Examination of Sex Stereotypes and Press Patterns in Statewide Campaigns," and "Looking for Sex in All the Wrong Places: Press Coverage and the Electoral Fortunes of Gubernatorial Candidates," are known in the field for using experimental methods to review media perception of female candidates and the effect said media coverage had on the race outcomes (Kahn 163).

The first article compares senatorial and gubernatorial candidates from 1984 to 1988 by looking at coverage patterns and gender stereotypes. According to the author, Kim Fridkin Kahn, the gender stereotypes about female candidates equate them to a maternal figure, making females more apt at dealing with social issues like education and the environment, while male candidates are associated with the paternal image and better able to handle defense issues. Kahn delves further by exploring the differences in task and subject matter handled by senators versus governors. The results shows a consensus that senators must deal with issues of foreign policy and national security while governors primarily address social issues. Not surprisingly, Kahn notes that this difference "may advantage women candidates in races for governor" but creates a disadvantage for female senate candidates due to the stereotypes of women as mothers (Kahn 163-165).

"Looking for Sex in All the Wrong Places: Press Coverage and the Electoral Fortunes of Gubernatorial Candidates" studies female candidates in the nineteen nineties and draws similar conclusions. The authors examine the media coverage given to candidates and note that "women received slightly more press

coverage than men for their positions, whereas men were nearly twice as likely as women to receive coverage devoted their actions." These findings conclude that male candidates are more likely to be "portrayed as 'doers'" than their female counterparts (Fowler and Lawless 523). The 2009 study by Fowler and Lawless built upon the work done by Kahn in the nineteen nineties and add substantial background to my research analysis.

The second category consists of external factors in female candidates' campaigns. The works of political scientists Poole and Rosenthal were dominant in this category. Together they created the DW-NOMINATE method, which is the leading method in measuring political ideology on the congressional level by plotting the voting records of congresspeople (4). Their mathematical algorithm informed the research conducted by Jeffrey Koch.

Jeffrey Koch's piece "Gender Stereotypes and Citizens' Impressions of House Candidates Ideological Orientations" highlights the ideological differences between female Republicans and Democrats in Congress. Koch cites fellow political scientist, John Petrocik, when stating "policy areas where citizens commonly see women as more competent are typically assigned to liberals and the Democratic Party; and similarly, areas of competence generally assigned to male candidates—the economy, crime, defense, and foreign affairs—are the same as those assigned to conservatives and the Republican Party" (454). This statement mirrors the conclusion Kahn drew from her works, thus stringing together a larger theme in all the aforementioned scholarship: women are perceived to

better equip to handle social issues – such as education and healthcare – in a passive manner, than their male counterparts and are therefore more easily elected to the state-level offices than to Congress.

Similarly, important research on the state-level presented by Jason Windett, author of “State Effects and the Emergence and Success of Female Gubernatorial Candidates,” does not include an ideological component. Windett claims that the outcome of gubernatorial elections that include a female candidate has more to do with the state than the candidate. In other words, each election should be taken on a case-by-case basis and one cannot necessarily draw broad assumptions about female candidates (476). The article used a longitudinal approach by analyzing gubernatorial primaries from 1978 to 2008 looking at cultural and political factors along with historical legacies. Windett’s use of states’ politics impacted my decision to include external factors of the candidates and states’ cultures.

Even with the over-arching theme presented above, there were aspects of research relevant to my project that were not present in scholarship. Firstly, there were a limited number of published academic pieces pertaining to my topic. Few academics address the subject of female gubernatorial races; if mentioned at all, it reads like an afterthought. Secondly, the literature that was available only addressed aspects of my project. My development of an alternative ideology score was based on the theory presented by Poole and Rosenthal, yet used a different method because their works do not translate to state-level officials due to the lack of candidates’ voting record. Further shortcomings in the scholarship pushed me to combine

aspects of both Windett and Koch’s research to form a more complete research question that includes the partisanship of the candidates and individual states’ culture.

