Is Feminine Style Executive Style?
Textual Analysis of State of the State Addresses 2001-2016

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Abstract

Current literature diverges over the prime factor that influences political speech.
Institutional Literature: Authority and constraints of institutions influence speech. Legislators use speeches to credit claim and executives to agenda set.
Gender-Based Literature: Authors unanimously find that female legislators speak with a "feminine style", emphasizing traditional women's issues including healthcare, education and social spending.
Problem: Institutional literature that examines executive speech ignores gender. The gender-based literature only examines legislators, ignoring executives.
The overlap, female executive speech, has not been studied.
Though there has never been a female US national executive, female executives on the state level , governors, are a valuable resource.
Research Question: Does gender (Independent variable) condition executive speech (Dependent variable) as it conditions female legislative speech?
Finding: The institution conditions speech more so than gender. Regardless of gender, governors emphasize similar issues in their speeches.
However, male governors address national issues more frequently than female governors who tend to focus on state-specific issues.
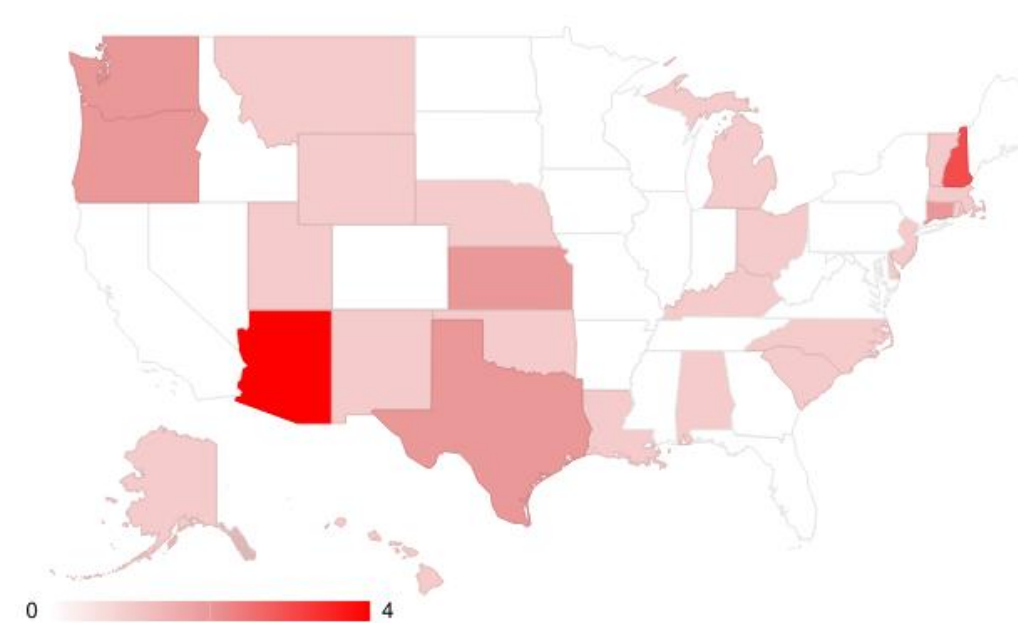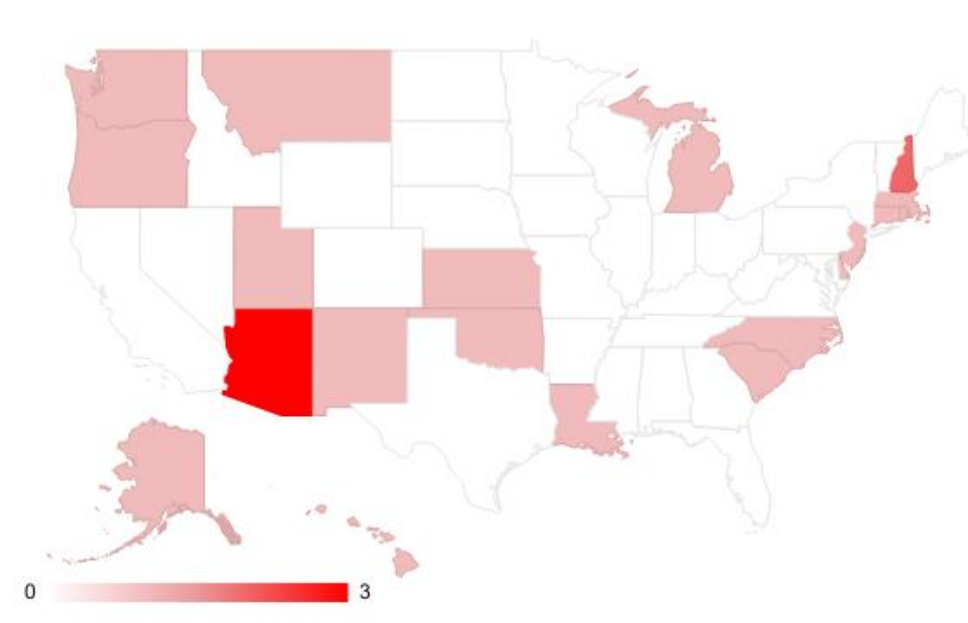
Fig 1: Concentration of Female Govs in US History   Fig 2: Concentration of Female Govs 2001-2016

