

Media Coverage of Governors' Policy Agendas

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Abstract: The media play an integral role in communicating political information from elected official to citizen. Most research examining the relationship between media coverage and governors focuses on campaigns and concludes that the media at times do not always portray campaign messages accurately for female candidates (Kahn 1994; Devitt 2002). Very little is known about how the media cover sitting governors much less whether the reporting varies by gender. We address this gap in the scholarship and examine the degree to which the media represent accurately governors' policy agendas - specifically those outlined in a governor's most visible speech, their annual state of the state address. To execute this analysis, we content analyze annual state of the state addresses from 2007 through 2011 and the resultant newspaper coverage. We also analyze gubernatorial press releases regarding their speeches. We find that media coverage of governors' addresses is largely faithful to the original message and that female reporters are slightly more accurate in their coverage than male reporters.

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U.S. governors have begun to steal the limelight from their federal elected official counterparts. Surely some of the shift in attention is due to the governors themselves and their controversial views and actions. Still, much of the change in both power and focus is due to the financial challenges many states face, particularly as the federal government grows increasingly reluctant to provide economic relief. Throw in controversies over health care mandates being challenged by over twenty-five states and one can see why states - and their governors - would attract attention. Arguably, the political battleground may be shifting from Washington, DC to the states. By virtue of their status as chief executive, governors necessarily claim the bulk of that limelight. So whether it is the looming recall election of the perceived union busting governor from Wisconsin, or the finger-wagging executive from Arizona, there is little doubt that as Peter Hamby (2011) from CNN suggests, political power is moving to the states and governors are the vanguard of that shift.

Among the prominent roles that governors play in state government are agenda setters and chief policymakers (Hertzik and Wiggins 1989; Gross 1989; Rosenthal 1990; Vinovskis 2008). At least since the Reagan years, state governments have shouldered more of the programmatic imperatives of government. As this type of federalism continues to unfold, scholars have begun to focus more intently on the policy making process at the state level (e.g. Cohen 2006; Jacoby and Schneider 2001; Dileo 1997; Hertzik and Brown 1991). That governors play a substantial role in shaping policy agendas is evident through their power of initiation. In state policymaking, as Hertzik reminds us, "Governors are the most central and visible individual actors influencing state policy" (1991, 27) and hold a significant advantage over state legislatures in setting the policy agenda (Jewell and Morehouse 2001).

Despite this central role governors play in the state policy process, scant research exists on how the media cover sitting governors. Much more evidence exists on how the media cover gubernatorial candidates (Kahn 1994; Freedman and Fico 2005, Fico and Freedman 2001; Atkeson and Partin 2001; Devitt 2002; Banwart et al.2003; Rausch and Wilson 2001). Underlying these research enterprises is an acknowledgment that while gubernatorial candidates are highly visible political actors whose proposed actions have substantive consequences, few citizens listen to them firsthand. In campaigns, politically aware citizens are likely to hear about gubernatorial candidates and their proposals through their paid advertisements and political debates as well as media accounts. Once elected, governors suffer from the same situation as their fellow state legislators-- the public rarely follows their actions or hears what they say directly.¹ Rather, what the public knows about governors and their policy priorities is filtered through the media. The media play a crucial role in providing the citizenry with summaries, interpretations, and analysis of state legislatures and governors. To the extent reporters faithfully report the messages of governors, the agendas they advocate will be well- or ill- known. Simply put, if the media do not accurately portray the policy agenda of governors, then citizens' ability to evaluate their performance is hindered and the representation link weakens.

We examine the degree to which the media accurately cover governors. To do so, we determine the policy agenda outlined in a governor's most visible speech, her annual state of the state address. We then compare the policy priorities outlined in the speech with the subsequent coverage in the media to gauge its accuracy of portraying the major themes of the governor's address. We begin by addressing how accurately the media relay the messages governors send to

¹ Though this may be changing as governors such as Scott Walker, Jan Brewer and others increasingly command a national spotlight.

their constituents. Since the accuracy of media coverage varies by gender in gubernatorial campaigns (Kahn 1994, 1996; Atkeson and Krebs 2008; Banwart 2003; Fico and Freedman 2001), we also examine gender differences in the veracity of coverage for sitting governors and include the gender of the reporter in our analysis. Finally, we conclude with a preliminary analysis of the policy priorities governors emphasize in their press releases announcing their state of the state addresses.

Scholarship & Expectations

We are aware of no research on the media coverage of sitting governors. However, studies of the media coverage and executive messages the presidential level conclude that the president's speeches do reach the public and can impact the policy making process (Cohen 1995; Canes-Wrone et al. 2001; Barrett 2007; Wanta et al. 2001). Some studies place much weight on the messages conveyed by presidents and how they affect (Cohen 1995) or respond to public opinion and/or the media (Canes-Wrone, et al.; 2001; Druckman and Holmes 2004; Yates and Whitford 2005; Wanta et al. 1989; Edwards and Wood 1999). In the absence of state level research we assume that the media plays a similar role in transmitting gubernatorial messages to the public and that the public's opinion of the governor is in turn influenced by information received through the media. Moreover, it is likely any media effect is even more pronounced at the state level since far fewer individuals actually listen to a state of the state address as compared to the presidential state of the union address.

Most studies that examine media coverage at the state level focus on campaigns and, as such, gubernatorial candidates for office (e.g., Atkeson and Partin 2001; Banwart et al. 2003; Fico and Freedman 2001; Kahn 1994, 1996). One key theme in this research is the use of gender stereotypes in the media coverage of female candidates for all levels of office (e.g., Atkeson and

Krebs 2008; Devitt 2002; Rausch and Wilson 2001; Kahn 1994, 1996). These studies find that media coverage varies systematically by gender. Specifically, analysis of campaign coverage of female and male candidates demonstrates that reporters often over represent women's emphasis on "women's issues" such as health care and family issues. Regardless of how female candidates prioritize those issues, the media tend to portray women candidates using stereotypes. However, we do not know if this stereotypical coverage at the candidate level translates into gender differences in the media coverage of sitting governors

Our expectations about how the media cover female governor's speeches are guided by the research on media coverage of campaigns. Consistent with previous work in that area, we expect there to be some slippage in the reporting of governors' state of the state addresses (Kahn 1994, 1996; Atkeson and Krebs 2008; Banwart 2003; Fico and Freedman 2001.) We expect the media to focus on the stereotypical women's issues when reporting on female governors as compared to those of their male counterparts, regardless of the emphasis on which the governors themselves place those issues. We further expect that the media coverage of male governors will accurately emphasize the same policies as does the governor. In short, we anticipate the media will do an accurate job of capturing the policy emphases from male governors but will distort the coverage of female governors.