Research Design

A comprehensive qualitative case study approach was used to determine the impact of political and cultural factors on gubernatorial races. Through the assembly of a spreadsheet containing all of the gubernatorial races during the 2002, 2006, and 2010 elections cycles with female candidates (see appendix 1), an influx of successful female Republican candidates was revealed in the 2010 election cycle. After a secondary review of the spreadsheet, New Mexico and Arizona were chosen as the states to use for the basis of this research for two main reasons. One, they border each other, thus sharing similar issues and maintaining a cultural constant. Two, both states alternate between a Democratic and Republican controlled state legislature and are considered “purple” states, which removes the variable of a particular candidate, regardless of sex, winning due to party affiliation (i.e., presumably the case with Mary Fallin of Oklahoma).

The most laborious and intricate aspect of this project was the creation of an alternative ideology score. The scoring mechanism used was based on the work of political scientists Poole and Rosenthal. Poole and Rosenthal developed a multidimensional scaling method to analyze political choice data in the early 1980s. The original scale, NOMINATE (Nominal Three-Step Estimation), was proven a successful way to measure politicians’ ideology, and as technology advanced Poole and Rosenthal expanded their model. After creating multiple iterations

of the NOMINATE scale their latest method, the DW-NOMINATE, is used most commonly today. The DW-NOMINATE method uses politicians’ voting records in order to graph partisanship; partisanship is another way of explaining a politician’s political ideology. This allows fellow political scientists, and/or others, to graph overall partisanship or use the mathematical equation to analyze a specific vote. For the purpose of this research, the DW-NOMINATE method will be referenced in context of overall partisanship (Poole and Rosenthal 1-5).

As noted, the politicians’ ideology scores are derived from their individual congressional voting records. While this is an extraordinarily effective methodology for measuring congressional incumbents’ partisanship, the same approach cannot be applied to political candidates running in state-level elections. The vast majority of gubernatorial candidates have never held an elected position that left them with a consistent voting record. Therefore, in order to determine the partisanship of the four gubernatorial candidates running in New Mexico and Arizona, I created an alternative methodology based on the method put forth by Poole and Rosenthal.

The information used to create this alternative ideology score was based on news articles, campaign websites, and debate speeches. Each candidate was evaluated based on their stance on five issues in four categories:

SOCIAL ISSUES:

- 1) Abortion (SI₁)
- 2) Marriage Equality (SI₂)

FISCAL ISSUE:

- 3) Taxation (FI₁)

“CURRENT” POLICY ISSUE:

- 4) Affordable Care Act (PI₁)

REGIONAL ISSUE:

- 5) Immigration (RI₁)

Figure 1

The scoring closely mirrors the DW-NOMINATE scale, ranging from -1.0 to 1.0. For each issue, a candidate received a numeric value: an extreme liberal stance would receive a -1.0 and an extremely conservative stance would receive a 1.0. In-between, the options were -0.5, indicating liberal; 0.0, indicating neutral; 0.5, indicating conservative. Once each candidate received the score an averaging formula (figure 2) was used to calculate the candidates’ alternative ideology score. Overall, this scoring was an effective way to compare the ideological priorities of each candidate and determine whether or not the female candidates were actually more moderate than their male opponents.

In-Depth Analysis of the Case Study

The complex history of female governors is affected by the history of the women’s suffrage movement. Many of the original

female occupants of the position held the role temporarily due to a husband’s death or illness, thus making them the natural successor until further elections could be held. Ironically, the first acting female governor—Carolyn Shelton, whose term lasted a weekend—was not allowed the right to vote until three years later. Technically, the first elected female governor, Nellie Tayle Ross, assumed office in 1925 and had succeeded her late husband by winning a Special Election. Since then a total of thirty-four women – as of 2012 – have been governors, but only twenty-three were “elected in their own right; [three] replaced their husbands, and [eight] became governors by constitutional succession, three of whom subsequently won a full term” (“History of Female Governors” 1). This history provides a context to the 2010 political climate and illuminates the path that both individuals involved with this case study had to overcome.