Data and Methods

Dataset: A collection of 668 State of the State Addresses 2001-2016 across all 50 states composed of 584 male and 84 female speeches with a total of 1,362,657 words.
The dataset is original, and to my knowledge the largest State of the State dataset over the longest period of time in existence.

Method: Textual analysis using statistical software program R. I preprocessed and staged the data removing numbers, capitalization, common words such as "the", "my" and "was" and punctuation. I also stemmed the dataset, collapsing words into their common root.
Word frequencies form the basis of my analysis. The frequency of terms is a proxy for the salience of terms: the more frequently a term is used, the more important it is to the governor.
Grouped by gender, the most frequently used terms can be compared for men and women to discover whether these governors emphasize similar or dissimilar issues.
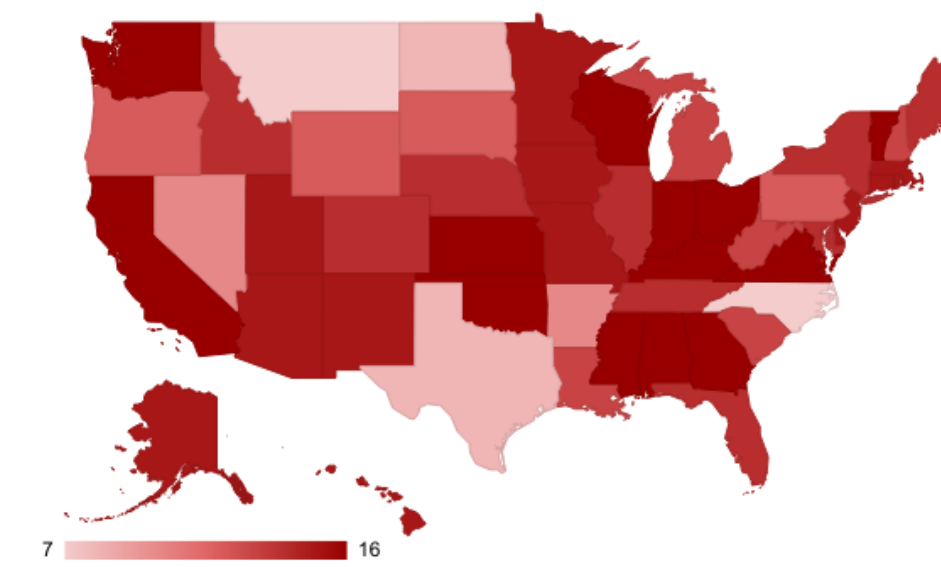I focused on the top 100 terms overall for females and for males.

Fig 3: Concentration of Addresses, 2001-2016

Results

The most frequent term overall, for males and for females is *will*.

Figures 4 and 5 show the top 15 terms for both female and male governors are the same: *budget, busi, can, educ, fund, govern, help, job, need, new, peopl, school, tax, will, work*.

The top 31 terms are listed in relative rather than raw frequencies with the frequency of *will* = 1 in Figure 6. The terms reveal a high degree of homogeneity between male and female governors. Against expectation, female governors speak frequently on business and economic issues and males speak frequently about health, family and social issues.
This is finding is also reflected in the word clouds in Figures 7, 8 and 9.

Male and female governors do diverge over scope. For example, *million* and *nation* rank higher for male governors than females. Terms *world, general, billion* and *universe* appear in the top 100 most frequent male terms but not in the top 100 female terms.