Data - State of the State Addresses and Associated Press Stories

To test our expectations regarding gender and media coverage of governors we analyzed the state of the state speeches to determine the policy priorities of governors and compared the volume of attention on various policy areas in the actual speeches with the volume of attention in Associated Press (AP) reports of those speeches. We used governors' state of the state addresses

in our analysis because they are the best measure of the governor's policy priorities.² In addition, the state of the state address is likely the most visible speech given by the governor in any given year with two targeted audiences – the public and the legislature. The purposes of these speeches are to influence the legislative process either directly by setting the governor's agenda for the legislative session or indirectly to gain public support for this agenda, or both. On a more practical level, governors deliver this type of speech consistently throughout all of the states, and the texts can be acquired from state libraries and archives because they are public records.

The gubernatorial data for this analysis are 171 U.S. governors' state of the state addresses from 2007 through 2011(See Table 1).³ Of those speeches, Democrats gave 57% and Republicans delivered 43%. Speeches by the female governors serving over these five years represent almost 16% of the total number of state of the state speeches delivered.

[Table 1 about here]

To draw comparisons to the media coverage of governors' addresses, we chose to use newspaper coverage of the event because it is more detailed than local news broadcasts and also available online. In selecting the specific type of coverage, we have three objectives in mind. We want to make sure we use sources whose coverage is widely circulated, are available for replication, and that are comparable across the states. We chose to use the AP coverage of the speeches because they satisfy all three of our conditions. Most local papers rely on the

² State of the state addresses have typically been used to measure the policy agenda of governors (e.g. Herzik 1991; Coffey 2005; DiLeo 1997, 2001; Van Assendelft 1997). In some states budget or inaugural addresses are given in lieu of state of the state addresses and we used those speeches instead. Also, in some states, the legislature meets only once every two years so those states do not have annual state of the state addresses.

³ Due to the availability of the AP coverage, we have only included some of the state of the state speeches for 2007 and 2011. We are using all of the state of the state addresses given in 2008 through 2010.

Associated Press wire services and these stories provide an overview of the speech with little additional analysis. Also the coverage is fairly standard in length and context eliminating that sort of variance between newspapers. AP coverage is also available through Lexus/Nexus and is therefore available to most scholars. And, of course, we reduce any error associated with paper-specific bias in coverage.

Our analysis includes 171 media reports from AP of the state of the state addresses. Of course, since these data match the sample of speeches, 57% is devoted to coverage of Democrats while 43% is devoted to Republicans. Coverage of female governors occurs in 16% of the articles.⁴

Policy Dictionary and Method

We employed a computer-assisted technique to efficiently and reliably analyze both the speeches and the resulting media coverage. The first step is to determine what policy areas to investigate where gender differences may be present. We developed our policy dictionary based on gender differences in policy priorities found among state legislators. Women legislators introduce more bills related to women, children and family issues, health, welfare, and education and these areas reflect their legislative priorities. (Thomas 1991, 1994; Dobson and Carroll 1991; Thomas and Welch 1991; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Reingold 2000). Men give priority to business issues (Thomas 1991; Thomas and Welch 1991). Women legislators are more likely to sit on committees related to health and welfare than men and are less likely to sit on business or

⁴ We originally collected data for 2010 and found AP coverage for all states except two, Mississippi and Florida. We found suitable substitutions for those two states. We then expanded our data collection and had no problems finding AP coverage for all states for 2008 and 2009. However, AP coverage only exists for about a half of the 2007 speeches and only a handful of 2011 speeches. We have chosen to include those speeches in our analysis and have not yet determined if some other alternative speech coverage would be appropriate to use for the missing coverage in 2007 and 2011.

economic committees (Thomas and Welch 1991). Given these differences we have created five categories of policies where we anticipate there may be gender-based differences in the policies priorities of governors - health, social welfare, education, macroeconomic & commerce, and women's issues. In our analysis of the media coverage of governors, we anticipate that the media will devote more media attention than warranted by the actual speeches by female governors in the areas of health, social welfare, education, and women's issues. We anticipate that the coverage of macroeconomic & commerce for female governors may be less than anticipated based on their speeches since coverage is disproportionately greater in the other areas. Finally we expect reporting across all five policy areas to be accurately reflected for male governors.

The next step of this process is to develop a reliable data dictionary to reflect these five categories. We relied on several sources to develop a data dictionary for each policy area. First, we included the policy labels used by researchers who have categorized legislation or committee assignments in their analysis of gender differences among state legislators (Thomas 1991; Bratton and Haynie 1999). To supplement that list, we then included key words used by the Policy Agenda Project to describe each policy area and the policy words used in Coffey's (2005) analysis of state of the state speeches.

One of the benefits of computer aided content analysis over manual coding is that it can processes and analyze many documents reliably and extremely quickly. However, the data dictionary must be carefully constructed to ensure validity and avoid measurement errors. To avoid overlooking any key words and committing any Type II errors, one co-author performed a detailed manual content analysis on ten speeches in the greater sample. These words were added to our list and became the initial dictionary.

To test the validity of the initial dictionary, we randomly selected 25 speeches from our larger dataset and determined the number of times a word in the initial dictionary accurately represented the policy area being addressed. Dictionary words that reflected a different policy area or had no policy context were stripped from our data dictionary to minimize Type I errors.⁵ Words in the data dictionary must be disambiguous. That is, they should fall within one policy area or another but not both. Those words that did not were also removed from our dictionary. Finally we also eliminated words that appeared less than 5 times in the set of 25 test speeches as there was not sufficient data to conclude they were accurately measuring the underlying concept.⁶

Consistent with other significance testing, we wanted a 90% confidence level that the words used in each policy area were accurately measuring the concept. The final data dictionary appears in Table 2. These words are stemmed so that the analysis includes all versions of the word (e.g., singular and plural). The validation analysis demonstrates that the dictionary

⁵ For example, our original dictionary included the word "test" as an education policy word. However, this term often was used in a non-policy way. In other analysis we found, for example, that in Christine Todd Whitman's (R-NJ) 1994 speech she stated "Today's inauguration marks not a victory of partisanship, but a test of our democracy, of our ability to govern ourselves." The original dictionary also included "insurance" as a health policy word but it often referred to auto, house or Worker's Compensation insurance. These words and words that performed similarly were not included in our final dictionary.