During the 2010 election cycle there were a total of ten female gubernatorial candidates. Four of these candidates won: Jan Brewer of Arizona, Susana Martinez of New Mexico, Mary Fallin of Oklahoma, and Nikki Haley of South Carolina. Of the above winners, all four are affiliated with the Republican Party. The four candidates used in this case study are: Diane Denish - NM (D), Susana Martinez - NM (R), Terry Goddard - AZ (D), and Jan Brewer - AZ (R).

New Mexico

Throughout the following examination of the 2010 gubernato-

rial election in New Mexico, multiple political and cultural factors will be addressed. For the ease of clarity, they will be all stated here and then highlighted throughout the remainder of the section. Firstly, an overview of New Mexico’s history will be presented, highlighting three political factors: the state’s political affiliation, history of the governorship, and the state legislature’s political breakdown. As for cultural factors, the state of New Mexico’s Hispanic population will be addressed in the context of cultural factor that affect Martinez. The political factors that matter for Martinez are her previous jobs and affiliation with the Republican Party, along with her stance on larger issues like Katie’s Law and the economy. The two prominent cultural factors that matter for Martinez are her family and Hispanic origin. Diane Denish is compared on three similar political factors: previous occupations, Democratic affiliation, and position on larger issues. However, her cultural factors focus on her Caucasian origins and familial roots within the state of New Mexico.

New Mexico, dubbed a swing state due to its population favoring both Democratic and Republican presidential candidates and the state legislature’s frequent shifts in the political majority, acquired statehood in 1912. Prior to 2010, New Mexico had never elected a female governor and had only elected one female Lieutenant Governor. The New Mexico legislature has held a Democratic majority since 1987 but elected three Republican governors and two Democratic governors during that time (Melzer 320). This complex political climate set the stage for a contentious 2010 gubernatorial election.

The former governor, Bill

THE FORMULA:

$$\frac{SI_1 + SI_2 + FI_1 + PI_2 + RI_1}{5} = \text{Ideology}_{\text{average}}$$

Figure 2

Richardson (2002–2010), was a Democratic male serving with a female Lieutenant Governor, Diane Denish. Denish, with a background in business and past Chair of the Democratic Party of New Mexico, became the Democratic gubernatorial nominee in the 2010 election (“About Diane” 1). Denish’s opponent, Susanna Martinez, a Hispanic prosecutor and previously the District Attorney for the Third Judicial District in Southern New Mexico, ran as the Republican candidate (“Bio” 1). Both Denish and Martinez had extensive prior experience but because they cannot be ranked, the only measurable difference to note is racial. Martinez identifies as a Hispanic American, while Denish is Caucasian. According to the 2010 Census, 46.3% of the population in New Mexico is Hispanic (Ennis and Rio-Vargas 6). The majority of New Mexico’s Hispanic population openly supported Martinez, and she went on to be the first Hispanic female governor in America.

In terms of the candidates’ stances on issues, Denish and Martinez often disagreed on economics, however, found common ground when dealing with children’s rights legislation, which is reflected in their ideology scores. Two big issues addressed repeatedly throughout the campaign were the economy, specifically dealings with small business, and Katie’s Law. While both candidates are pro-small business, Denish is the only candidate to have concrete experience as she ran her family’s small business in the state for twelve years (“About Diane” 1). Martinez’s background as a prosecutor left her with a disadvantage because of her lack of experience with state fiscal matters. Martinez’s public stance was pro-tax reform and against raising the minimum

SUSANA MARTINEZ					<i>Alt-Ideology Score: 0.5</i>
SI ₁ : 0.5	SI ₂ : 0.5	FI ₁ : 0.5	PI ₁ : 0.0	RI ₁ : 1.0	
DIANE DENISH					<i>Alt-Ideology Score: -0.4</i>
SI ₁ : -1.0	SI ₂ : -1.0	FI ₁ : -0.5	PI ₁ : 0.0	RI ₁ : 0.5	

Figure 3

wage, the exact opposite of Denish’s stance (“Bio” 1). The second larger issue, Katie’s Law,¹ was given much attention during the campaign. Both candidates publicly supported this legislation, however, Martinez personally prosecuted and convicted Katie Sepich’s killer, giving her a large advantage in the public’s eyes (Simonich 1).