In sum, my analysis of word frequencies for male and female gubernatorial speech reveals diversity within but homogeneity across male and female gubernatorial speech with the exception of scope.
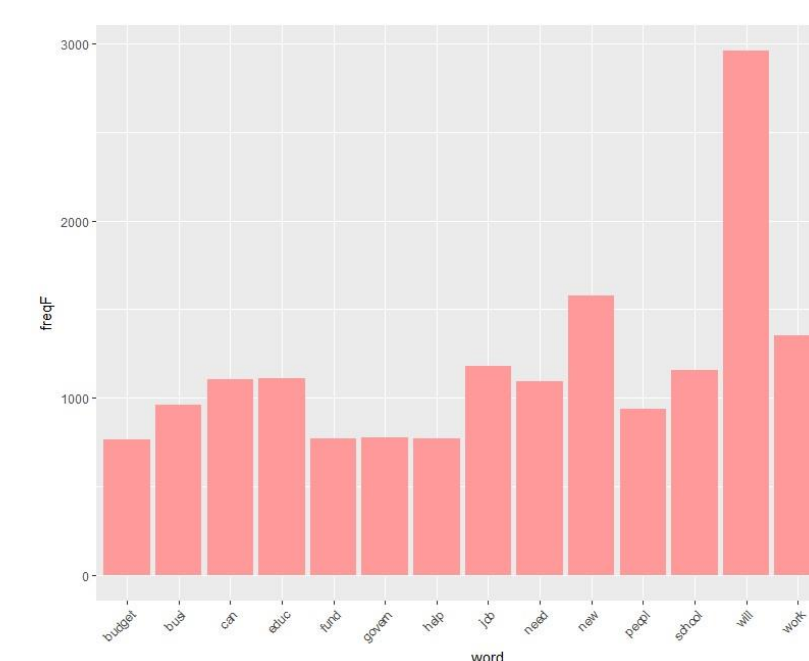

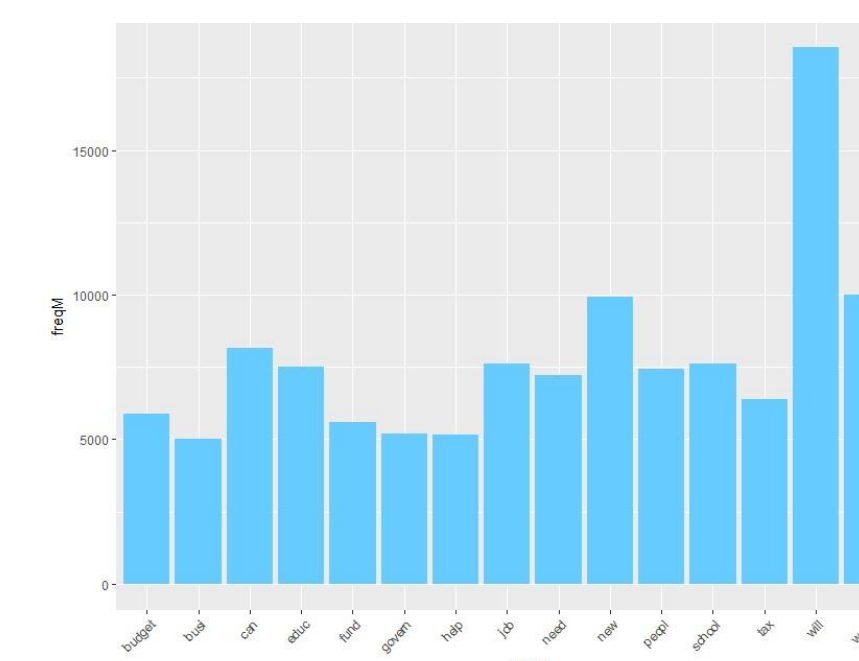Fig 4: 15 Most Frequent Female Terms   Fig 5: 15 Most Frequent Male Terms
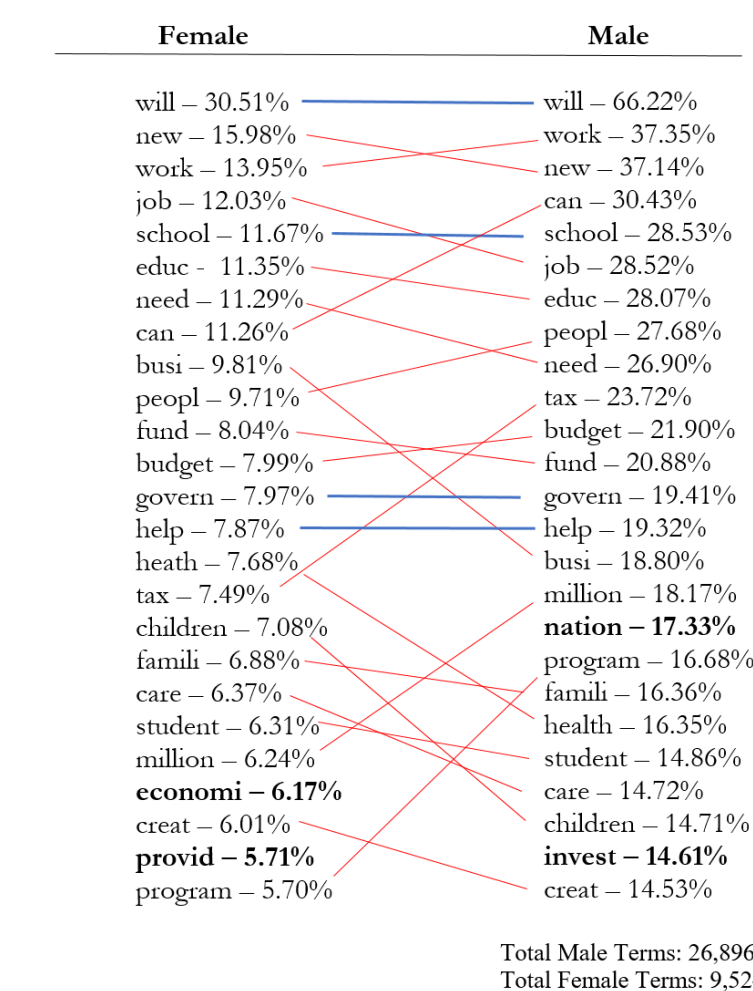