⁶ The only exception to this rule was in developing the Women's Issues dictionary. Creating the women's issues category was more challenging than for the other policy categories, yet central to a study of gender differences in the policy priorities of governors and subsequent media coverage. As with the other categories, the women's issues policy area dictionary had to meet the threshold of correctly identifying a women's issue over 90% of the time. However, since this category is not discussed as frequently as the other's we also encountered the problem of using words that appeared infrequently but were important for defining the issue area. We made an exception to our rule of dropping words that appeared 5 or fewer times in the women's issues category. Given the centrality of these policy areas to gender, we left in the words gender, infant, and newborn. These words - like the others in the women's issues dictionary - correctly captured a women's issue 100% of the time so we felt confident with their inclusion.

correctly identifies speeches associated with each policy area between 90% and 100% of the time (See Table 3). We are confident that these words accurately identify the content associated with each policy area and that false positives are within the acceptable statistical threshold.

[Tables 2 and 3 about here]

Findings

To apply the data dictionary to the 171 speeches and resulting media coverage, we used Lowe's (2010) JFreq (v.0.2.3) program to create a matrix of all of the words that appear in all of the speeches. We then aggregated the policy specific words by category. State of the state addresses as well as the media coverage vary in length, so we took the totals by policy areas and divided that figure by the total number of words in the document (excluding stop words).⁷ As a result we have a measure of the volume of each speech and the corresponding media coverage devoted to a specific policy area.

Aggregate Differences in Media Coverage of State of the State Speeches

The average state of the state address contains about 2,140 words with some sort of contextual meaning. (See Table 4.) Examining overall gubernatorial priorities, the average speech mentions macroeconomics & commerce words the most at 74 times per speech, education receives 49 mentions, while health policy words appear 18 times, and social welfare and women's issues words appear at the same frequency with not quite 1 occurrence per speech. The length of the media coverage is roughly one-fifth of the length of the actual speeches (See Table 5).⁸ As a result, policy words appear less frequently although they do follow the same pattern as

⁷ Stop words are words such as "a", "the" and "what" that are devoid of any specific meaning. We have excluded them for our analysis to focus on words that should substantively contribute to the intent of the speech.

⁸ The AP articles include 433 non-stop words on average.

the speeches. The average AP story speech mentions macroeconomics & commerce words the most at 15 times per article, education receives 7 mentions, while health policy words appear 3 times, and social welfare and women's issues appear on average less than once. Since speeches and the press coverage vary in length, our key measure of analysis is the proportion of the particular policy area words under consideration to the total number of non-stop words. The rest of the analysis will focus on the proportional figures rather than the absolute word counts as this will allow for comparison between documents.

[Tables 4 and 5 about here]

As a precursor to our analysis of press coverage, we first examined differences in state of the state addresses among male and female governors. To determine if there are gender differences in the five policy areas, we compared the average frequency with which the policy words were spoken by the gender of the governors. Table 6 shows our results. We find no significant gender differences in any of the policy areas. The volume of state of the state speech dedicated to each policy area does not differ significantly by gender.⁹

[Table 6 about here]

To address our research question, we applied t-tests on the volume of the speeches dedicated to each policy area to the volume of press coverage. If the media faithfully report the

⁹ These findings are largely consistent with our previous research (Shafer and Herrera 2010). Using nearly all of the state of the state addresses from 1991 through 2010, we found that female governors were significantly more likely to discuss health policy issues while less likely to address social welfare than their male counterparts. The emphasis on health policy issues is consistent with gender differences found in the state legislatures, but the findings related to social welfare are contrary to expectations as we expected them to be emphasized more heavily by the female governors. We found no gender differences in the emphasis on education and macroeconomic & commerce issues. Our previous research did not address women's issues due to challenges in developing a valid data dictionary for this policy area.

content of the speeches and emphasize the same issues as the governors, there should be no significant difference. As shown in Table 7, we do find significant differences between the content of the speeches and the resulting coverage in two of the five policy areas under investigation. The press coverage significantly underreports both health and education policy areas as compared to the underlying speeches. There was no difference in the coverage of social welfare, macroeconomic & commerce, and women's issues policies. Figure 1 highlights graphically the proportion of speeches dedicated to each policy area as well as the proportion of the media coverage.

[Table 7 and Figure 1 about here]

We then repeated this analysis by gender to see if the uses of gender stereotypes are present in the press coverage. In the analysis of male governors only, again, the media significantly underreports the amount of the speech devoted to education (See Table 8 and Figure 2). Further, the reporting of the speeches devotes significantly more attention to macroeconomic & commerce policy than the speeches would warrant. There was no significant difference in coverage of health issues contrary to the findings for the overall sample and there were also no significant differences in social welfare policy or women's issues.

[Table 8 and Figure 2 about here]

In the analysis of the coverage of female governors, we also find some areas where the press accurately covers their speech and areas where there are significant differences. As shown in Table 9, there is a significant difference in the area of social welfare policy. The media coverage is significantly less likely to devote attention to this issue than to the actual speech. This is contrary to expectations and to evidence from gubernatorial campaigns, where social welfare issues are likely to be over-emphasized compare to other issues (Kahn 1994). Also, as

with male governors, the media significantly underreports the education policy content of the women governors' speeches. Since this difference is found for both male and female governors, gender stereotypes are likely not playing a role in the inaccurate coverage of this area. In the areas of health, macroeconomic & commerce, and women's issues policies we find no differences in the content of the speeches and the underlying coverage (See Figure 3). With few exceptions, the media reports of the state of the state addresses reflect the content of the underlying speeches. Also, there do not appear to be gender stereotypes used by reporters in reporting the governors' policy agendas.

