

Context and Media Frames: The Case of Liberia

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There is a growing body of work examining gender stereotypes in media representations of female candidates, but much of this literature is based on analysis of media sources in developed countries, including the United States (Braden 1996; Jalalzai 2006; Kahn 1994, 1996; Smith 1997), Australia (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008), Canada (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008), France (Murray 2010b), and Germany (Wiliarty 2010). The increase in female presidential candidates and presidents in Latin America has encouraged research on media portrayals of women in Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela (Franceschet and Thomas 2010; Hinojosa 2010; Piscopo 2010; Thomas and Adams 2010). To date, however, there has been little research exploring media representations of female politicians in Africa. (Exceptions include Adams 2010; Anderson, Diabah, and hMensah 2011). A question that emerges is whether the gender stereotypes common in coverage in the United States, Europe, and Latin America are also prevalent in Africa.

In addition, there is relatively little information on how incumbency affects coverage of female politicians, especially at the level of the presidency. In recent years, more women have won second (or third) terms as presidents or prime ministers, including Angela Merkel in Germany (reelected in 2009 and 2013), Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner

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in Argentina (reelected in 2011), Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia (reelected in 2011), and Michelle Bachelet in Chile (reelected in 2013). When women run as incumbents (or past office holders in the case of Bachelet), does media coverage change?

This article sheds light on African particularities and incumbent effects by analyzing media coverage of the 2011 presidential campaign in Liberia. It focuses on coverage of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her chief challenger, Winston Tubman. It also compares coverage of Johnson Sirleaf in 2011 and 2005, juxtaposing the results from the media analysis of the 2011 campaign with findings from previous studies on the 2005 campaign (Adams 2010; Moran 2012; Thomas and Adams 2010). It finds that Liberia does not conform to many of the gender stereotypes that appear in other world regions. In 2011, Johnson Sirleaf received more coverage than Tubman and was identified with a broader range of issues. There was no coverage of her appearance and little mention of her family roles. The one area that does correspond with expectations concerns the use of the first name — Liberian journalists used Johnson Sirleaf's first name far more frequently than Tubman's. Most of these media patterns are similar in 2005 and 2011. The main differences are that Johnson Sirleaf received less coverage than her male opponent in 2005, there was less discussion of her prepresidential experience in 2011, and there were fewer allusions to her maternal status in 2011. These findings suggest that context matters. Context is not only location specific (e.g., linked to current cultural norms and political institutions within a country), but also tied to the characteristics of specific candidates. When women run as incumbents, the press may be less likely to employ gender stereotypes that reinforce traditional gender roles.

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN MEDIA COVERAGE

The literature on gender stereotypes in media coverage of candidates identifies differences in the amount, type, and tone of coverage of women and men. Studies of American senatorial and gubernatorial races in the 1980s found that female candidates often received less coverage than male candidates (Kahn 1994, 1996). More recent analyses find that differences in the amount of coverage devoted to male and female candidates have decreased or have even been eliminated (Bystrom et al. 2004; Jalalzai 2006; Kittilson and Fridkin 2008; Smith 1997).

Even as differences in the amount of coverage seem to be diminishing, women may still receive different kinds of coverage. Past research has indicated that the press is more likely to focus on female candidates' appearance (Braden 1996; Heith 2003; Murray 2010a). Since press coverage is limited, any attention to a candidate's clothing or hairstyle can diminish the amount of space available to discuss issues. This pattern of greater attention to women candidates' appearance is not limited to the U.S. context; scholars have found similar patterns in Germany (Wiliarty 2010), Venezuela (Hinojosa 2010), and Argentina (Piscopo 2012).

The literature also suggests that journalists pay more attention to women's family roles (wife, mother, grandmother) (Murray 2010a). Women may be characterized as the "wife of" rather than as an autonomous individual. Murray (2010a, 19–20) indicates that women also face the "Mommy Problem," in which a focus on women's maternal characteristics undermines their authority and makes them less competitive for executive office. Press treatment of female candidates uses the first name more frequently, suggesting a lack of familiarity with women candidates and less formality and respect (Murray 2010a; Uscinski and Goren 2011).

Kahn (1994) notes that voters weigh the candidates' positions on critical issues when making decisions about which candidate to support. Female candidates are associated more frequently with feminine issues like women's rights, education, health, welfare, and the environment (Alexander and Anderson 2003; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Jalalzai 2006; Kittilson and Fridkin 2008). While these associations with feminine issues can be helpful for women running for state and local offices (Atkeson and Krebs 2008), they may disadvantage women running for presidential elections, since issues related to the economy, defense, and foreign affairs generally dominate presidential races.

