What Does it Take to Be Popular: Predictors of Women Candidates' Visibility in the 2009 European Election Campaign

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Previous research suggests that women candidates are in general less popular in the eyes of the news media than their male contenders. Women receive less amount and different type of media coverage than men do. These findings are, however, based on research that has mostly concentrated on describing the media bias of candidate coverage and possible implications it might have on overall electoral process, while largely ignoring the factors that explain this very bias itself. Therefore, the aim of the current paper is to address this gap in the literature and investigate the possible mechanisms behind gender differences in candidate coverage in the context of 2009 European Parliamentary Elections. This approach is possible thanks to the collaborative project on "Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union" (PIREDEU). The paper relies primarily on PIREDEU's Media Content Data. These unique data cover the media in 27 EU member states across which news coverage of candidates vary. These data enable the paper to study these effects not only on aggregate level but also on candidate level. The current paper finds evidence of the gender gap in media coverage. However, when looking at the highly competitive candidates (election list leaders) only, the gender bias in media coverage becomes insignificant. This suggests that the bias which has traditionally been attributed to media begins in fact in party offices and in the society in general.

Introduction

The basic assumption underneath democratic electoral process is that the electorate has sufficient information about politics, parties, and candidates to make reasoned decisions of whom to vote for. In this process voters rely heavily on news media in terms of political information. It is the news media that influence to a large extent what voters know about politics and candidates which in turn is likely to influence their overall political information and candidate preference. In other words, the news media do not only construct political reality, especially during the elections, but voters see the political landscape largely through the lens of the news media (Kahn 1994b: 171).

Previous studies indicate that different candidates enjoy different levels of news media coverage (i.e. Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; Bystrom et al. 2001; Heldman et al. 2000). These differences are attributed to a number of factors, such as the incumbency of a candidate, campaign funding, but also to the gender of the candidate (i.e. Kahn and Goldeberg 1991; Kahn 2003). Scholars of election studies report that female candidates receive relatively less news media coverage than their male contenders do. It is also not only the amount of coverage that varies but also the type of stories in which women and men candidates appear, and the tone of the coverage they receive (i.e. Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; Kahn 1994a; Bystrom et al. 2001; Gidengil and Everitt 2000; Heldman et al. 2000). Moreover, recent study by Banducci and her colleagues shows that the gender gap in media coverage of candidates also varies cross-nationally, with countries like Austria, France, and Spain showing a greater bias of media coverage against women candidates than countries like Sweden and Denmark (Banducci et al. 2007). This indicates that contextual setting is likely to influence the level of media coverage different candidates enjoy. These previous studies, however, have mostly concentrated on describing the media bias of candidate coverage and possible implications it might have on overall electoral process, while largely ignoring the factors that explain this very bias itself.

The purpose of the current paper is to fill in this very gap and explain the possible mechanisms behind gender differences in candidate coverage. The main questions that arise are: (a) whether these differences are purely contextual, i.e. caused by different election and voting systems? (b) Or do parties and party rules play an active role in determining who of their candidates gets more (positive) media coverage and who get less? (c) Does candidate's own history (e.g. incumbency) and characteristics (e.g. gender) play a role in how much news media coverage she receives? (d) Or do more general socio-cultural settings, such as the over-all gender roles in the society, explain

most of the variance in the gender gap of candidate coverage?

The current paper aims to test these above mentioned research questions with data from the 2009 European Parliamentary election. It will rely primarily on the Media Content Data of the European Election Study (EES) and the PIREDEU Project (Providing and Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union). Besides that, the paper makes use of some contextual data, as well as data on candidate background information provided by the European Parliament.

The first part of the paper provides a compact overview of the current state of the art by discussing previous research on women's representation and gender bias in news media coverage. The paper continuous by analysing cross-national differences in the gap between the proportion of female candidates and the amount of media attention they receive, by utilizing aggregate country-level data. However, in order to study in more detail the factors that influence candidate coverage, the paper takes advantage of the unique PIREDEU Media Data and analyses the impact of possible individual and contextual level predictors also on candidate level by employing Tobit regression model.

Why media coverage matters?

Primary reason to study how different media treat different candidates is the belief that media influence the electoral outcome and women's representation in general. Candidates who enjoy higher levels of media coverage are more easily recognisable to the voters on the ballot box and are therefore also likely to enjoy higher chances of getting elected. If the amount of media attention and the type of coverage candidates receive is dependent on their own personal traits and qualities only, the overall impact on electoral process would be less concerning. Previous studies, however, indicate that media coverage does not only depend on candidates' qualities but there exists a group bias where women candidates' systematically receive relatively less coverage than their male counterparts do (see for example, Kahn and Goldenberg 1991, Kahn 1994a, Kahn 1994b, Gidengil and Everitt 2000, Heldman et al. 2000, Banducci et al. 2007). These studies, therefore, indicate that media plays a role in the electoral competition and is likely to hinder women candidates' chances of getting elected and therefore affects women's representation in general. And representation matters because a democratic representative government cannot function and have democratic legitimacy unless the elected representatives make present in the policy-making process the political views and interests of voters (Pitkin 1964). Moreover, it is not only the scholars who believe that representation matters but also the citizens. Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler's (2005) global study

supports this argument because both men and women respondents believe that government is more democratic when more women are elected.

Despite the fact that past decades have witnessed a general increase in the number of women been elected to legislative bodies around the world, descriptive representation of women still lacks behind of that of men. Representation of women is the most pictorial in the Nordic countries and in the Netherlands where women constitute around 40 per cent or more of all the elected officials in lower legislative bodies. In all other European and other Western hemisphere countries female representation is still largely lacking behind the desired descriptiveness. Previous research suggests several reasons for that. For example, women often lack political resources (Burns et al. 2001); they often run in hopeless races (Ryan et al. 2010); and women candidates may sometimes become victims of sexist stereotyping by voters (Sapiro 1982).

However, in order for a person to get elected she, first, needs to be a candidate. That is why intuitive thinking would suggest that the main predictor explaining how many women there are in elected legislative office is the number of women running for this office. Derived from that, the emphasis of our analysis should be on what determines the share of female candidates rather than what explains how many women are there in parliaments. In fact, several scholars have studied the reasons why women are less likely candidates than men and reported that one of the main predictors is women's lack of political ambition and lack of belief in their own competence (Lawless and Fox 2006). However, finishing the analysis by explaining the determinants of candidacy only when explaining women's representation can be deceiving as previous studies show relatively weak correlation between the share of female candidates and the share of women MPs (Norris and Franklin 1997, Reynolds 1999, Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Kittilson 2006). In other words, this suggests that being a candidate is not enough for securing an elected office. Moreover, it implies that most likely there are some institutional and contextual factors in place mediating the effect of gender in electoral contests.