[Table 9 and Figure 3 about here]

Partisan Differences in Media Coverage of State of the State Speeches by Female Governors

While gender differences are found in multiple areas in campaigns and institutions, the most significant differences in politics are usually based on partisan identification. Some scholars have found that partisanship typically trumps gender when it comes to the behavior of women officials. For example, gender differences among members of Congress are conditional on both party affiliation and majority/minority party status (Swers, 2002). Gender and party also intersect in how the public views women politicians. Some studies suggest that gender stereotypes persist in how elected officials are viewed by constituents regardless of party (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009; Fridkin and Kenney 2009). Yet, even in this area some have found that party continues to trump gender when vote choice is considered (Fulton 2011). Given the dominance of political party and the intersection of party and gender, it is important to consider our analysis within the context of party.

Female governors make up 16% of the Democratic governors in our sample and 9% of the Republican governors. Table 10 compares the proportion of state of the state address by

policy area to the media coverage for female Democrats. We find no significant differences in any of the policy areas between the state of the state speeches and the resultant coverage. The press accurately portrays female Democrats' agendas and gender stereotyping is not present. However, a different story emerges when examining Republican female governors (See Table 11 and Figure 4). The media coverage significantly underrepresents the amount of their speeches devoted to both social welfare and education policies. The degree of emphasis female Republican governors place on these issues is not reflected in the press coverage they receive, contrary to expectations about gender stereotyping. The difference is starkest in the area of education. Education policy words comprise 1.4% of the total speeches while they comprise less than 0.5% of the media coverage of those speeches. Given this difference, constituents from states governed by female Republican may receive a distorted view of their governors' emphasis on education policy.

[Tables 10 and 11 and Figure 4 about here]

Gender Differences in Media Coverage of State of the State Speeches Based on Reporter's Gender

Studies on female gubernatorial candidates indicate that the gender of the reporter influences the coverage. Kahn (1996) found that female reporters do a less accurate job of covering female gubernatorial candidates by overemphasizing female policy issues (p. 94). Devitt (2002) also found gender differences but largely due to male reporters using a personal frame significantly more often when covering female gubernatorial candidates versus male candidates. We now consider whether male or female journalists employ stereotypes or frames when reporting the content of female governors' policy proposals.

In our sample of we identify the gender of the reporter for 169 of the 171 AP reports.¹⁰ Twenty-four percent of the reporters are female with 17% of them covering Democrats and 33% writing about Republican speeches. To determine how accurately the coverage is by gender we took the proportion of a speech devoted to each policy area and subtracted from it the proportion of the AP coverage devoted to that policy area. For analysis purposes, we took the absolute value of the resulting difference. The lower the figure, the closer the media reporting is in capturing the same policy emphasis as in the speech.

In Table 12 we have computed the difference in the means from the relative distance between each speech and the resulting coverage by gender of reporter. We find significant differences in the veracity of media reporting based on gender of the reporter in the social welfare and education policy areas. Specifically, female reporters are more likely to accurately cover the social welfare and education policy areas than their male counterparts. While female reporters are doing a better job generally in covering this area, it is unclear if they are better at covering female, male or all governors.

[Table 12 about here]

To further explore the accuracy of coverage by gender, we divide the sample based on the gender of the governor. We find no differences in the accuracy of coverage for male governors based on the gender of the reporter with the exception of social welfare policy (See Table 13). Again, as with the overall sample, we find that female reporters do a better job in covering this area. A different pattern emerges when female governors are considered (See Table 14). Female reporters do a significantly better job at covering educational policy than their male

¹⁰ The other two news articles were co-authored by a male and female reporter.

colleagues. Moreover, female reporters do a better job of accurately reflecting the women's issues discussed in female governors speeches. In general, however, it appears that the gender of reporter has relatively little influence over the coverage of sitting governors although the evidence available suggests female reporters do a more faithful job of covering the speeches of governors regardless of gender.

[Tables 13 and 14 about here]

Gender Differences in State of the State Speeches Press Releases

When we first conceptualized this project on media accuracy we also began collecting the press releases for the state of the state addresses. Since the press releases targeted the media, the resulting news coverage could be influenced by the themes highlighted in the releases.

Moreover, the press releases serve as a way for governors to emphasize certain policy areas over others.

Contrary to our expectations, we found that many governors do not generate a content related press release regarding their state of the state address. In 2008 (the year with the most complete set of press releases to date), of the 44 speeches given that year, we have 16 press releases. In 18 instances we have confirmation that there was no press release provided; the press release was simply the text of the speech; or, in a few instances, only an announcement of the location and time of the speech was provided but no policy content was included. We are collecting the remaining 10 press releases from 2008 but anticipate that they will not be available in all cases.

So far we have obtained 48 press releases from 2008 through 2010. Sixty-five percent of the press releases are from Democrats, and 81% are from male governors. While not an exhaustive collection, there are enough press releases to conduct preliminary analysis.

The length of the average press release is roughly one-fourth of the length of the actual speeches and is nearly 100 words longer than the AP news story.¹¹ The relative frequency of policy words is the same as for the speeches and media coverage. The average press release mentions macroeconomics & commerce words the most at 23 times per release, education policy receives 12 mentions, while health policy words appear 5 times. Social welfare and women's issues appear on average less than once. Since the press releases vary in length, again our key measure of analysis is the proportion of the particular policy area words under consideration to the total number of non-stop words.

As when analyzing the media coverage, we applied t-tests on the volume of the speeches dedicated to each policy arena to the volume of press releases devoted to that area. If the press releases emphasize the same themes as the actual speeches, there should be no significant difference. The data confirm that assumption. As shown in Table 15 there are no significant differences in the content of the speeches and the press releases in any policy area. The press release does an effective job of signaling to the media the major themes in the upcoming speech.

[Table 15 about here]

When we examine only male governors, we again find that the press releases accurately reflect the speeches with one exception - women's issues (See Table 16). Male governors devote significantly less attention to women's issues in their press releases than the content of their speeches would suggest. When we consider only female governors, we find no significant differences between their speeches and press coverage in any of the policy areas (See Table 17). This finding does not align with expectations based on related studies. Dolan, et al. (2007), for example, find that female governors emphasize women's issues in the context of executive orders

¹¹ The press releases include 510 non-stop words on average.

which suggests the same pattern would occur in press releases, yet it does not. The finding about male governors deemphasizing women's issues is curious and may warrant a more detailed review of the context within which the governors characterize those issues in their speeches and press releases.