Some scholars have found that women receive more "horse race" coverage that focuses on their viability than men (Kahn 1996). While Jalalzai (2006) finds that, as a whole, male candidates receive more horse race coverage, when limiting her analysis to competitive men and women candidates, her data indicate that women receive a higher proportion of horse race coverage. In their comparative study, Kittilson and Fridkin (2008, 381) do not find significant differences in the amount of attention devoted to male and female candidates' viability.

Electoral systems, party systems, and other political institutions shape the nature of campaigns and how the press covers elections (Kittilson and

Fridkin 2008). Culture also matters because gender norms vary across states and over time. Examining international and African media coverage of the 2005 Liberian elections, Anderson, Diabah, and hMensah (2011, 2516) find that attention on Johnson Sirleaf's appearance and her marital and maternal roles was more pronounced in the international media sources, observing that "the African media reporters make fewer and less explicit gender-biased references." As the gender context changes (i.e., as more women gain access to political power), media coverage may also change (Jalalzai 2006).

As more women enter elected office, there are also greater numbers of women incumbents. Most of the literature on the gendered effects of incumbency focuses on how incumbency constrains women's access to political power by conferring electoral advantages on (mostly male) incumbents (Darcy and Choike 1986; Schwindt-Bayer 2005). Recent scholarship, though, has begun to examine whether incumbency confers the same advantages on women office holders as it does on men. Shair-Rosenfield and Hinojosa (2014), for example, find that female incumbents in Chile who run for reelection are as likely as male incumbents to retain their seats. Women who have demonstrated their ability to win elections may face less bias — at least from voters — in subsequent elections. Women office holders also have the opportunity to challenge traditional gender stereotypes.

There is relatively little scholarship that looks specifically at how incumbency affects media representations of male and female leaders. Examining media coverage of the 2005 and 2009 German elections, Wiliarty (2010, 141) finds that Angela Merkel received more coverage than her male counterparts in both 2005 and 2009 but that the difference was more pronounced in 2009. Moreover, in 2009, the media employed more powerful images of Merkel, leading Wiliarty (2010, 153) to conclude that "[i]t is likely that after four years in office, potential stereotypical images of powerless women simply made no sense in connection with Merkel and the press began to find other images with which to describe her campaign."

THE LIBERIAN CONTEXT AND THE 2011 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Before testing the extent to which the Liberian case corroborates or complicates existing findings, it is important to have a sense of the

country's political context. In recent decades, Liberia has been marked by significant conflict. In 1980, Samuel Doe overthrew the long-standing Americo-Liberian dynasty of the True Whig Party, which had monopolized economic and political power for more than a hundred years. Doe, Liberia's first indigenous leader, led a government marked by violence, authoritarianism, and increased ethnic exclusivity. Liberian rebel leader Charles Taylor invaded Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire on December 24, 1989, sparking a seven-year civil war. After numerous failed peace processes, the 1996 Abuja Accord paved the way for elections. Taylor, who controlled much of the media outside of the capital, Monrovia, and threatened to restart war if he did not win the presidency, won the 1997 special presidential elections with 75% of the vote. Despite Taylor's victory, Liberia experienced renewed violence in 1999. The second civil war lasted from 1999 until 2003, when, under pressure from Liberian civil societal groups and the international community, the parties to the conflict negotiated the Accra peace accord, which led to a transitional government and elections in 2005.

Johnson Sirleaf, who contested those elections, drew on a long history of political activism. She had served as minister of finance under William Tolbert's administration (1979–80). She won a Senate seat in 1985. However, to protest the flawed elections, she refused to take her seat, which led to her arrest. She eventually left the country and spent time in exile working for Citibank, the World Bank, and the United Nations. A vocal critic of Doe, Johnson Sirleaf initially supported Taylor's effort to overthrow Doe. In her memoir, she admits to visiting Taylor and providing him with \$10,000 but indicates that she soon withdrew her support. In 1997, Johnson Sirleaf returned to Liberian politics, running against Taylor and eleven other candidates for the presidency. She came in a distant second, attracting less than 10% of the vote. Following the second civil war, she once again entered the political fray. In a field of 22 candidates, she placed second in the first round of the 2005 election, winning just under 20% of the vote and trailing former soccer star George Weah, who garnered 28% of the vote. During the runoff, Johnson Sirleaf was able to draw support from candidates who failed to make it to the second round and won the presidency with 59.4% of the vote. The level playing field, support from women, and her education (she holds an MPA from Harvard), political experience, and international connections (especially to donor states and international financial institutions like the World Bank) helped propel her to victory (Adams 2008; Bauer 2009; Harris 2006).