There are numerous contextual explanations to the cross-national differences in women's representation. Institutional settings, such as the electoral system, party system, and adoption of gender quotas are reported to matter (Darcy et al. 1994; Matland and Studlar 1996; Caul 2001; Htun 2004; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). But besides that, as mentioned above, the overall representation of women can also be partly dependent on how much news media coverage and what type of coverage female candidates enjoy. Media influence what voters know about candidates and

if media cover different candidates in a different way, then media treatment is likely to have consequences not only for both voter information and candidate preferences (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991, Kahn 2003) but also for the wider representative process. This paper, therefore, hypothesises that media are one of these institutions that mediate candidate's chances for becoming elected and it makes is necessary to study the mechanisms behind media coverage.

Women Candidates' Coverage in the News Media

Candidates who receive more attention in the news media are more easily recognizable to their potential voters and hence have higher chances of becoming elected. Banducci and her colleagues (2007) report in their study that the visibility of female candidates rather than just the mere presence of them influences the electoral process. Without being visible, female candidates have little impact on the overall mass political engagement, including voter turnout among female electorate (Banducci et al. 2007). In other words, the presence of women candidates can fully be brought to the attention of voters only by being covered in the news media during the campaign because in order to become elected voters need to recognize the candidates. However, since variations in the amount of media coverage can influence recognition rates (Goldenberg and Traugott 1987), gender bias in the news media attention is likely to result in considerable electoral consequences. This implies that the news treatment does not only influence candidates in contemporary campaigns, but these coverage patterns are likely to affect the future of women in politics, too: "gendered images of political figures may influence the decisions of political or party elites when they nominate or solicit candidates" (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008: 386). Moreover, Scammell and Semetko (2000) suggest that one of the central roles of the media in democratic systems are to accurately represent social groups therefore implying that group bias in media coverage refers to an ill-served democratic process. This all implies that media coverage does not only trigger academic debates but also has real-life consequences which is why the current paper aims to study how the press covers women candidates as well as the factors that influence the extent of coverage they receive cross-nationally.

Possible gender bias in candidate coverage in news media has not received much attention by the scholars of election studies, especially not outside the United States. The few earlier studies indicate a considerable amount of bias in media coverage of women candidates. Kahn and Goldenberg (1991: 185) found in their study of American Senate elections that races with male candidates received more news media attention than races with female candidates. Moreover, the coverage that

women candidates received tended to concentrate more on their (negative) viability rather than on their issue positions (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991: 196). Kahn (1994a; 1994b) continues to report similar results in her later studies. She suggests that gender differences in press coverage differ from one type of election to another by showing that women candidates face less fair treatment by the press during senatorial races compared to gubernatorial races (Kahn 1994a; Kahn 1994b). Kahn's studies show that in state wide U.S. Senate races, where direct contact between citizens and politicians is rare, women candidates do not only receive less campaign coverage, but the coverage they receive is also more negative and less emphasizing their issue positions than the coverage male counterparts enjoy. In the case of gubernatorial races, however, the gender bias is only present in terms of issue attention (Kahn 1994b: 171).

Smith (1997), on the other hand reports that female and male candidates were being treated more or less equally by newspaper reporters during the 1994 U.S. state-wide campaigns. In the majority of cases both male and female candidates were covered in terms of their issue positions rather than focusing on the novelty of a woman candidate. However, most exceptions to that rule were at the expenses of female candidates (Smith 1997: 79). Kahn (2003: 176) also points out that Smith's study may be limited as competitive women candidates were over represented in his sample.

However, the trend of increasing equality in female and male candidate coverage in the news media is also supported by a more recent study in the United States. Bystrom et al. (2001) report that during the 2000 primary races for U.S. Senate, women candidates received even more media coverage than men candidates did. However, the type of coverage varied by gender with female candidates being more likely to be covered in terms of their role as mothers and their marital status (Bystrom et al. 2001: 2011). Kittilson and Fridkin (2008) also fail to find any significant gender differences in the amount of coverage female and male candidates enjoy. But like Bystrom and her colleagues, Kittilson's and Fridkin's data also suggest that the type of stories where women appear in differ from the stories where male candidates dominate, indicating that the media "still perpetuate gender stereotypes that link female candidates more often with stereotypically 'female issues'" (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008: 385).

But the complete record shows some mixed results. Heldman et al. (2000) found, for example, that during the 1999 Republican presidential primaries the only female candidate, Elizabeth Dole, received a differential amount of media coverage compared to the male Republican presidential candidates. They concluded based on their data, how "journalists repeatedly framed Dole as the

'first woman' to be a serious presidential candidate and focused on her gender more than any other aspect of her candidacy, suggesting implicitly, if not explicitly, that she was a novelty in the race rather than a strong contender with a good chance of winning" (Heldman et al. 2000: 12).

The overall trend of gender biased media coverage of female candidates has also been supported by data outside the United States. Gidengil and Everitt (2000) report that female political leaders experienced more filtered and mediated media coverage than their male counterparts did during the 1993 Canadian Leader's Debates. The standpoints and behaviour of female party leaders were not so much described as evaluated and interpreted in comparison to male party leaders (Gidengil and Everitt 2000: 122).

The only large cross-national study measuring media coverage of female candidates found that on a country level, there was no strong linear relationship between the proportion of women candidates and their coverage in the news during the 2004 European Parliamentary election campaign (Banducci et al. 2007). In other words, female candidates received less media coverage than their total share among all candidates would have expected them to get in a condition of complete equality. Moreover, their study also found considerable cross-national differences in female candidate coverage. Banducci and her colleagues suggest that the fact that in countries where women have higher representation than average in the EP but receive less media attention might be because women are not such a novelty in politics anymore and therefore receive less news coverage (Banducci et al. 2007: 10). Apart from that there is little discussion in the literature about possible explanations of (cross-nationally) varying levels of female candidate media coverage. The current paper, therefore, aims to fill in the gap by testing some conceptual and candidate level factors that may influence the amount and type of coverage female and male candidates receive during the European Parliamentary election campaign.

Predictors of Women Candidate Visibility

Previous research suggests that both candidate specific and contextual variables are likely to explain the differences in candidate coverage in the news media. Therefore the paper discusses both candidate level and country / political system level variables that are likely to affect the amount of coverage women candidates are given compared to their male counterparts.

Candidate level predictors

The presence of women candidates is a necessary perquisite for media to pay attention to women during campaign period - if there are no women candidates, there also cannot be any press coverage of them. However, as pointed out above based on previous research, the mere share of female candidates is not a good predictor of female candidate media coverage (see Kahn 2003 for an overview). Banducci et al. (2007) also demonstrate this cross-nationally. They find little connection between the overall share of female candidates and the coverage they receive. In other words, the total proportion of women among candidates is not a very good predictor of the amount of news attention they enjoy. This, however, raises a question if the number of women candidates fails to predict female candidate coverage under all conditions or are there some contextual settings where the share of women among candidates can predict their share in campaign coverage.