An important step in comparing and contrasting the candidates involves reviewing their alternative ideology score. Martinez and Denish are both ideologically moderate with respective scores of 0.5 and -0.4. Based on these scores, neither appealed to their Party’s extremists, instead they both engaged with centrists. On each of the five issues, the candidates received the following scores:

The outcome of the election resulted in a Republican gubernatorial victory by a margin of 6 points. Susana Martinez received 53% of the vote, while Denise Denish received 47%. The gubernatorial race affected the composition of the New Mexico state legislature: the House lost nine Democrats and gained eight Republicans (and one independent), the Senate remained the same. For a complete breakdown of the state legislature from 2009 to 2012 see appendix 2.

Arizona

Similarly to New Mexico,

before presenting all of the details explored in the case study, the political and cultural factors will be stated. An overall history of Arizona will be presented highlighting three political factors: the state’s political affiliation, history of the governorship, and the state legislature’s political breakdown. Then the candidates will be compared. The political factors that are relevant for Brewer are her previous occupation, affiliation with the Republican Party, and position on issues such as immigration and abortion. The two cultural factors that matter are Brewer’s family and education. As for Terry Goddard, the political factors that matter are his previous jobs, Democratic affiliation, and stance on the same issues mentioned above. The two key cultural factors that matter for Goddard are his education and family background.

Just like New Mexico, Arizona, established in 1912, is referred to as a swing state due to its fluid political climate. Unlike New Mexico, Arizona has elected four female governors, three consecutively. The Democratic governor from 2003–2009, Janet Napolitano did not complete her term due to her appointment as the United States Secretary of Homeland Security (“Janet Napolitano” 1). President Obama’s selection required another governor to be sworn-in and since Arizona does not have a Lieutenant Gover-

nor, the next in line was Jan Brewer, the Secretary of State for Arizona.

Brewer, a Republican, was sworn-in with one year until Napolitano's term expired. The former state legislator, with her vast previous political experience, became the Republican nominee for the 2010 gubernatorial election despite her lack of a college degree. This lack of education was prominent in contrast to Brewer's Democratic opponent's personal history. Terry Goddard served previously as the Mayor of Phoenix and later the state's Attorney General. Goddard came from a political legacy (having attended the prestigious Philips Exeter Academy and Harvard College) he followed in his family's political footsteps. Goddard's father served as Governor of Arizona and his great-grandfather was the Illinois Secretary of State ("Terry Goddard's Biography" 1).

During the campaign, Brewer and Goddard focused on very different issues. Brewer often discussed her success as governor during that short year, touting the passage of legislation that required all immigrants to carry identification and if caught without it they would be charged with a misdemeanor.² This law, considered to be the strictest immigration legislation passed in the United States, caused Brewer to soften her image late in the campaign (Archibold 1). Brewer began discussing her family's history, appealing to voters in a new way. The mother of three discussed the loss of one son to cancer and the hard legal time faced as the other was convicted of sexual assault twenty years prior. The latter son has since been institutionalized for mental health issues. Ironically, prior to using her son's mental health condition on the campaign trail, Brewer attempted to eliminate language from legislation

that allows citizens with mental disorders to be found not guilty on the basis of their condition. If this law had been passed her son would have served serious time in prison (Fischer 1).