Winston Tubman, who emerged as Johnson Sirleaf's main challenger in 2011, comes from a prominent political family in Liberia. The BBC characterizes him as "from Liberia's political royalty."¹ He is the nephew of William Tubman, the longest-serving Liberian president (1944–71). Like Johnson Sirleaf, he is well educated, having studied at Harvard, Cambridge, and the London School of Economics. He is a lawyer who served as the Justice Minister under Doe's government. He has worked in the United Nations as a member of the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) and as a UN envoy to Somalia.² In 2005 he ran for the presidency under the banner of the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), coming in fourth with 9.2% of the vote. In 2011, the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), Weah's party in 2005, selected Tubman as its standard-bearer and Weah as his running mate, pairing Tubman's education, experience, and international connections with Weah's charisma and appeal to the youth and ordinary Liberians.

The 2011 Liberian presidential elections were the second postwar elections. Sixteen candidates, including three women, competed in the first round, which was held on October 11.³ Johnson Sirleaf came into this election as the incumbent, carrying not only years of experience and name recognition, but also the baggage of unfulfilled expectations given Liberia's slow pace of economic development. Continuity was the central theme expressed in colorful slogans such as "Monkey still working, let baboon wait small" and "When the plane e'en land yet, don't change the pilots!"

Johnson Sirleaf's campaign also highlighted experience. The UP identified a range of issues, including accountability, debt relief, education, fighting crime, international respect, sanitation, salary increases, and women's rights and highlighted the UP's strength in each realm. The signs for each issue were nearly identical. Each sign featured images of Johnson Sirleaf and Boakai and the slogan: "Ellen & Joe, [Issue area], Da Their Area." UP campaign materials primarily referred to Johnson Sirleaf and her running mate by their first names. Her 2011 campaign used nicknames like "Ma Ellen" infrequently, although messages focused on children ("For our children's sake, all the way with Ma Ellen") called attention to her maternal status.

1. "Liberia Election: Winston Tubman Profile," BBC, November 8, 2011. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15590715> (accessed February 23, 2016).

2. *Ibid.*

3. The other two women were Gladys Beyan (1.1%) and Manjemgie Cecelia Ndebe (0.5%).

Tubman's CDC campaign emphasized national reconciliation — a weakness for Johnson Sirleaf given her testimony at Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings and the recommendations made in the TRC final report. The CDC also appealed to the youth via its charismatic vice-presidential candidate, Weah. CDC campaign materials were generally more formal than those of the UP. While the UP referred to its candidates as Ellen and Joe, the CDC not only used full names (including middle initials), but also sometimes included titles, referring to Cllr. Winston A. Tubman and Amb. George M. Weah. The CDC may have felt it was necessary to emphasize their candidates' education and experience since Weah was criticized in 2005 for his youth and lack of formal education. Following his failed 2005 presidential campaign, Weah returned to school, completing a degree from DeVry University in the United States in business administration.

The Liberian electoral system requires that presidential candidates gain at least 50% of the vote. If no candidate breaks the 50% threshold, then the top two candidates move on to a second round. The Liberian National Election Commission (NEC) released the first-round results on October 25, 2011, indicating that Johnson Sirleaf had placed first (43.9%) and Tubman second (32.7%). Both moved on to a runoff election on November 8, 2011. Citing electoral irregularities (despite evidence from domestic and international observers that the results announced by the NEC accurately reflected the vote), the CDC boycotted the second round. Turnout in the second round declined dramatically (from 71.6% to 38.6%), and Johnson Sirleaf won 90.7% of the vote (NEC 2011).

ANALYSIS OF 2011 ELECTION COVERAGE

The analysis of Liberian media coverage of the 2011 campaign covers the period between the first and second rounds. We collected newspaper articles from LexisNexis, searching for coverage of Tubman and Johnson Sirleaf between October 11, 2011, and November 8, 2011. The sample includes five Liberian-based newspapers available through LexisNexis. These sources are the *The Analyst* (n = 49), *The Heritage* (n = 35), *The Informer* (n = 25), *The New Dawn* (n = 70), and *New Democratic* (n = 39). They are well-established newspapers included in other studies (Bauer 2009).⁴ We included all five newspapers available in LexisNexis

4. Only *The New Dawn* is not included in these studies, but it is available through LexisNexis and AllAfrica.com.

to reduce any effects of bias displayed in a single publication.⁵ The fact that there were only two candidates (one woman and one man) in the second round makes it easier to identify gendered patterns of media coverage.