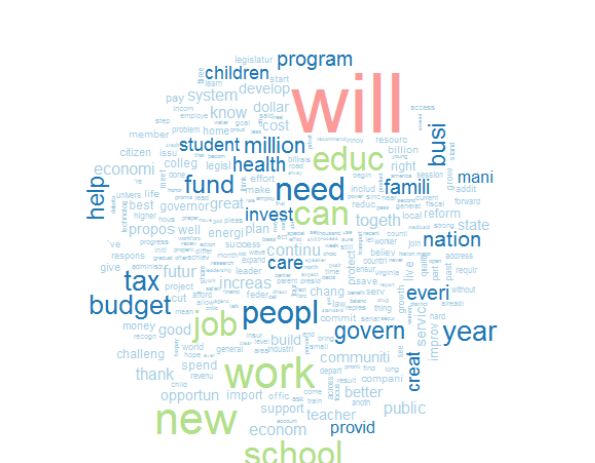Fig 6: Top 31 Terms for Female and Male Governors
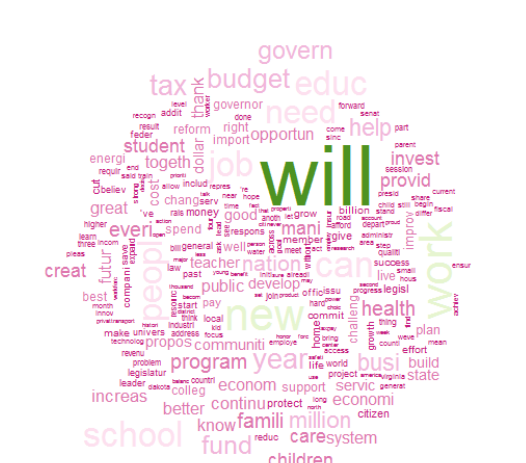
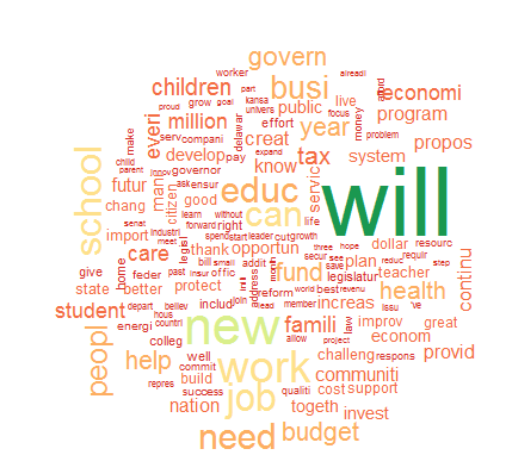

Fig 7: Combined Word Cloud   Fig 8: Male Word Cloud   Fig 9: Female Word Cloud

Conclusions & Contribution

While gender-based literature finds that female legislators emphasize issues such as healthcare, education and social spending more so than male legislators and exhibit a more inclusive tone, I find that female executives speak on a diverse range of issues and homogeneously with males. While male governors tend to use broader and more nationalistic speech, both males and females speak with an overwhelmingly positive and optimistic tone in their addresses.
As executives, governors are responsible for the full range of policy issues in their states. For this reason, female governors do not have the luxury of solely advocating for women's issues as female legislators do. Rather, they must address policy issues specific to their state environments which may or may not include women's issues.
Their feminine style is executive style, shaped by the nature of their office rather than their gender.
Contributions:
My original dataset of 668 State of the State Addresses is to my knowledge the largest in existence.
My finding that the institution conditions speech more than gender challenges the existing congressional/gender-based literature.
This research has started the conversation of women executives and female gubernatorial speech.

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