[Tables 16 and 17 about here]

Because collection of the press releases for 2007 through 2011 is ongoing and our dataset is incomplete, our results are necessarily inconclusive.¹² However, because we do not anticipate the availability of many more press releases, we do not expect our conclusions to change substantially.

Conclusion

Our analysis focused on the veracity of the media coverage of governors and whether that accuracy varies by gender. As in previous work, we uncovered few policy differences by gender in the state of the state speeches (Shafer and Herrera 2010). The policy agendas of governors vary little. We attribute those findings to the political reality that governors must address the same set of core state-based issues. Whether Democrat or Republican, woman or man, states' executives deal with budgetary, safety, education, and health issues. We found little evidence that press coverage of governors' policy agendas varies by gender even when accounting for party. Reporters, for the most part, accurately portray the speeches they cover although when considering all governors, they underreport the amount of attention given to health and education policy. As a result, individuals who choose only to read the coverage of the speeches may conclude that governors place a lower priority on these areas less than is actually the case.

¹² Also since we have only one press release by a female Republican governor we are unable to do any analysis based on party and gender.

Turning to gender differences in the coverage, we did find some slippage in both anticipated and unanticipated directions. Reporters tended to overemphasize the extent to which male governors address macroeconomic & commerce policy issues. This finding may reflect the gender stereotype in policy areas since it is considered an area of expertise for male officials. Female Republican governors receive significantly less coverage on education and social welfare policy than their speeches would suggest. These findings are contrary to gender stereotypes used by the media and applied to women candidates. The media does a good job of reflecting all of the policy areas for female Democrats. This mixed finding for female governors indicates that party and gender interact when media cover governors. We find some evidence that party trumps gender in media portrayals of Republican governors' policy priorities.

The gender of reporter does play a role in the accuracy of the media coverage of governors. Female reporters are generally more accurate in their descriptions of governors' state of the state addresses. Yet, we do not find systematic use of gender stereotypes by the press with one exception; female reporters do a more accurate job of reflecting women's issues covered in speeches given by female governors compared to male reporters.

One as yet unfinished part of this analysis regards the press releases by governors of their speeches. The press releases are governors' opportunities to prime the media on their priorities. Curiously, we found relatively few governors take advantage of that opportunity. Of those who did, male governors deemphasized their interest in women's issues. In all other areas, the press releases accurately preview the upcoming speeches. Once all of the available press releases have been collected we will be able to develop this analysis more fully.

Finally, our analysis suggests that unlike in gubernatorial campaigns in which female candidates' messages may be distorted by the media, we find that once governors take office, the

transmission of their policy agendas and priorities remains largely intact as it passes through the media to the voter. If the public chooses to obtain press coverage of their governors' state of the state speeches, the first representational linkage between voters and their states' top executive, with few exceptions, appears strong.

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Table 1: Governors Included in Analysis

Female Governors	State	Party	Male Governors,	State	Party
Blanco, Kathleen	Louisiana	D	Huntsman, John	Utah	R
Brewer, Jan	Arizona	R	Jindal, Bobby	Louisiana	R
Fallin, Mary	Oklahoma	R	Kaine, Tim	Virginia	D
Granholtz, Jennifer	Michigan	D	Kulongoski, Ted	Oregon	D
Gregoire, Christine	Washington	D	Lynch, John	New Hampshire	D
Lingle, Linda	Hawaii	R	Manchin, Joe	West Virginia	D
Minner, Ruth Ann	Delaware	D	Markell, Jack	Delaware	D
Napolitano, Janet	Arizona	D	McDonnell, Bob	Virginia	R
Palin, Sarah	Alaska	R	Mead, Mead	Wyoming	R
Perdue, Beverly	North Carolina	D	Nixon, Jay	Missouri	D
Rell, M. Jodi	Connecticut	R	O'Malley, Martin	Maryland	D
Sebelius, Kathleen	Kansas	D	Otter, C.L. (Butch)	Idaho	R
Male Governors	State	Party	Parkins, Mark	Kansas	D
Abercrombie, Neal	Hawaii	D	Parnell, Sean	Alaska	R
Baldacci, John	Maine	D	Patrick, Deval	Massachusetts	D
Barbour, Haley	Mississippi	R	Patterson, David	New York	D
Beebe, Mike	Arkansas	D	Pawlenty, Tim	Minnesota	R
Bentley, Robert	Alabama	R	Perdue, Sonny	Georgia	R
Beshear, Steve	Kentucky	D	Perry, Rick	Texas	R
Blagojevich, Rod R.	Illinois	D	Quinn, Pat	Illinois	D
Blunt, Matt	Missouri	R	Rendell, Ed	Pennsylvania	D
Bredesen, Phil	Tennessee	D	Richardson, Bill	New Mexico	D
Carcieri, Donald	Rhode Island	R	Riley, Robert R.	Alabama	R
Christie, Chris	New Jersey	R	Ritter, Bill	Colorado	D
Corzine, Jon	New Jersey	D	Rounds, M. Michael	South Dakota	R
Crist, Charles	Florida	R	Sanford, Mark	South Carolina	R
Culver, Chet	Iowa	D	Schwarzenegger,	California	R
Daniels, Mitch	Indiana	R	Schweitzer, Brian	Montana	D
Douglas, Jim	Vermont	R	Spitzer, Eliot	New York	D
Doyle, Jim	Wisconsin	D	Strickland, Ted	Ohio	D
Easley, Mike	North Carolina	D	Tomblin, Earl Ray	West Virginia	D
Freudenthal, Dave	Wyoming	D	Vilsack, Thomas	Iowa	D
Gibbons, Jim	Nevada	R			
Heineman, Dave	Nebraska	R			
Henry, Brad	Oklahoma	D			
Herbert, Gary	Utah	R			
Hoeven, John	North Dakota	R			