All five newspapers included in the analysis are privately owned. In 2011, Freedom House rated Liberia's press freedom as "partly free," noting that "the constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the government largely respected these rights in 2011" (Freedom House 2012). The 2012 Liberia Media Sustainability Index (MSI) gave a positive evaluation of the Liberian press, concluding that it "perform[ed] in outstanding fashion during the 2011 elections in Liberia ... [and] is considerably stronger and more influential than it was a few years ago" (IREX and LMC 2012, 211). Liberia performed above the sub-Saharan Africa regional average in all five objectives included in the MSI,⁶ and in the area of freedom of speech, only Ghana, Namibia, and South Africa scored higher than Liberia (IREX 2012).

The Liberian media largely eschew endorsements. In 2005, only one newspaper endorsed a presidential candidate when the *Daily Observer* supported Johnson Sirleaf (Bauer 2009, 197). In 2011, none of the newspapers included in the study endorsed a presidential candidate.

A review of the Liberian media identified 18 newspapers in Liberia, though only eight publish on a daily basis (IREX and LMC 2012, 212). Most newspapers have low circulations, ranging from about 500 to 3000 per day (IMS 2007, 20). Distribution is strongest in Monrovia, though most newspapers have at least a few distribution centers (ranging from two to seven) outside of Monrovia (Randall, Kpargoi, and Pulano 2008, 27). This distribution network is "owned privately, apolitical, and subject to no government restrictions" (IREX and LMC 2012, 221).

A study of media penetration carried out by the Liberia Media Center (LMC) in 2008 found that newspapers are read by about 75% of the literate population (Randall, Kpargoi, and Pulano 2008, 17). Literacy rates in Liberia are estimated at 42.9% (CIA 2015). The influence of newspapers goes beyond their circulation rates, however, since newspapers differ from radio and television coverage in that they create a permanent record.

The author and a research assistant coded the 218 articles. The unit of analysis is the news story. Quantitative analysis included amount of

5. This approach is similar to the strategy employed by Bauer (2009).

6. The 2012 African MSI includes 42 countries and evaluates the press in each country on five criteria: freedom of speech, professional journalism, plurality of news, business management, and supporting institutions.

coverage and references to appearance, age, family roles, first name, and prior experience. Articles were coded as either including references to these topics or not. Qualitative analysis comprised a broader examination of issues discussed in the articles and the tone of the article. Intercoder reliability ranged from 83% to 100% across all the variables. Cohen's Kappa ranged from 0.481 to 1.00.⁷ The code sheet for content analysis is provided in the online appendix.

Amount of Coverage

We measured amount of coverage in two ways: the number of articles that mentioned a candidate and the number of articles with the candidate's name in the headline. By both standards, Johnson Sirleaf received more media coverage than Tubman. Tubman appeared in about 57% of the articles, and Johnson Sirleaf appeared in 85% (See Table 1). This difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).⁸ In terms of headlines, Johnson Sirleaf's name (first name, last name, or both) appeared in 29% of the headlines. In contrast, Tubman's name appeared in just 10% of the headlines. Again this difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Tone of Coverage

We coded the tone of the article and the tone of the headline for both candidates, rating them as positive, negative, mixed, neutral, or not about the candidate.⁹ The press's treatment of Johnson Sirleaf was generally positive: 37% of the articles were considered positive, while only 3% were negative.¹⁰ The analysis of the headlines shows a similar trend: 23% of the headlines for stories that discussed Johnson Sirleaf were positive, and only 1% of the headlines were coded as negative. The findings for Tubman are far more negative. Among the stories mentioning Tubman,

7. I was unable to calculate Cohen's Kappa for three variables — appearance, reference to dynastic connections, and association with change — due to lack of variation.

8. The p value is based on a difference in proportions test.

9. To assess tone, we focused on the overall impression the article provided on the candidate. We assessed whether the article was broadly favorable to the candidate or whether it was broadly damaging. Articles that did not fit into these two categories were coded as mixed (a combination of favorable and damaging coverage), neutral (neither favorable nor damaging), or not about the candidate.

10. There was some variation in the tone of coverage across the five publications, ranging from 52% positive coverage in *The Informer* to 14% positive in *The Heritage*. Negative stories accounted for 0% to 6% of the sample for each paper.