Previous studies (Atkenson 2003; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007) indicate that the ***viability and novelty*** of female candidates are the more salient and influential aspects of female candidacies than their mere presence in the electoral contest. Both of these studies concentrated on the impact viable candidates have on women political engagement but this hypothesis is likely to hold true in the case of media coverage, too. Candidates who have a fair chance of winning the office are also likely to attract media's attention. In the case of European elections where the majority of countries uses proportional election system with party lists (except for Finland, Ireland, Malta, and the constituency of Northern Ireland in the UK), the viability of a candidate is highly dependent on her ***list position***. Candidates who are positioned at the end of the party's election list have little chances of winning the office which is likely to make them obscure also to media's attention. Therefore, the paper hypothesizes that candidates who are positioned higher in the election list are more likely to be covered in the news media than their counterparts at the end of the list.

Besides the list position of a candidate, also her ***incumbency*** is likely to influence her viability as a candidate and therefore the expected amount of media exposure. Kahn and Goldenberg (1991) report that the differences in media coverage are, indeed, not only apparent between men and women but also between incumbents and challengers, indicating that current office holders have better chances of gaining access to news media compared to their challengers. Giebler and Wagner (2010), however, point out that the incumbents and candidates might not always have the same impact on voters, dependent on the kind of elections they run. They report, that national candidates impact voters' party choice more than European candidates do during European Election (Giebler and Wagner 2010: 13). Therefore, the incumbency in the European Parliament might not serve as a

positive predictor of media coverage. Moreover, in the case of European Election the incumbents are geographically "further away" from their voters and it might be harder to use the advantage of incumbency from Brussels. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the effect of incumbency is mediated by the type of election. Derived from that, the hypothesis is that incumbent candidates receive more media attention than non-incumbents in national elections as they tend to be more known to the public and in general enjoy greater access to campaign resources, while in European elections incumbency is expected to have negative or no impact on candidate's media coverage as "being in Brussels" does not necessarily increase the candidate's reputation and fame in news media.

Contextual and institutional predictors

As the paper studies candidate coverage in 27 different countries, it is also possible to test for contextual factors that are likely to affect the amount of female candidate coverage in news media. All member states use proportional or semi-proportional (Ireland, Malta, the constituency of Northern Ireland in the UK) ***election system*** to elect the representatives to the European Parliament. At the same time, however, the exact design in terms of ***voting system*** of these proportional election systems varies. Some member states use closed and blocked party lists where voters can demonstrate their preference to the party as a whole only while other member states employ preferential voting where voters have the chance to show their preference for a specific candidate. Whether or not the party competes as a whole or by specific candidates in the electoral competition may influence how media covers the campaign. I expect more candidate than party specific coverage in countries with preferential voting compared to countries with closed and blocked party lists. As male candidates are traditionally more successful in gaining media attention, the paper hypothesizes that the gender bias in news coverage is greater in preferential voting system where traditional patterns can be more easily held. In the case of closed and blocked party lists, on the other hand, it is not only media but also parties that might influence more who receives news attention and who does not. This in turn may reduce the visibility bias. Therefore, I expect higher female candidate coverage in the context of closed and blocked party lists compared to preferential voting, while the latter system should in return favour male candidates.

I hypothesise that political parties do not influence their candidates' chances of receiving media coverage only by how they place their male and female candidates in the election lists but also by ***formal party rules***. Candidate gender quotas are the most direct measure to influence the gender

composition within political parties and in their election lists. Both states and political parties have the ability to increase women's descriptive representation by creating formal rules that prescribe a certain share of women among the candidates. Many parties in industrialised democracies and some countries' electoral laws have established ***gender quotas*** ever since their first appearance in the 1970s (Caul 1999). The main aim of establishing these quotas was to increase women's descriptive representation. I suggest that gender quotas do not only increase the number of women in election lists but also sends out a message that politics is not only a man's game and women are as important but so far disadvantaged players in that game. Therefore, I hypothesise that women candidates enjoy higher levels of media attention if either their party or country has adopted gender quotas.

However, the impact of voting system, party candidate selection process (whether women are present on the top of the list or not), and the presence of candidate quotas might as well be spurious effects. The fact that in some countries press covers men and women candidates more equally and that political parties position both men and women as their top candidates can simply be an expression of ***overall gender equality*** in the society. Countries where women participate more in labour force, receive more equal pay to men, have more political and social power than in other countries, both media and political parties are likely to treat female candidates more equally. Such expectations are also supported by previous research which argues that women enjoy greater political representation in countries where gender ideology is more equal (Matland 1998; Paxton and Kunovich 2003; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler 2005). Therefore, I expect women to enjoy greater exposure in media in countries where overall gender roles are less traditional and equality between women and men higher.

European Parliamentary Elections

Because the paper studies the visibility of female candidates in the context of European Parliamentary elections, it is necessary to note the supra-national feature of these elections and the specific role media plays during the campaign period. Previous studies indicate that the influence of media grows with the size of constituency because it is less likely for voters to have personal contact with candidates in a large constituency. This forces them to rely even more heavily on news media in terms of political information (Goldenberg and Traugott 1987; Kahn 1994b). In the case of the European elections, in most member states the whole country constitutes only one large constituency, with the exception of Belgium, Italy, France, Poland, and the UK. Therefore, media attention is likely to be more prevalent and gender differences in news coverage even more

consequential than in the case of national or local elections as the likelihood of voters having direct contact with their potential representatives is very small.

The European elections are also often referred to as second order elections which matter less and are therefore also covered less in news media. In the conditions of limited amount of coverage and information about the election in general, the consequences of who receives part of the limited media attention and who does not may become even more consequential than in the setting of national elections which are covered more broadly.

The European Parliamentary elections, however, provide a unique setting to study gender bias in candidate coverage. The advantage of the EP elections is that these are in general the same elections in every member state while at the same time some contextual and institutional settings still vary across countries. This allows the paper to study besides candidate level predictors also the possible impact different contextual and institutional factors have on candidate visibility.

