

How partisans stereotype female candidates: Untangling the  
relationship between partisanship, gender stereotypes, and support  
for female candidates

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Abstract: Existing research offers conflicting conclusions on whether feminine stereotypes help, hurt, or have no effect on how voters perceive female candidates (Dolan 2014; Hayes 2011; Brooks 2011). Feminine stereotypes characterize women as nurturing and sensitive – qualities generally not valued in political leadership (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b). Complicating the relationship between female candidates and feminine stereotypes is that they overlap with partisan stereotypes (Winter 2010). This study uses an original survey experiment to clarify the relationship between partisanship and gender stereotypes. The results uncover several findings. First, partisanship and gender can combine to affect how feminine stereotypes become activated during a campaign. Second, when feminine stereotypes are activated voters use them to evaluate Democrat female candidates more positively than Republican female candidates on caring and trustworthiness. Third, activating masculine stereotypes leads voters to make similar inferences about the leadership abilities of both Democrat and Republican female candidates.

Unprecedented numbers of women run for political office in each election cycle, and 2012 was a record year with 181 women running in a House or Senate race (CAWP 2013). Concurrent with this surge of female candidates is a rise in the ideological and partisan diversity of women running for office. Historically, female candidates tend to be Democrats; but there is a shift in these dynamics as more Republican women enter the electoral arena. Many female candidates, both Democrats and Republicans, may have to overcome the perceptual biases associated with feminine stereotypes. Identifying the dynamics between partisanship and feminine stereotypes is critical to understanding the electoral biases female candidates may face, especially as women's underrepresentation persists at every level of elected office in the U.S.

Existing research is unclear about whether feminine stereotypes affect perceptions of female candidates or if partisan concerns are more important. Some studies argue that feminine stereotypes pose a constraint for female candidates because they run counter to the expectations voters have for political leader (Sapiro 1981; Leeper 1991; Rosenwasser et al. 1987; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b). However, other studies argue that feminine stereotypes do not affect vote support for female candidates because of the prevailing influence of partisanship (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009; Dolan 2014; Hayes 2011). These mixed findings point to a debate in the literature about which force dominates evaluations of female candidates: partisanship or gender stereotypes.

Complicating the dynamics between partisanship and gender is the alignment between feminine stereotypes with Democrat stereotypes and masculine stereotypes with Republican stereotypes (Winter 2010). The interconnected nature of these stereotypes means that these characteristics may jointly influence perceptions of female candidates (Schneider and Bos 2014). However, current research suggests that whether voters use feminine stereotypes to evaluate female candidates depends on the campaign strategies of female candidates (Bauer 2014; Krupnikov and Bauer 2014; Bos 2011). Thus, whether gender stereotypes and partisanship combine to affect voter evaluations depends on the salience of feminine stereotypes. The relationship between feminine stereotypes and partisan stereotypes is not necessarily

a question of which force drives support for female candidates, but how and when these factors work together to affect female candidates. This manuscript expands on current research on the intersection of partisan and gender stereotypes to ask: *What is the relationship between partisan and feminine stereotypes when voters evaluate female candidates?* The next section reviews extant research on gender stereotypes, partisan stereotypes, and female candidates. Following this review, I develop a theoretical framework for unpacking the relationship between gender and partisan stereotypes. From this framework, I develop a series of hypotheses, and I test these with an original survey experiment. The results show that partisanship can affect how voters use feminine stereotypes to evaluate female candidates in ways that are politically consequential.

## **The Role of Gender Stereotypes and Partisanship in Politics**

Stereotypes about women and men can be particularly potent because they are ubiquitous concepts that individuals learn about early in childhood (Hill and Flom 2007). Gender stereotypes delineate the types of traits, behaviors, and roles separately assigned to men and to women (Prentice and Carranza 2002). Feminine stereotypes lead to the perception that women are more nurturing, caregiving, and emotional. These traits are considered essential for filling the communal social roles traditionally held by women, such as being a homemaker or a mother (Eagly and Karau 2002). Masculine stereotypes, on the other hand, reflect the perception that men are best suited for agentic roles, such as being a political or business leader. Gender stereotypes lead to the perception that men compared to women have more of the traits needed to be successful leaders such as being tough, aggressive, and assertive. These gender divisions can be problematic when women fill agentic roles because feminine stereotypes are incongruent with the traits and qualities associated with leaders (Eagly and Karau 2002).

The political consequences of gender stereotypes for female candidates are unclear in existing literature. On the one hand, female candidates may face bias because feminine

stereotypes can lead voters to see women as ill-suited for leadership roles (Lawless 2004; Rosenwasser et al. 1987; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a). Alternatively, some research suggests that female candidates can leverage feminine stereotypes to their advantage such as when they are running in state and local races (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b; Fridkin and Kenney 2009). At lower levels of office, feminine stereotypes align with the types of issues that dominate state and local political agendas (Herrnson et al. 2003). Other studies find that feminine stereotypes have little affect support for female candidates (Dolan 2014; Brooks 2011).

Research on the relationship between partisan and gender stereotypes offers similarly conflicting conclusions about how and when these two types of stereotypes affect female candidates. Some research finds that party stereotypes far outweigh gender stereotypes when voters evaluate female candidates (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009; Dolan 2014; Hayes 2011). However, other studies find a more complex relationship between gender and partisan stereotypes (Huddy and Capelos 2002; King and Matland 2003). For example, King and Matland (2003) find that Republican female candidates can attract support from Democrat and Independent voters, but the mechanism motivating Democrats to support Republican women is unclear.