Table 1. Liberian press coverage of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Winston Tubman

	<i>Ellen Johnson Sirleaf</i>	<i>Winston Tubman</i>
Amount of coverage***	85.3% (186/218)	57% (124/218)
Name in headline***	29.4% (64/218)	10% (21/218)
Positive tone***	37.1% (69/186)	4.8% (6/124)
Negative tone***	3.2% (6/186)	27.4% (34/124)
Reference to appearance (1)	0% (0/186)	0% (0/124)
Reference to age (2)	2.7% (5/186)	0% (0/124)
Reference to familial roles and connections (1)	1.6% (3/186)	1.6% (2/124)
Use of first name only (2)	21.5% (40/186)	1.6% (2/124)
Reference to prior experience***	43.5% (81/186)	16.1% (20/124)
Reference to one or more issues**	34.9% (65/186)	22.6% (28/124)
Reference to an endorsement (2)	26.4% (49/186)	1.6% (2/124)

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$.

(1) Samples 1 and 2 do not satisfy the requirement that $n \times p$ and $n(1-p) \geq 5$.

(2) Sample 2 does not satisfy the requirement that $n \times p$ and $n(1-p) \geq 5$.

27% were coded as negative, and only 4% were coded as positive.¹¹ There were very few positive (6) or negative (7) headlines for Tubman, since the majority did not address Tubman explicitly, reinforcing the finding that he received less coverage than Johnson Sirleaf. For both positive and negative tone, the differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Gender Stereotypes: Appearance, Age, and Maternal Traits

Previous studies have found that coverage of women politicians is more likely to focus on appearance. One striking finding of the analysis of Liberian media coverage is that Liberian newspapers did not discuss

11. Across the publications, the amount of positive coverage of Tubman ranged from 0% to 12% (but the 12% was just 3 out of 25 articles). *The New Dawn* had more negative coverage (32%), and *The Informer* had less (17%).

Johnson Sirleaf's appearance. This complete lack of attention to appearance distinguishes the Liberian media coverage from press coverage of female candidates in Latin America, the United States, and Europe.

Johnson Sirleaf's age (73) may partially account for the lack of attention to appearance. Older women are respected in Liberia and Africa more generally. There were just five mentions of Johnson Sirleaf's age, and most of these references clustered around her 73rd birthday, which fell on October 29, in the midst of the campaign period. These were generally celebratory articles that extended birthday wishes to the president. One article, for example, quotes a citizen who states: "Even at 73, Madam Sirleaf ... is still one of Africa's strong women."¹² Discussing the Liberian context, Moran (2012, 56) observes that "[e]lderly people of both genders were respected for their experience and wisdom." While age affects women's and men's status differently, it generally provides a source of authority to women especially when coupled with motherhood.

Previous studies have found that coverage of women often calls greater attention to family roles and dynastic connections. Again, the analysis of 2011 runoff coverage does not support this expectation. There were just three mentions of Johnson Sirleaf's familial roles. None of the articles referred to her by using nicknames — for example, "Old Ma" or "Ma Ellen" — that called attention to her age and maternal status. The media's eschewal of these names is particularly surprising, since Johnson Sirleaf's campaign used them.

For Tubman, there was one reference to his wife and one reference to his dynastic connection to William Tubman. Tubman is a powerful name in Liberia, and this history is reinforced in news stories that mention Antoinette Tubman Stadium (named after William Tubman's wife), the soccer stadium in Monrovia where political rallies (including those for Johnson Sirleaf) are sometimes held, and Tubman Boulevard, a major road in Monrovia.

Past studies have also found that media sources are more likely to use the first name for female politicians. Liberian news stories were far more likely to identify Johnson Sirleaf by just her first name, Ellen, than to identify Tubman in this way. Overall, 22% of the articles that mentioned Johnson Sirleaf referred to her by just her first name, Ellen, in either the

12. "There is Still 'Optimism' for Ellen at 73 — Citizens' View Point," *The Informer*, November 1, 2011.

headline or the text of the article. In contrast, just two articles (2%) referred to Tubman by his first name alone, and both of these instances were direct quotations of individuals speaking about Tubman. The media's frequent use of Johnson Sirleaf's first name reflects her own campaign's messaging.