Table 2. Data Dictionary (Stemmed) by Policy Areas

Health	Social Welfare	Education	Macroeconomics & Commerce	Women's Issues
Biomed	Elder	Academ	Busi	Discrimin
Coverag	Foster	Charter	Compani	Domest
Disabl	Suffic	Class	Corpor	Gender
Diseas	Welfar	Colleg	Econom	Infant
Health		Educ	Entrepreneur	Newborn
Hospit		Elementari	Export	Pregnanc
Medicaid		Kindergarten	Farm	Rape
Mental		Math	Foreclos	Sexual
Nurs		Principl	Global	
Prescript		Read	Income	
Uninsur		Scholarship	Industri	
		School	Inflat	
		Secondari	Infrastructur	
		Standard	Job	
		Student	Manufactur	
		Teach	Research	
		Tenur	Regul	
		Univers	Tax	
			Train	
			Tourism	
			Unemploy	
			Wage	

Table 3: Validation of Data Dictionary

Policy Area	Total word count	Words correctly identified	Words incorrectly identified	Proportion correct
Health	303	277	26	91%
Social Welfare	92	87	5	95%
Education	1,323	1,184	139	90%
Macroeconomics & Commerce	1,443	1,292	151	90%
Women	50	50	0	100%

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for all speeches

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total of words with stop words removed	439	5,333	2,139	812.0
Total number of health words	0	72	17.1	13.5
Total number of social welfare words	0	8	0.74	1.3
Total number of education words	2	320	48.5	32.9
Total number of macroeconomic & commerce words	2	196	73.8	37.8
Total number of women's issues words	0	18	0.95	2.2
Proportion of words devoted to health	0	.0290	.008	.004
Proportion of words devoted to social welfare	0	.002	.001	.006
Proportion of words devoted to education	.016	.077	.023	.012
Proportion of words devoted to macroeconomics & commerce	.005	.010	.035	.014
Proportion of words devoted to women's issues words	0	.008	.000	.001
N =	171			

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for all media coverage

	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total of words with stop words removed	208	641	402.6	86.4
Total number of health words	0	24	2.9	3.6
Total number of welfare words	0	4	0.2	0.6
Total number of education words	0	34	7.4	6.8
Total number of macroeconomic & commerce words	0	50	14.8	8.9
Total number of women's issues words	0	5	0.1	0.5
Proportion of words developed to health	0.000	0.052	0.007	0.008
Proportion of words developed to social welfare	0.000	0.011	0.007	0.008
Proportion of words developed to education	0.000	0.113	0.018	0.015
Proportion of words developed to macroeconomics & commerce	0.000	0.140	0.037	0.021
Proportion of words devoted to women's issues words	0.000	0.009	0.000	0.001
N =	171			

Table 6: Mean Proportion of Speeches Dedicated to Each Policy Area by Gender

	Female	Male	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.007	0.008	-0.001	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0003	0.0004	-0.000	n.s.
Education Policy	0.0227	0.0227	-0.000	n.s.
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.033	0.035	0.002	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0005	0.0004	0.0000	n.s.
N	27	144		

Table 7: Mean Proportion Dedicated to Each Policy Area - All Governors

	Speech	AP coverage	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.008	0.007	0.001	p<0.1
Social Welfare Policy	0.0003	0.0004	-0.0001	n.s.
Education Policy	0.023	0.018	0.005	p<0.001
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.035	0.037	-.0.002	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0004	0.0003	0.0001	n.s.
N	171			

Table 8: Mean Proportion Dedicated to Each Policy Area - Male Governors

	Speech	AP coverage	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.008	0.007	0.001	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0003	0.0005	-0.0001	n.s.
Education Policy	0.023	0.019	0.004	p<0.001
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.035	0.038	-.0.003	p<0.1
Women's Issues	0.0005	0.0004	0.0001	n.s.
N	144			

Table 9: Mean Proportion Dedicated to Each Policy Area - Female Governors

	Speech	AP coverage	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.008	0.006	0.002	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0002	0.0000	0.0003	p<0.01
Education Policy	0.023	0.015	0.008	p<0.01
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.033	0.031	0.002	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0004	0.0001	0.0002	n.s.
N	27			

Table 10: Mean Proportion Dedicated to Each Policy Area - Female Democrats

	Speech	AP coverage	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.009	0.007	0.001	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	n.s.
Education Policy	0.029	0.023	0.006	n.s.
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.036	0.031	0.005	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0005	0.0001	0.0003	n.s.
N	16			

Table 11: Mean Proportion Dedicated to Each Policy Area - Female Republicans

	Speech	AP coverage	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.006	0.004	0.002	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0006	0.0000	0.0006	p<0.01
Education Policy	0.014	0.004	0.010	p<0.001
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.028	0.030	-0.002	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0003	0.0002	0.0001	n.s.
N	11			

Table 12: Mean Distance between State of the State Address and Media Coverage by Policy Area by Gender of Reporter

	Female Reporter	Male Reporter	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.006	0.006	0.000	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0003	0.0007	-0.000	p<0.05
Education Policy	0.008	0.012	-0.004	p<0.05
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.013	0.013	0.001	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0006	0.0006	0.000	n.s.
N	41	128		

Table 13: Mean Distance between State of the State Address and Media Coverage by Policy Area by Gender of Reporter - Male Governors Only

	Female Reporter	Male Reporter	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.006	0.006	0.000	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0003	0.0007	-0.000	p<0.05
Education Policy	0.008	0.012	-0.003	n.s.
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.012	0.013	-0.001	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0005	0.0006	0.000	n.s.
N	32	111		

Table 14: Mean Distance between State of the State Address and Media Coverage by Policy Area by Gender of Reporter - Female Governors Only

	Female Reporter	Male Reporter	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.007	0.006	0.000	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0002	0.0003	-0.000	n.s.
Education Policy	0.007	0.016	-0.009	p<0.01
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.017	0.010	0.008	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0002	0.0007	-0.000	p<0.1
N	9	17		

Table 15: Mean Proportion Dedicated to Each Policy Area - All Governors

	Speech	Press release	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.008	0.009	-0.001	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0003	0.0001	0.0001	n.s.
Education Policy	0.023	0.023	0.000	n.s.
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.038	0.040	-.0.002	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0003	0.0002	0.0000	n.s.
N	48			

Table 16: Mean Proportion Dedicated to Each Policy Area - Male Governors

	Speech	Press release	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.008	0.009	-0.001	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0003	0.0001	0.0001	n.s.
Education Policy	0.023	0.023	0.000	n.s.
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.038	0.040	-.0.003	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0002	0.0000	0.0001	p<0.05
N	39			