Based on previous literature and the elaborations above the central hypotheses of the paper are as follows:

H1 *Viable candidates who are positioned on the top of their party's election list are more likely to enjoy media coverage than their less competitive counterparts.*

H2 *Incumbent candidates do not receive relatively more media coverage than their non-incumbent challengers, in the context of European Election.*

H3 *In countries with closed and blocked party lists women candidates have better chances for media exposure than in countries with preferential voting.*

H4 *Female candidates receive more media coverage if their party has adopted candidate gender quotas or if there are legislative quotas in place compared to conditions without gender quotas.*

H4 *Female candidates in more gender equal countries enjoy higher levels of news media coverage than women candidates in societies with more traditional gender stereotypes.*

Data and Measurements

For the analysis, the paper relies on data from the 2009 European Election Media Content Study. In total, the paper covers the media in 27 member states across which news coverage will vary. The

advantage of these data are that they have been collected EU wide, using the same coding rules in each country to assure comparability across countries (for more information see Schuck et al. 2010). Both newspapers and television news were coded in each country. With at least two television news outlets (public and commercial) and at least three newspapers (two "quality" and one tabloid) per country, the total sample consists of 58 television networks and 84 different newspapers. The content analysis was conducted for news items published or broadcast within three weeks running up to the election. With regard to story selection, for television, all news items have been coded; and for newspapers, all news items on the title page and on one randomly selected page as well as all stories pertaining particularly to the EU and/or the EU election on any other page of the newspaper have been coded (within the Political/News, Editorial/Opinion/Comment, and Business/Economy sections) (Schuck et al. 2010).

Aggregate country-level analysis

The unit of coding the data was individual news story which is used as the unit of analysis in the aggregate country-level part of the paper. As this paper is interested in the candidates' coverage only, the analysis will utilize these news stories where MEP candidates were coded as actors[1]. In all 27 countries in total, candidates appeared as actors in 7065 occasions; least often in Lithuania (13) and most often in Spain (526).

The key measure used in the aggregate country-level part of the paper is the visibility of female candidates. The paper uses a measure of female candidate visibility that is comparable to the previous work on the 2004 EP election by Banducci and her colleagues (Banducci et al. 2007). To measure female candidate visibility, I calculated the share of stories of women candidates among all the stories of MEP candidates in each country. This measure will give an overall indication of women candidates' visibility and in order to establish the presence or no presence of gender bias in media coverage it is explored against the share of women among candidates. Previous studies (Atkenson 2003; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007) indicate that the viability and novelty of female candidates are the more salient aspects of female candidacies than their mere presence as candidates. Therefore, to get a more elaborate picture of the gender bias in news media coverage, visibility of women candidates is also explored against the share of women among the top one third of the party

[1] For the indicator based on actors, one main actor and up to 5 additional actors were coded in each newspaper and TV story. To be considered an actor, the entity or person must have been mentioned by name and quoted directly at least once or indirectly at least twice.

list and the share of women among election list leaders.

Candidate level model

For the candidate level model, I transposed the data set by transforming candidates (actors) from variables to cases. This way, it is possible to calculate how many times each candidate was mentioned, and run the candidate level analysis. Since the number of news stories that covered MEP candidates varies from one country to another, I generated a standardized measure of candidate coverage by calculating the proportion of times a candidate was mentioned compared to the total number of times MEP candidates were mentioned in the news media in a given country. As a result, the values of candidate coverage vary from "0" to "100", indicating the percentage of total MEPs coverage on a specific candidate. Only candidates who have a personal actor code in the Media Study are included in the candidate level model. Candidates who were coded in the European Election Media Content Study as "Other X-party (candidate) MEP" could not be included in the analysis because it was impossible to link other candidate level data (their lists position and incumbency) to them. The total number of candidates included in the analysis is 543 with 130 observations of women and 413 of men.

The distribution of candidate coverage is heavily skewed. More than one third of the cases included in the data set received no media coverage and are assigned a value "0" for the share of media attention they received in a given country. Since the data is based on a collection of news stories from a limited number of outlets, it is not unlikely that the candidates with zero-values would still be covered somewhere. In other words, we can treat it as a situation of unobserved values. All the zero-values do not mean that there is zero-probability of receiving media exposure for candidates that were not covered by these particular news outlets in this particular data set.

In order to take this into account, Tobit regression model is run. Tobit model is a censored regression model that is designed for data, where only the value for the dependent variable (number of times mentioned in news media) is in some cases unknown while the values of the independent variables (sex, incumbency, country background) are still available. I will also report, next to the Tobit model, the results of robust regression model, that are however likely to yield inconsistent estimates (a downwards-biased estimate of the slope coefficient and an upwards-biased estimate of the intercept). Tobit model on the other hand should give us the right estimates. Since the analysis includes both individual and country level variables, the current paper will report robust standard errors.

The analysis employs a dichotomous variable for gender (1 = female candidate, 0 = male candidate), incumbency (1 = incumbent, 0 = non-incumbent), country's voting system (1 = preferential voting, 0 = closed and blocked party list), and for candidate gender quotas (1 = party or legislative quota; 0 = no quota). Candidate's list position and the length of party's election list are measured on a continuous scale.

For measuring overall gender equality in the society, I calculated primarily based on the EU Gender Equality Index developed by Plantenga and her colleagues (2009) a Gender Equality Index (GEI). This index is based on eight indicators that make up four dimensions of equality: equal sharing of paid work (gender employment gap and gender unemployment gap); equal sharing of money (gender pay gap and gender gap in risk of poverty); equal sharing of decision making power (gender gap in national parliament's and gender gap in ISCO 1 occupation category); and equal sharing of time (gender gap in time spent for caring for and educating children and gender gap in time spent for cooking and household among employed people)[2]. My index differs from Plantenga et al. (2009) in terms of three indicators. Instead of using the Eurostat measure for risk of poverty they applied a gender poverty gap in single-headed households, measured in one-time survey; and they used a measure of gender gap in care intensity and gender gap in leisure time to calculate equal sharing of time (for more detailed overview of the index see Plantenga et al. 2009: 25). The greatest differences between my index and Platenga's and her colleagues' index is that I did not replace any missing cases with mean, all the indicators that I use to measure overall gender equality index are standard indicators collected by Eurostat and ILO, and it is possible to calculate the value of the index in all EU member states. As the new index uses standard indicators, it is possible to update the index values over time. The values of the GEI can range from "0" to "100", where "0" marks the state of complete inequality and "100" the condition of total equality between men and women in a given society. (There will be an appendix on the index and how it works.)

As the paper concentrates primarily on the factors influencing female candidate coverage only, I also use interaction terms in the analysis to see how (a) preferential voting system, (b) presence of candidate quotas, and (c) overall gender ideology in the society interacts with candidate's gender.

[2] In the case of Luxembourg, the GEI is based on 7 indicators instead of 8 because there is no data available on ISCO 1 occupation categories.

Results and Discussion

Visibility of Female Candidates across Countries

Before analysing the factors explaining the amount of news attention women candidates receive, the paper first examines whether news coverage of female candidates is biased. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the share of female candidates in each member state and the visibility of female candidates in the news during the 2009 EP election campaign. The diagonal line represents a situation where the share of attention women candidates receive in media is equal to their share among the candidates. In the majority of countries women candidates receive proportionally much less media attention than their proportion among candidates would expect them to get if there was no bias in news coverage. Moreover, there is a slight negative relationship between the proportion of women candidates and the coverage they receive in the news media.