Experience

Johnson Sirleaf was more frequently portrayed as the experienced candidate with 43.5% of the articles mentioning her previous experience. Specific references to her experience included comments about her Harvard education, her recent receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize, and her positions in banks and multilateral institutions. Articles also noted her political experience, making note of her time as minister of finance, her previous presidential campaigns, and the fact that she was the incumbent president. In contrast, only 16% of the articles on Tubman called attention to his experience. The news stories mentioned his high level of education. News accounts also referred to Tubman as "Ambassador Tubman," highlighting the fact that he served as a UN diplomat, most recently in Somalia. This difference in references to experience was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Issues

Johnson Sirleaf was associated with more issues — both masculine and feminine — than Tubman. (See [Table 2](#).) For Johnson Sirleaf, 34% of the articles discussed one or more issues. Since some articles referred to more than one issue, she was associated with 116 issues overall. For Tubman, only 15% of the news stories mentioned an issue. Even when accounting for references to multiple issues in a single article, he was linked to only 28 issues. In line with previous studies, Johnson Sirleaf was closely identified with a range of feminine issues, including peace and reconciliation, women's rights, health and welfare, education, and corruption. The issue most frequently mentioned for her, however, was masculine — the economy.

Johnson Sirleaf's commitment to women's issues received attention early in the runoff campaign period, since the Nobel Peace Prize committee announced that she was one of three women awarded the 2011 Peace Prize. One story indicated that female politicians endorsed

Table 2. Issues associated with candidates

	<i>Ellen Johnson Sirleaf</i>		<i>Winston Tubman</i>	
	<i>Number of References</i>	<i>Percentage of Total References (n = 116)</i>	<i>Number of References</i>	<i>Percentage of Total References (n = 28)</i>
<i>Masculine issues</i>				
Economy, development, debt*	44	37.9%	6	21.4%
Total coverage of masculine issues*	44	37.9%	6	21.4%
<i>Feminine issues</i>				
Peace and reconciliation**	40	34.5%	16	57.1%
Corruption (1)	4	3.5%	2	7.1%
Women's rights/equality (2)	10	8.6%	0	0%
Education (2)	6	5%	0	0%
Health and welfare (2)	8	6.9%	0	0%
Total coverage of feminine issues	68	58.6%	18	64.3%
<i>Unclassified issues</i>				
Democracy/civil liberties (1)	4	3.4%	4	14.3%
Total coverage of unclassified issues (1)	4	3.4%	4	14.3%

Note: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

(1) Samples 1 and 2 do not satisfy the requirement that $n \times p$ and $n(1-p) \geq 5$.

(2) Sample 2 does not satisfy the requirement that $n \times p$ and $n(1-p) \geq 5$.

Johnson Sirleaf.¹³ Another noted that women's groups met with Johnson Sirleaf.¹⁴

Johnson Sirleaf was closely identified with the economy and foreign aid — economic areas that have typically been associated with men. Johnson Sirleaf's background may give her an edge in these traditionally masculine areas. She sought to highlight positive developments in these areas, including infrastructural development, increasing employment (though unemployment remains a major challenge in Liberia), and debt relief. Articles taking a more critical perspective highlighted her shortcomings in the economic realm, especially the continued lack of jobs and the slow pace of economic development.

13. "Female Politicians Declare Support for Ellen," *The New Dawn*, October 26, 2011.

14. "Women's Groups, Traditional Leaders Meet Sirleaf," *The Analyst*, October 21, 2011.

While women are often associated with anticorruption (Barnes and Beaulieu 2014; Watson and Moreland 2014), Johnson Sirleaf was associated with both corruption and anticorruption measures. She has been accused of nepotism and of not doing enough to stop corruption. Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist who jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize with Johnson Sirleaf in 2011, has criticized Johnson Sirleaf for hiring her sons for positions with the state oil company and the central bank).¹⁵ While corruption continues to be a critical issue in Liberia, Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perception Index suggests that corruption has diminished during Johnson Sirleaf's tenure. In 2005, Liberia was ranked 137th out of 159 states in terms of corruption. By 2011, Liberia moved up to 91 out of 182 states (TI 2013).

Peace and reconciliation received the most media coverage. Johnson Sirleaf was linked more frequently with this issue than Tubman, though articles mentioned both her strengths and her limitations in this area. Near the end of the campaign (October 7), the Nobel Peace Prize committee announced that Johnson Sirleaf jointly received the award with fellow Liberians Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkol Karman of Yemen, calling attention to Johnson Sirleaf's commitment to the "non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work." A group of female politicians announced their support for Johnson Sirleaf, stating, "The women said the President has made them proud for her unflinching stance on the promotion of peace and non-violence throughout her entire political struggle."¹⁶

Challengers, especially Tubman and his running mate, Weah, criticized the Nobel committee's decision, arguing that Johnson Sirleaf "does not deserve it. She is a warmonger. She brought war on our country and spoiled our country."¹⁷ Critics argued that Johnson Sirleaf was included in a list of 49 of individuals recommended for public sanctions for initially supporting Taylor. The TRC recommended that these individuals — including Johnson Sirleaf — should be barred from holding elective or appointive public office for 30 years (TRC 2009, 361).