Table 17: Mean Proportion Dedicated to Each Policy Area - Female Governors

	Speech	Press release	Difference	Significance
Health Policy	0.009	0.010	-0.001	n.s.
Social Welfare Policy	0.0002	0.0002	-0.0000	n.s.
Education Policy	0.025	0.024	0.000	n.s.
Macroeconomic & Commerce Policy	0.038	0.036	.0.002	n.s.
Women's Issues	0.0007	0.0009	-0.00002	n.s.
N	9			

Figure 1: Mean Proportion of Speech Compared to Mean Proportion of AP Coverage by Policy Area - all Governors

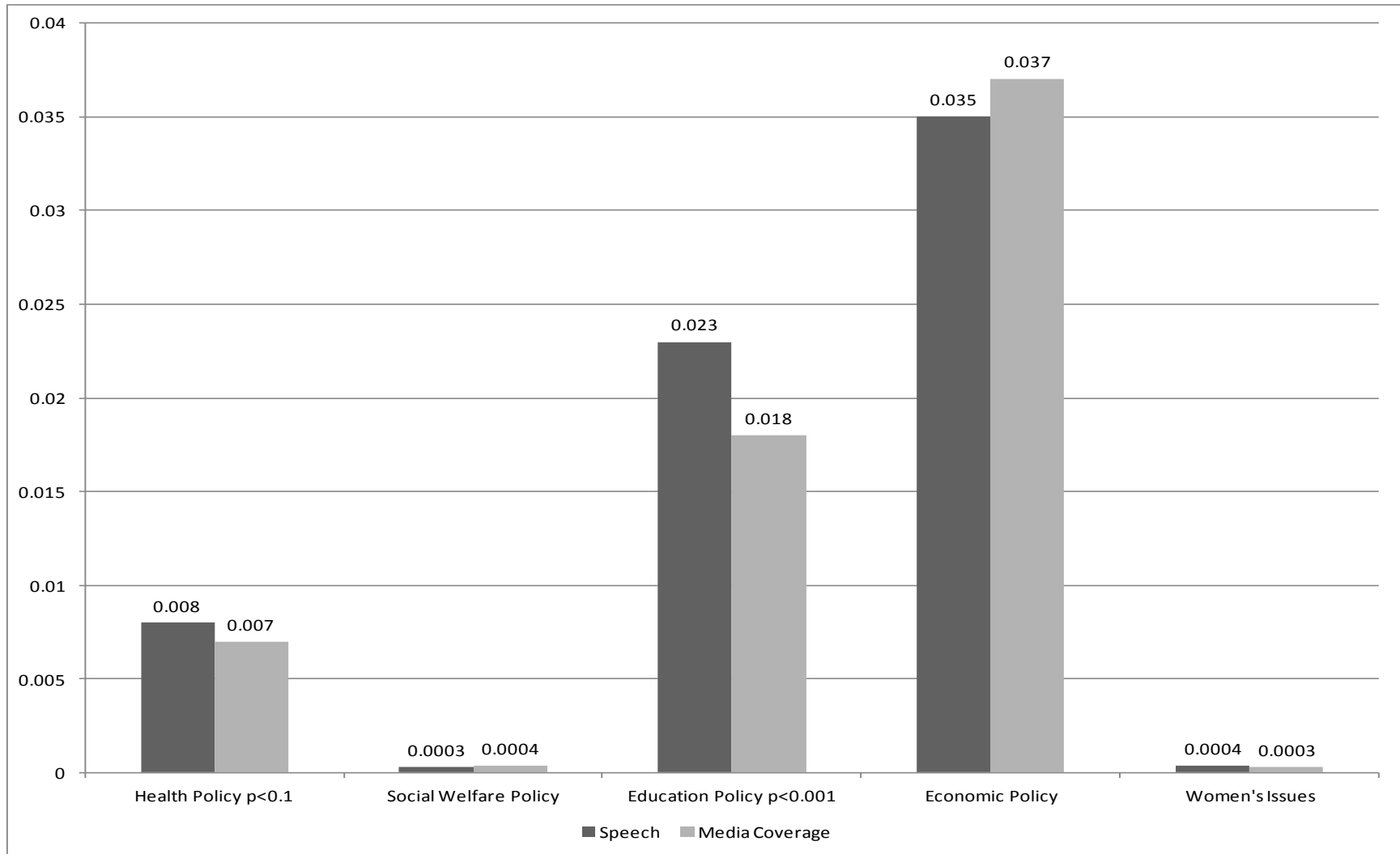


Figure 2: Mean Proportion of Speech Compared to Mean Proportion of AP Coverage by Policy Area - Male Governors