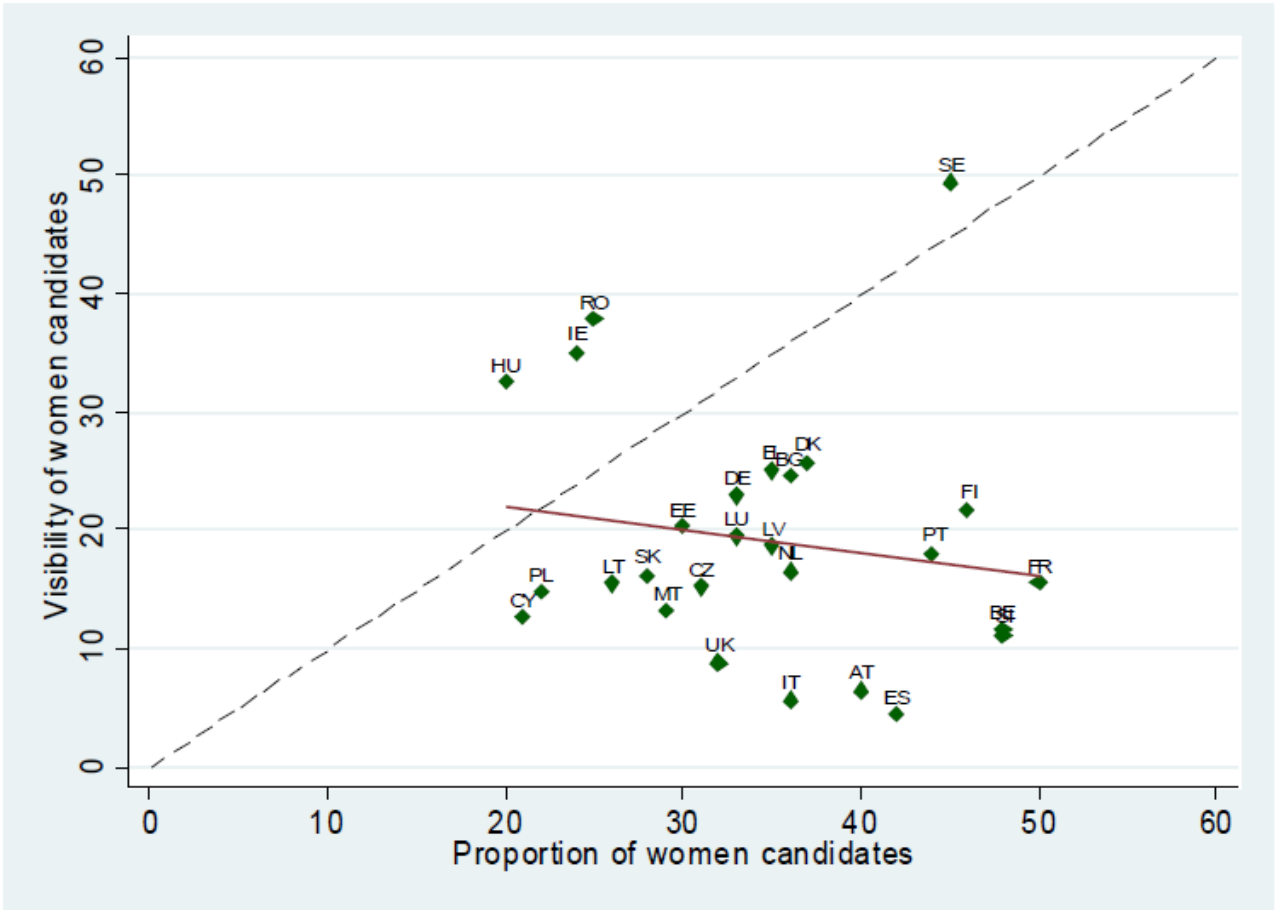

Figure 1: Bias in Media Coverage of Women Candidates: 2009 European Parliamentary Election News Coverage

Source: 2009 European Election Media Study

The most extreme examples of gender bias in news attention are Spain and Austria where women constitute around 40 per cent among all candidates but receive only around 5 per cent of the media

coverage. Two of the outliers from the general trend of gender bias in media coverage, Ireland and Romania had both one very prominent and controversial female candidate running who received the majority of the media attention among women. In Sweden on the other hand media attention was more equally divided between all male and female candidates. More gender equal candidate coverage seems to be consistent in time in Sweden because it appeared as the most equal country in terms of news media coverage of women candidates in previous study on European Elections, too (Banducci et al. 2007: 20).

As mentioned above, this paper is also interested in exploring if the share of female candidates has the same effect on women candidate coverage under all conditions. Therefore, to get a more elaborate picture of the gender bias in news media coverage, visibility of women candidates is plotted against the share of women among the top one third of the party list (Figure 2). Candidates who are positioned in the end of their party's election list have little chances to become elected and can therefore be considered less viable.