While acknowledging the work of the TRC in a 2010 speech, Johnson Sirleaf decided to run for reelection. Tubman vowed to implement the TRC's proposals, which may have cost him the support of third-place

15. "Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee Disowns Fellow Winner," *The Telegraph*, October 8, 2012

16. "Female Politicians Declare Support for Ellen," *The New Dawn*, October 26, 2011.

17. "Sirleaf Gets Local, Global Ovations for Nobel Prize," *The Analyst*, October 12, 2011.

candidate Prince Y. Johnson. Johnson, a former warlord, endorsed Johnson Sirleaf, stating that she was the best candidate to promote “reconciliation.” Johnson indicated that “his decision to support President Sirleaf in the runoff is based on the fact that both of them are on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission list for prosecution.”¹⁸

Coverage of Tubman mentioned a narrower range of issues. Issues most associated with Tubman include peace and reconciliation, the economy, democracy and civil liberties, and corruption. News stories explore whether a Tubman victory would be good for peace and reconciliation. During the campaign, Tubman announced that he would welcome Taylor back to Liberia if he was not found guilty of war crimes at The Hague and even stated that he would be willing to give Taylor a position in his government. This position raised questions about Tubman’s commitment to peace and economic development. Several news stories quoted U.S. congressional representatives criticizing Tubman’s statement and indicating that welcoming Taylor would have significant economic consequences, including the loss of foreign aid.

Tubman was also associated with fears about the future of civil liberties and democracy. Before the runoff campaign, Tubman stated that civil liberties were not a priority for Liberia and should come after development.¹⁹ Tubman’s statement raised questions about his commitment to democracy, especially since he served as minister of justice during Doe’s military government. Fears about declining press freedom may account for the media’s negative coverage of Tubman.

Horse Race versus Issue Coverage

In Liberia, there is a general dearth of issue coverage, but the lack of attention to issues was even more pronounced for Tubman. Much of the news coverage focused on personal politics and the viability of candidates rather than issues. These patterns are even more pronounced in the runoff election when candidates who did not make it to the second round use their regional political capital to leverage political positions and favor with the future administration. Much of the coverage in the runoff period focused on endorsements from the candidates who did not make it to the second round, especially the third- and fourth-

18. “Why PYJ Dumped CDC for Ellen?” *The Informer*, October 19, 2011.

19. “Treat Tubman with Critical Eyes,” *The Analyst*, October 4, 2011; “Dictator in the Making,” *The Analyst*, October 3, 2011.

place candidates, Johnson and Charles Brumskine. Of the articles that focused on Sirleaf, 26% mentioned an endorsement by another candidate, a political party, or a civil societal group. In comparison, only two articles indicated endorsements for Tubman. After the endorsements were announced, the coverage focused on whether Tubman would boycott the election, the validity of his claims of election irregularities, and the constitutionality of the boycott.

COMPARING MEDIA COVERAGE OF ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF IN 2005 AND 2011

While the preceding section focused on whether gendered patterns of media coverage common in the West occur in Liberia, the following section examines whether media coverage changed between 2005 and 2011. It compares the findings discussed above with those from previous studies that focused on the 2005 campaign (Adams 2010; Moran 2012; Thomas and Adams 2010). In 2005, Johnson Sirleaf received less media coverage than her main opponent, George Weah (Adams 2010). In 2011, this trend was reversed, with Johnson Sirleaf receiving more press than Tubman. In 2005, media sources often described Johnson Sirleaf as a “Harvard-trained economist,” a “former World Bank official,” or a “financial expert.” These kinds of phrases were less common in 2011. The decrease in media attention to her prepresidential experience may reflect greater knowledge of Johnson Sirleaf’s background after nearly six years in office. It may also reflect the fact that Tubman is a very different candidate than Weah. The 2005 election was marked by the stark choice between age/experience and youth/“clean hands.” The 2011 campaign did not feature the same contrasts: Johnson Sirleaf and Tubman were similar in terms of age, education level, and professional experience.