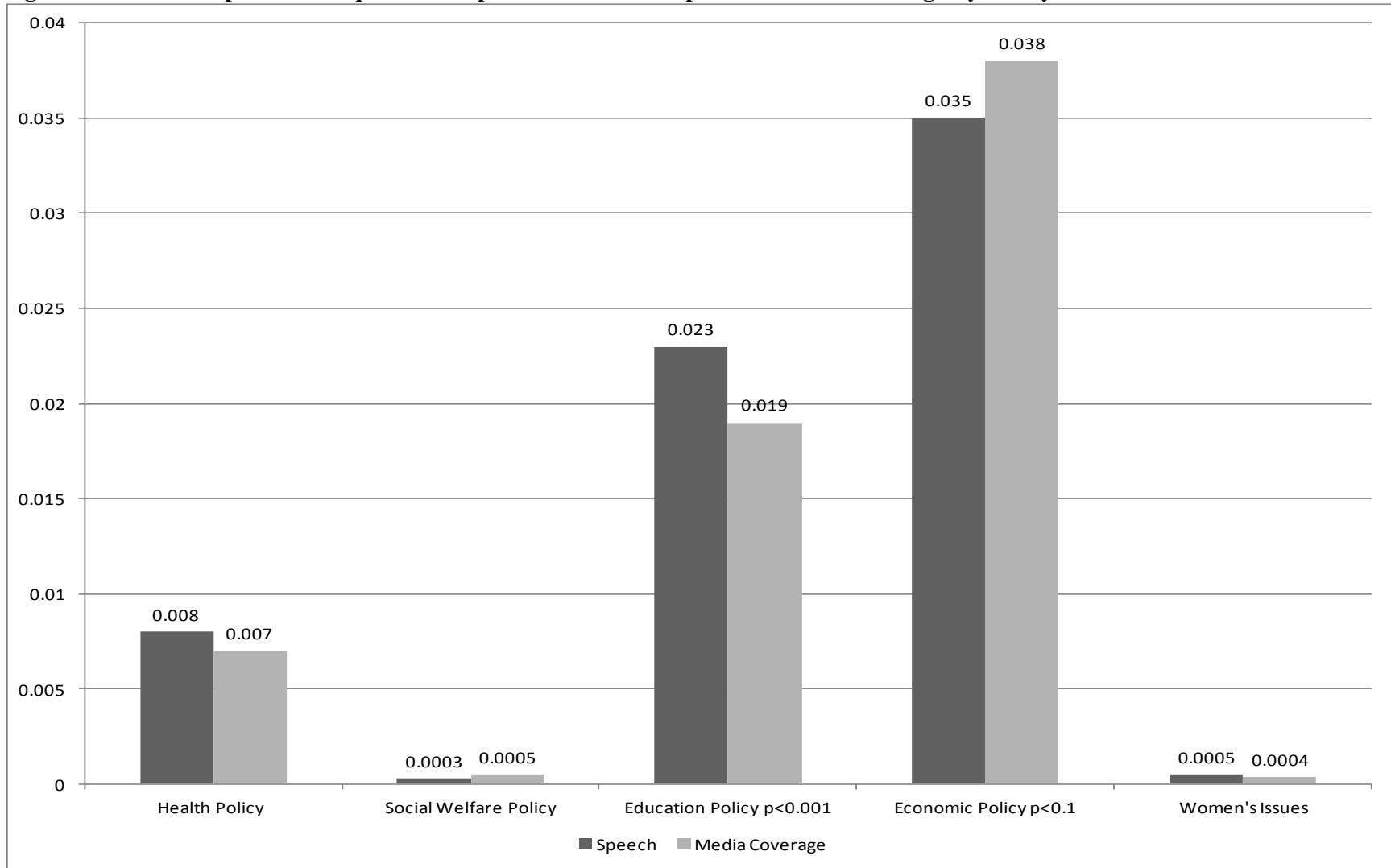


Figure 3: Mean Proportion of Speech Compared to Mean Proportion of AP Coverage by Policy Area - Female Governors

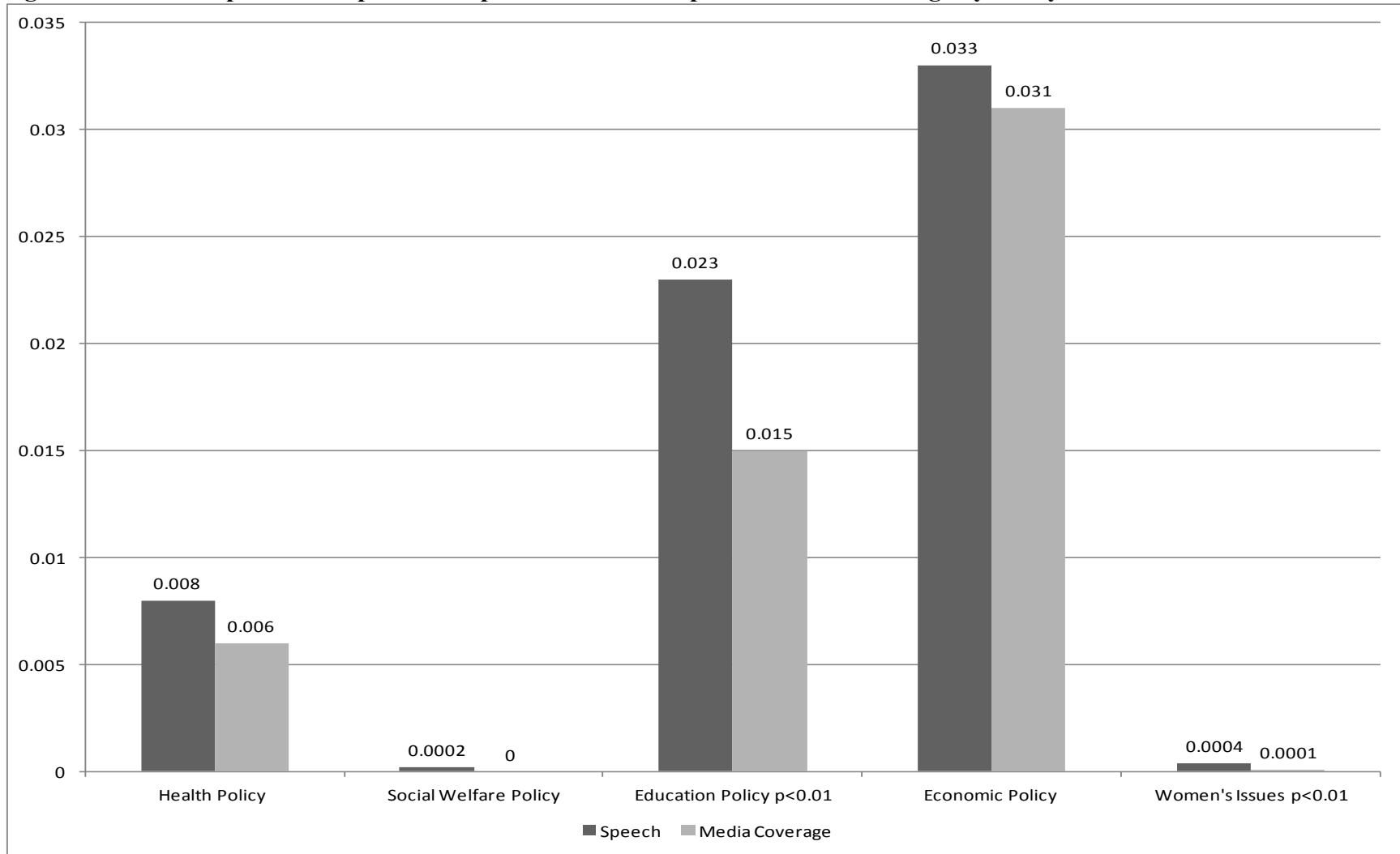


Figure 4: Mean Proportion of Speech Compared to Mean Proportion of AP Coverage by Policy Area - Female Republican Governors