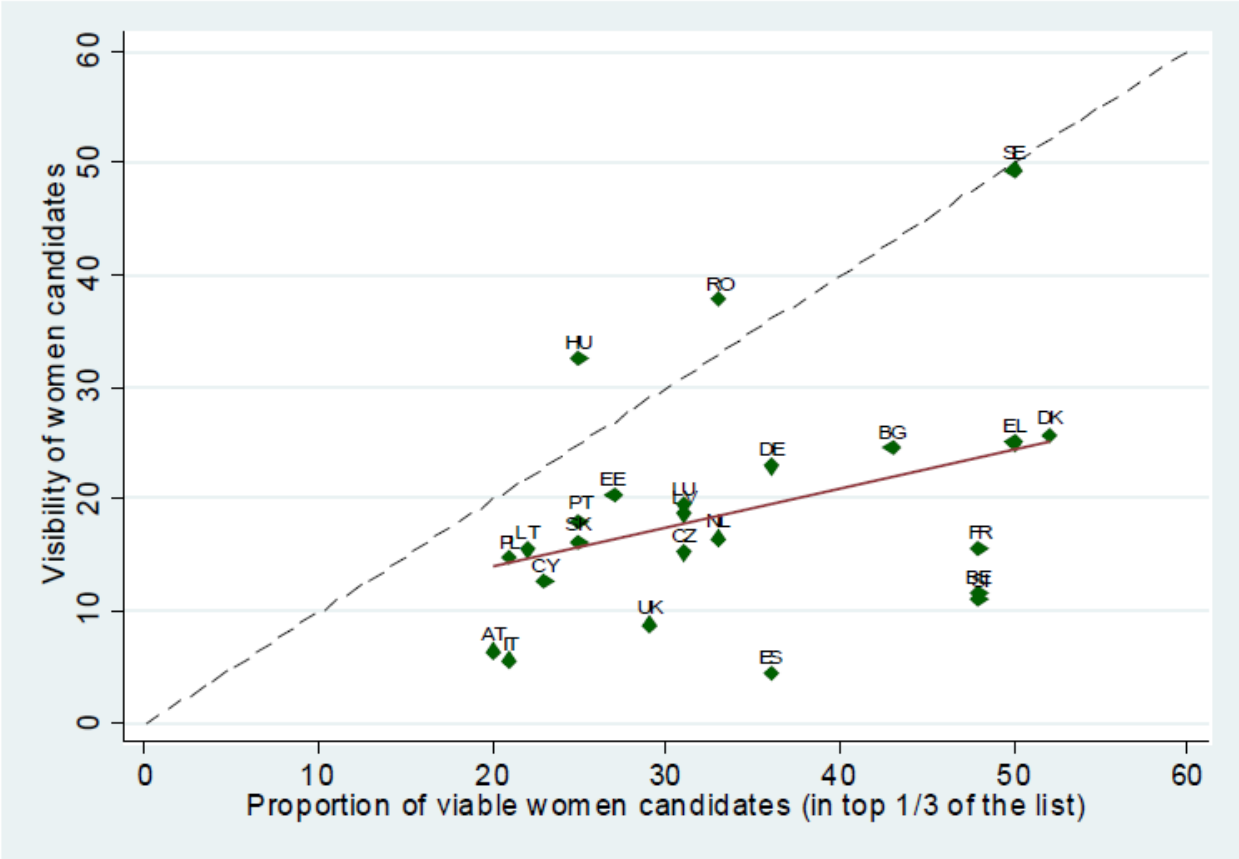

Figure 2: Bias in Media Coverage of Viable Women Candidates: 2009 European Parliamentary Election News Coverage[3]

Source: 2009 European Election Media Study

[3] Finland, Ireland, and Malta are excluded from the analysis because they do not use election lists and therefore it is impossible to calculate candidates' list positions.

The gender bias in media coverage of candidates who are positioned in the top one third of their election list is less visible than among all candidates. In the majority of countries also the top one third of women candidates receive less media coverage than the exact correspondence would expect, by being positioned below the dashed diagonal line. However, there is a slight positive relationship between the proportion of women among viable candidates and their visibility in the news media. This suggests that part of the bias could be attributable to political parties who in some countries tend to position women candidates in the lower end of their election list. In the case of Italy and Austria, for example, viable women candidates still enjoy much less media coverage than their male counterparts. At the same time, however, the media bias is much less visible on Figure 2 than on Figure 1 because both Italian and Austrian women candidates are disproportionately positioned in the lower end of the election lists. In other words, they their share among more viable candidates is only half of that of their share among all candidates.

In order to explore further the visibility of only viable female candidates and the possible bias created by political parties through candidate list positioning, I plotted the visibility of women candidates on the proportion of female election list leaders. Figure 3 shows stronger positive linear relationship between the proportion of female list leaders and the media coverage of women than we witnessed before.

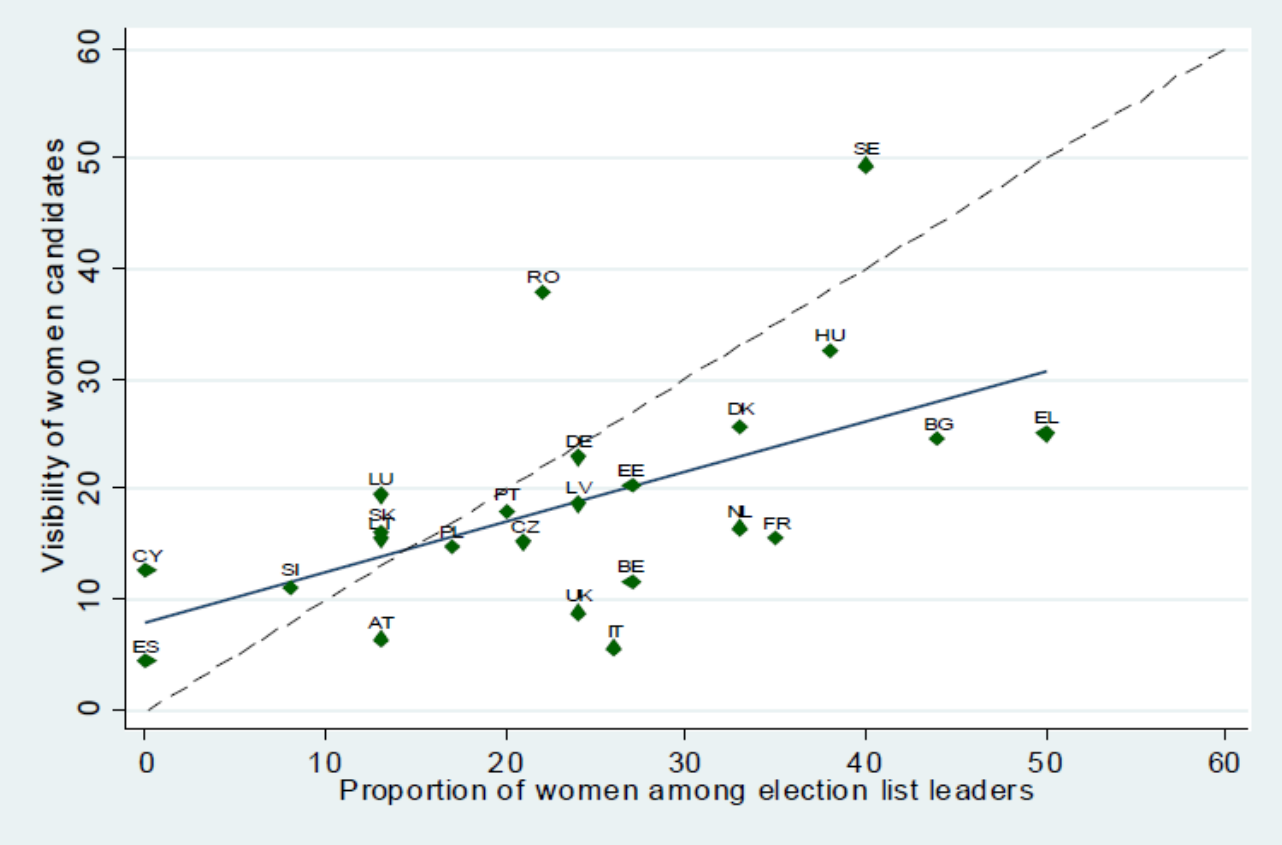

Figure 3: Bias in Media Coverage of Women Election List Leaders: 2009 European Parliamentary Election News Coverage[4]

Source: 2009 European Election Media Study

These findings suggest that the visibility data matches better with viable female candidates. This can largely be due to the fact that most of the media coverage is reserved for competitive candidates. On the other hand, it leads us to pay more attention to parties' candidate selection process. Most of the media coverage is reserved by the top number(s) of election lists and the lack of women among the election list leaders is, therefore, influencing the overall gender bias in candidate coverage. This might be more prevalent in the case of European elections than of national elections as here the overall media attention to the election is in general more limited. This, however, means that the list position of candidate matters even more because in the conditions of limited coverage the little media attention that is available is predominantly reserved for list leaders only. And if there are considerably less female list leaders than male, it may in turn have serious electoral consequences.