In 2005, the media frequently employed Johnson Sirleaf’s nickname, “Ma Ellen,” which emphasized her maternal status. This motherly/grandmotherly image was juxtaposed with her other nickname — Liberia’s “Iron Lady” — which denoted strength, toughness, and the ability to stand up to the male warlords. Together, these two sides to Johnson Sirleaf helped her to negotiate the “too masculine or too feminine” double bind. Examining the 2005 election, Moran (2012) draws on Van Allen’s conception of powerful motherhood: “a mother is a powerful female role, not a subservient one” since she has “authority not only over children, but over her adult sons as well as her daughters

and daughters-in-law . . . A mother is someone to be taken seriously” (Van Allen 2009, 71). Though Van Allen refers to the Tswana in Botswana, motherhood also serves as an important source of authority for women in Liberia. Johnson Sirleaf’s authority is enhanced by the fact that she is not only a mother but also a grandmother who is considered an “Old Ma.” Within the Liberian context, “To call someone an ‘Old Ma’ may communicate either affection or distaste, but it always implies respect” (Moran 2012, 62).

In 2011, there were no references to these nicknames in the runoff coverage. As Johnson Sirleaf became a known quantity, there may have been less of a need for the use of nicknames to invoke her maternal source of authority. Also, as Liberia moved further from the civil war, the relevance of a maternal, peace-making persona may have declined. Moran (2012, 52) observes that the 2011 presidential campaign was characterized by different discourses “when the question of a woman president as an anomaly had effectively been settled.” This shift away from an emphasis on Johnson Sirleaf’s maternal identity is one of the most significant changes in coverage from 2005 to 2011. It suggests that once women occupy leadership roles, they no longer need to justify their power through traditional sources of authority.

The Liberian evidence from both 2005 and 2011 supports previous studies’ findings that female candidates are more likely to be addressed by their first names. In the 2005 media coverage, 23.7% of the headlines referred to Sirleaf as “Ellen,” and nearly 8% juxtaposed “Ellen” with “Weah,” suggesting that the first name usage is only appropriate for women (Adams 2010). The use of Johnson Sirleaf’s first name continued in 2011, suggesting that it is not lack of familiarity that leads to the use of the first name by the Liberian press but rather a level of informality; however, Johnson Sirleaf embraced this informality, using just her first name in her own campaign materials.

In 2005 as in 2011, peace was both a strength and a challenge for Johnson Sirleaf. Her sex (which linked her to a strong women’s peace movement) and her work at the United Nations and elsewhere allowed her to make a persuasive case that she was the best candidate to promote peace. One of her 2005 campaign slogans was “All the men have failed. Let’s give a woman a chance,” which played on the association of men with violence and women with peacemaking and change. Her associations with past regimes (both Tolbert and Doe), her initial support for Taylor, and rumors of links to the rebel group Liberians United for

Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) during the second civil war (Bøås and Utas 2014, 51), however, allowed Weah and Tubman to characterize her as someone undermining peace in Liberia.

Johnson Sirleaf was also closely linked to women's issues in both campaigns. In 2005, she had the support of a strong women's movement that championed her presidency (Adams 2008; Bauer 2009). In 2011, she won the Nobel Peace Prize along with two other women's activists just days before the first round of voting.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of Liberian media coverage of the 2005 and 2011 presidential elections suggests important differences between the Liberian context and other campaign contexts. Many of the gender stereotypes that prevail in the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Australia are not present in Liberia. The press paid no attention to her appearance and featured few discussions of her family roles. These findings suggest that some stereotypes (such as age as a liability and a greater focus on appearance) are culturally specific and are not relevant in Liberia and perhaps more widely so in Africa. An initial analysis of media coverage of the 2014 presidential election in Malawi suggests that there were few references to Joyce Banda's appearance. This lack of interest in appearance may also be linked to Johnson Sirleaf's and Banda's age (73 and 64, respectively, at the time of the elections) since the media may not hold older women to the same gendered expectations regarding appearance and may show more deference to older women since age provides a source of respect.

With those important differences noted, the Liberian case does support some findings from other world regions. Six years after ascending to office, Johnson Sirleaf was still far more likely than her rival to be referred to by her first name. She was identified with a number of traditionally feminine issue areas (peace, women's rights, health, and education), though she was also linked with the economy, generally conceptualized as a masculine issue area.

The analysis of Liberian press coverage in 2011 also suggests that once women have attained the highest office, they are less likely to be viewed through stereotypical gendered lenses. The Liberian case provides initial evidence that incumbency contributes to more equal press coverage and less emphasis on maternal sources of authority.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X16000039>

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