An attorney by trade, Goddard focused more on the legal battles he accomplished during his time as Attorney General along with human rights issues. Goddard was well known for working on white-collar crime, but in order to appeal to a wider base his campaign publicized Goddard's role in convicting Warren Jeffs, the famous polygamist Mormon leader. Then, as an attempt to solicit the female vote, Goddard advertised his extensive support of Planned Parenthood, even speaking as the keynote during a 2010 conference. This highlighted the ideological differences between the candidates. Brewer was a well-

more vocal about their partisan views and attempted to appeal to their party's bases. On each of the five issues, the candidates received the following scores:

As the election date drew nearer the difference between the two candidates began to create a lead in favor of the current governor, Jan Brewer. In the end, Brewer received 54% of the vote, while Goddard received 42%. With a twelve-point margin, the state legislature also received a Republican bump, adding five seats in the house and three in the state senate. For a complete breakdown of the state legislature from 2009 to 2012 see appendix 2.

General Analysis

The largest problem with this case study is the inability to operationalize different factors when comparing the candidates. Even

JAN BREWER					<i>Alt-Ideology Score: 1.0</i>
SI₁: 1.0	SI₂: 1.0	FI₁: 1.0	PI₁: 1.0	RI₁: 1.0	
TERRY GODDARD					<i>Alt-Ideology Score: -0.8</i>
SI₁: -1.0	SI₂: -1.0	FI₁: -0.5	PI₁: -0.5	RI₁: -1.0	

Figure 4

known opponent of Planned Parenthood and during her time as a state legislator, she voted to cut funding for women's health care ("Jan Brewer Slashes Funding for Women's Health Care" 1).

In terms of the breakdown of the candidates' alternative ideology scores, they are polar opposites. Brewer and Goddard have a wide deviation, with scores classified as extreme equating to 1.0 and -0.8, respectively. These scores accurately depict the candidates' stances, but more so, the trajectory of the race. As time progressed both became

though the two separate categorizes, political and cultural factors, are clearly defined, one cannot simply state that a singular aspect of the race impacted the outcome more than another. However, one can note the important details presented and connect them to the candidates' ideology to form a large conclusion.

In the case of Martinez and Denish, the cultural factor of the candidates' races was a particularly important factor because of New Mexico's population (Ennis and Rio-Vargas 6). During this election cycle the federal government was

making a shift towards the Republican Party, specifically Tea Party politicians, which is often attributed by the media to be due to the low public approval of President Obama (Jones 1). Both candidates' ideology scores depict them as moderates and, because of New Mexico's purple state affiliation (political factor), the national elections could have swayed the state election towards the Republican candidate. In further research, in order to reach a more conclusive claim, an analysis of the national elections during 2010 should be examined. Without that, we currently know Republican females are already perceived as more moderate and therefore more likely to be elected in a purple state (Koch 453).

As for Goddard and Brewer, it is evident – based on political articles published during the time of the race – that their positions on social issues mattered greatly to voters and the outcome of the election. Their ideology scores reflected their partisanship, with each being classified as “extreme” based on the findings from my alternative ideology score. Along with their large ideological deviation, Brewer's position as *current* incumbent – even though she was only an interim governor for a year – gave her name recognition, which has been proven to be a powerful factor in election outcomes.

Conclusion

The question of how the political ideology of female Republican gubernatorial candidates, along with personal and professional cultural factors, affects their chance of election is still open. However, the new alternative ideology score presented in this research, used in conjunction with comparing and contrasting the candidates' political and cultural factors, provides a good basis to

examine the question further. The overall analysis suggests that no one factor will be the singular determinant in affecting the outcome of a gubernatorial election. This claim supports the ideas presented by Jason Windett, who stated that election outcomes are on a case-by-case basis and therefore cannot be determined by particular external factors. While this may be the situation, using an alternative ideology has shown to be a good measure of candidates' beliefs and if used in a broader context would also be able to assist with informing voters. If this research was to be expanded, the possibility of overgeneralization would be avoided and one could specifically focus on further development of an alternative ideology score, in addition to accounting for voters' perceptions.

Note

The appendices for this article can be found online at surjatclarku.com

Footnotes

¹ Katie's Law, named after Katie Sepich, requires all persons arrested for a violent felony in New Mexico to give a DNA sample.

² Commonly referred to as the “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhood Act.”

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