The aggregate level data supports the first hypothesis of the paper about viable female candidates receiving more equal media coverage than their less viable counterparts. This means that the list

[4] Finland, Ireland, and Malta are excluded from the analysis because they do not use election lists and therefore it is impossible to calculate candidates' list positions.

position of a candidate is one of the predictors of their news media coverage during the campaign period. However, it is not the only predictor as the gender bias in news coverage remains in a number of countries also when focusing on viable female candidates only. Therefore, the paper continues by testing other possible variables predicting the amount of news media attention female and male candidates receive prior to elections by employing a candidate level model.

Results of the (Viable) Candidate Level Analysis

It is somewhat difficult to directly test the viability hypothesis in the candidate level model because of the bias in sampling. 87 per cent of the cases in the candidate level model are positioned as the leaders of their election list. Therefore, the following candidate level analyses will be generalizable mostly for competitive candidates only. This is partly because of the data collection procedures that assigned individual actor codes for top candidates only but also because they were the viable candidates who received majority of the news coverage. This kept in mind; the results that follow are based on a sample strongly biased towards competitive candidates.

Figure 4 demonstrates that not all candidates are equally popular in the news media. In fact, more than one third of the cases in the sample received no media attention at all. That holds for both male and female candidates. There are however gender differences in mean coverage and the maximum amount of coverage a candidate proportionally receives in her country. Average individual news coverage is about one percentage point higher for men than for women candidates (4.6%| and 3.6% respectively). This gender mean difference of competitive candidate coverage is not statistically significant. Besides the fact that the data are biased towards competitive candidates and between them the gender difference in media coverage was expected to be lower based on the aggregate level data, the means are also slightly distorted by the high number of zero-values.

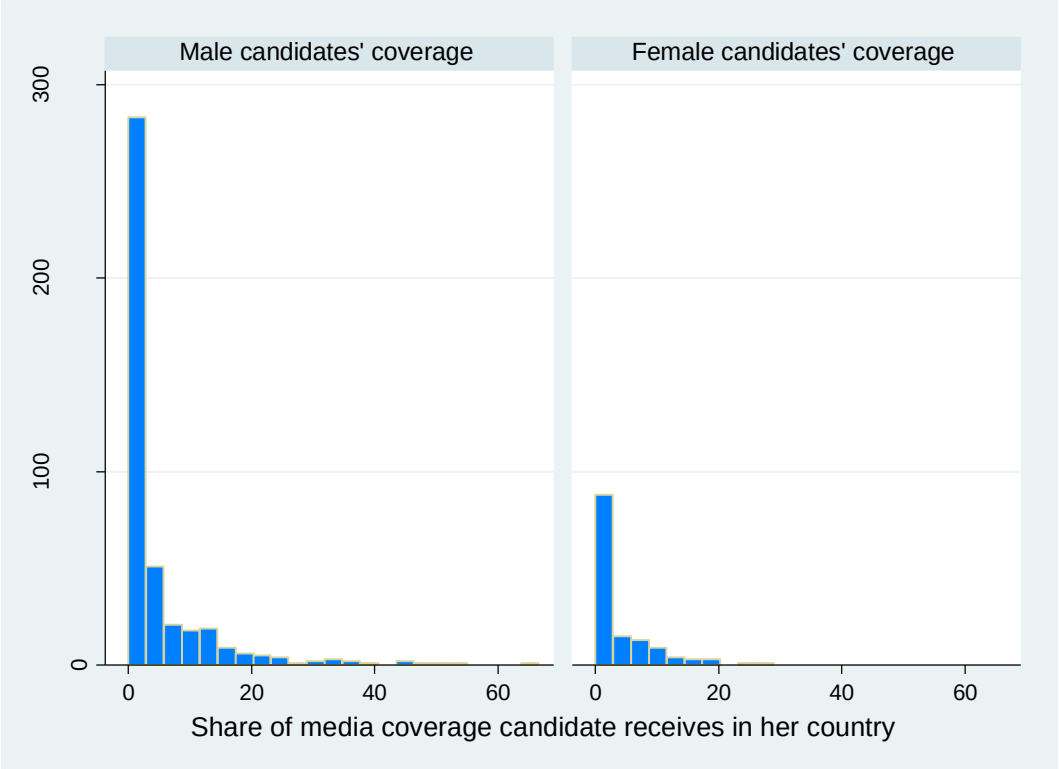

Figure 4: Distribution of the proportion of coverage (viable) candidates received during the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections
Source: 2009 European Election Media Study

In order to examine the gender difference in news media coverage as well as the factors influencing both male and female candidate coverage more in depth, I run four candidate level models (see Table 1 and Table 2). I run two Tobit and two Robust regression models, in each case one with candidates' list placement and one without. The models without candidate list placement are run because (a) there is not much variance in list placement because of the sampling bias and (b) this way all countries are included in the model[5]. I will concentrate mostly on the Tobit estimates as the data meet this model's assumptions better.

All four models indicate that men candidates enjoy relatively more news media coverage than their female counterparts. However, the Tobit estimates are missing traditional levels of significance. These results match with what was suggested by aggregate level data – the gender bias in media coverage among very competitive candidates appears insignificant. This is also in line with the work of Smith (1997) whose findings about little bias in media attention were contrary to other past research. In his sample, too, viable women candidates were over represented. Therefore, there is reason to question if the total gender bias in news media coverage is attributable to the press only.

[5] As candidate's list placement does not have any impact on her electability in Finland, Ireland, and Malta, these

These findings suggest that media covers mostly viable candidates only and hence the coverage bias is at least partly triggered by the gender inequality among competitive candidates.

Incumbency has a very small but statistically significant negative effect on viable candidate coverage during the European Parliamentary elections. These results also fit with the hypothesis, non-incumbents enjoy a miniature advantage in media coverage. As argued above, this might be due to the nature of the European elections where incumbents have been "further away" from the voters than their challengers who are mostly national political figures and likely to be more recognizable to the electorate. These results can also be partly explained by the fact that the sample is over-represented with election list leaders who in some countries are top national politicians (i.e. Berlusconi in Italy) who in general enjoy more media coverage and electoral popularity.

In preferential voting systems (competitive) individual candidates enjoy on average 7.9 (Model 1) and 8.9 (Model 2) points higher proportional coverage in news media than candidates in countries with closed and blocked party lists. The interaction term with candidate's gender fails to attain statistical significance in any of the models indicating that both men and women candidates are likely to enjoy greater share of media coverage in preferential voting systems. These results suggest that in countries with preferential voting system, a candidate enjoys a higher share of the total coverage of candidates which means that the number of candidates who receive any coverage at all is likely to be lower and/or the media coverage is more differentiated than in systems with closed and blocked party list voting.

Whether or not candidate's party or country has adopted any candidate gender quotas appears to have no significant impact on the amount of media coverage an individual candidate receives. However, the interaction term with candidate's gender attains statistical significance. These results are contrary to the hypothesis because quotas have a negative impact on female candidates' coverage. Since the dependent variable measures the share of coverage a candidate receives, the presence of quotas might decrease the proportion of coverage a female candidate attracts because the overall number of women running for office is higher and thus they need to share the press coverage. Or in systems with no gender quotas a female candidate might be more of a novelty and may therefore enjoy more media coverage because of her novelty.

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countries are excluded from the models that include list placement variables.

Overall gender equality in the society has a negative impact on the proportion of coverage a single candidate receives in a given country. This suggest that in countries where women and men are in general more equal to each other in terms of labour force participation, power sharing, etc., candidate coverage is more fragmented in the news media. In other words, there are fewer candidates that alone dominate the media and in general candidates receive more equal amounts of media coverage in more gender equal countries. However, the interaction term with candidate gender has a positive impact on candidate's media coverage (insignificant in Model 2) indicating that women candidates receive more media attention in countries where women and men are also in general more equal to one another.

Table 1: Effect of the predictors of (viable) candidate coverage in news media during the 2009 European Election campaign (Tobit estimates)

	Model 1			Model 2 (with list position)		
	Beta	Robust SE	P>|t|	Beta	Robust SE	P>|t|
Female candidate	-9.314	7.190	0.196	-8.362	10.143	0.410
Incumbent	-0.013	0.002	0.000	-0.016	0.002	0.000
Preferential voting	7.950	1.516	0.000	8.916	1.606	0.000
Legislative / party quotas	2.721	1.571	0.084	2.305	1.470	0.118
Overall gender equality	-0.146	0.087	0.094	-0.321	0.094	0.001
Preferential voting * female	-2.311	2.276	0.310	-2.032	2.558	0.427
Quotas * female	-7.827	2.522	0.002	-6.544	2.450	0.008
Gender equality * female	0.212	0.120	0.078	0.165	0.175	0.348
List position				-0.324	0.103	0.002
Length of the list				0.339	0.047	0.000
Constant	5.148	4.805	0.284	11.712	5.014	0.020

	Model 1	Model 2
Number of observations	543	481
F (8, 535) / F (10, 471)	8.94	9.13
Prob > F	0.000	0.000
Pseudo R2	0.026	0.050
Log pseudolikelihood	-1361.18	-1122.46
Left-censored obs. (<=0)	226	222
Uncensored obs.	317	259

Table 2: Effect of the predictors of (viable) candidate coverage in news media during the 2009 European Election campaign (Robust regression estimates)

	Model 3			Model 4 (with list position)		
	Beta	Robust SE	P>|t|	Beta	Robust SE	P>|t|
Female candidate	-7.301	1.265	0.000	-4.626	1.397	0.001
Incumbent	-0.002	0.000	0.000	-0.002	0.000	0.000
Preferential voting	1.385	0.217	0.000	1.220	0.209	0.000
Legislative / party quotas	-0.104	0.231	0.652	-0.291	0.209	0.165
Overall gender equality	-0.017	0.012	0.160	-0.040	0.012	0.001
Preferential voting * female	1.293	0.429	0.003	0.275	0.427	0.520
Quotas * female	-1.272	0.460	0.006	-0.773	0.421	0.067
Gender equality * female	0.138	0.022	0.000	0.087	0.025	0.001
List position				-0.096	0.016	0.000
Length of the list				0.116	0.007	0.000
Constant	1.713	0.677	0.012	2.036	0.678	0.003

	Model 3	Model 4
Number of observations	543	481
F (8, 534) / F (10, 471)	22.24	32.92
Prob > F	0.000	0.000

List position as implied by aggregate data; too, appears to be a statistically significant predictor of candidate coverage in news media.

In order to have a more straightforward overview of the impact of overall gender equality in the society on female candidate coverage, I also plotted the Gender Equality Index on the visibility rate of women candidates. Figure 5 suggests a weak but positive linear relationship between the two variables. In countries, where women and men are in general more equal to each other in different life aspects, women candidate also receive more exposure in the news media. These findings are well in line with the hypothesis above.

Figure 5: Visibility of Female Candidates and the Overall Gender Equality in the Society: 2009 European Parliamentary Election News Coverage[6]
Source: 2009 European Election Media Study; Platenga 2009.

Conclusion

Aggregate country level analysis suggests that female candidates enjoyed on average less news media attention during the 2009 European Election campaign than their proportion among all candidates would have expected them to receive. However, candidate level model where competitive candidates were over represented in the sample, showed no significant relationship between candidate gender and her news media coverage. These results are partly due to the fact that the data on women's visibility in news media is biased towards competitive candidates. Election list leaders are dominating the media. Therefore, the overall proportion of women among candidates is not a good predictor of their media coverage. However, when examining the media attention against women political leaders, we see less bias in the coverage. This suggests that the bias that has been traditionally attributed to media begins in party offices. Women tend to be under represented as election list leaders compared to their total share among candidates in the majority of European countries. The fact that women candidates are not as often as viable as male candidates hinders their

[6] Romania and Bulgaria are not included in the analysis because the EU Gender Equality Index was not available.

chances to become popular in the news media which in turn may further hinder their chances of becoming elected.

Besides the competitiveness of the candidate the gender bias in news media is also partly explained by the overall state of gender equality in a given society. Women candidates have higher chances of becoming visible in the news media in countries where men and women are in general more equal to each other in terms of sharing power, money and labour. The overall gender equality in the society might also act as a spurious effect in the relationship between the competitiveness of female candidates and their news media coverage. At the same time, however, societies where either parties or national legislature have established candidate gender quotas, women candidates do not receive proportionately more but less media coverage.

Incumbency of the candidate resulted to have a miniature negative effect and preferential voting system a strong positive effect on candidate coverage during the 2009 European Elections. Most of the non-incumbent challengers are national politicians who might be more recognizable to voters than incumbent MEPs that are "further away" from their national electorate.

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