Partisanship is certainly a critical factor in vote choice, but voters also hold stereotypes about political parties. Democrats are more often associated with issues such as support for social welfare policies, education, and health care; meanwhile, Republicans are more often associated with issues such as defense, foreign policy, and national security (Rahn 1993; Petrocik 1996). These issue associations affect the types of traits attributed to each political party. Partisan stereotypes have evolved such that Democrat stereotypes align with feminine stereotypes and Republican stereotypes align with masculine stereotypes (Winter 2010). The Democrat Party owns issues that connect with traits such as being caregiving and nurturing. Republican-owned issues relate to traits such as being aggressive and outspoken. This overlap between party and gender stereotypes means that party and gender can interact to influence how voters think about female candidates (Schneider and Bos 2014).

This study investigates how voters use feminine stereotypes when evaluating female candidates, and specifically examines how a candidate's partisanship can affect voter reliance on feminine stereotypes. Untangling the relationship between gender and party stereotypes is important to understanding the electoral challenges facing female candidates, especially as more women run in statewide and national elections. The following section outlines a theory about how voters process gender and partisan stereotypes, and from this theory, I develop a series of hypotheses.

## **Processing Gender Stereotypes in a Partisan Context**

To understand how and when voters use feminine stereotypes to evaluate female candidates I integrate research from social psychology with research on the role of parties in voter decision-making. Social psychology models are particularly useful because they treat stereotype reliance as a conditional process and consider how individuals simultaneously process multiple stereotypes, such as those about gender and partisanship.

Social psychology research finds that individuals do not automatically rely on feminine stereotypes when making a judgment about a woman; but rather, stereotype reliance depends on the reliance and salience of a particular stereotype to a decision-making task (Kunda and Spencer 2003; Brewer 1988; Sinclair and Kunda 1999; Blair 2002). In electoral decision-making, partisanship and feminine stereotypes have different levels of relevancy and saliency. Partisanship is a readily available and omnipresent cue during a political campaign, and is often the primary lens through which voters evaluate politicians (Lau and Redlawsk 2006). The strong attachments individuals have with specific political parties further increases the salience and relevance of partisanship in vote choice (Green et al. 2002). Feminine stereotypes, on the other hand, do not have the same level of salience or relevance to electoral decision-making compared to partisanship. A candidate's gender, by itself, is not a strong enough cue to make feminine stereotypes salient in a voters mind (Bauer 2014; Brooks 2011). At a baseline level, partisan cues can limit the activation of feminine stereotypes for female

candidates.

Different campaign tactics can activate feminine stereotypes in the minds of voters, thus increasing their salience and relevance (Bauer 2014). Using feminine traits to describe a female candidate activates the broader feminine stereotype in an individual's mind (Blair and Banaji 1996). Making feminine stereotypes salient increases the likelihood voters will use these ideas to form inferences about the leadership abilities of female candidates. It is not clear how the interconnected nature of partisanship and feminine stereotypes might affect the process of feminine stereotype activation. Schneider and Bos (2014) find that party and gender can work together to affect the leadership perceptions of female politicians. Similarly, partisanship can increase the ease with which feminine stereotype activation occurs for individual voters. Democrat and feminine stereotypes overlap, and this association may increase the extent to which feminine stereotype activation occurs for voters evaluating a Democrat female candidate. Conversely, the mismatch between Republican and feminine stereotypes means that feminine stereotypes may have lower activation levels for voters evaluating a Republican female candidate. The first hypothesis considers how partisanship and feminine stereotypes work together to affect feminine stereotype activation:

*H1: Partisanship will affect feminine stereotype activation so that voters evaluating Democratic female candidates will have higher feminine stereotype activation levels compared to voters evaluating Republican female candidates.*

Partisanship and gender can have a reciprocal influence where they reinforce one another and differentially affect Democratic female candidates compared to Republican female candidates.

The overlap between Democrat and feminine stereotypes might not only affect the process of feminine stereotype activation, but can also affect evaluations of female candidates. Because feminine traits align with characteristics of Democrats, Democrat female candidates might be evaluated more positively than Republican female candidates when feminine stereotype activation occurs. Conversely, Republican stereotypes clash with feminine stereotypes and this means that activating feminine stereotypes may reduce evaluations of Republican

female candidates. The next hypothesis considers how activated feminine stereotypes affect the way voters apply these stereotypes to Democrat and Republican female candidates.

*H2: When feminine stereotype activation occurs, voters will more positively evaluate Democrat female candidates compared to Republican female candidates.*

This hypothesis predicts that feminine stereotypes only affect female candidates when they have been activated, and voters will apply activated feminine stereotypes differently to Democrat and Republican female candidates. Not activating feminine stereotypes means that these constructs are unlikely to affect voter evaluations, and voters will fall back on partisanship.

Female candidates, regardless of their partisanship, may use masculine traits to bolster their leadership credentials and to counter the perceived effects of feminine stereotypes. Masculine stereotypes overlap with characteristics of the Republican Party; thus, using these strategies might benefit Republican female candidates more than Democrat female candidates. Masculine stereotypes also might provide female candidates with a role congruity boost because these stereotypes overlap with leadership expectations. The third hypothesis delineates how masculine stereotypes affects evaluations of female candidates.

*H3: When masculine stereotype activation occurs, voters will more positively evaluate Republican female candidates compared to Democrat female candidates.*

The combination of being a Republican and being depicted in ways that align with Republican characteristics should benefit Republican women more than Democrat women. Thus, feminine and masculine stereotypes have the potential to affect Democrat and Republican women in very different ways. The next section outlines an original survey experiment designed to test this process of stereotype reliance.

## **Experimental Design**

I use an experiment to test how partisanship affects feminine stereotype activation and application for female candidates. An experiment is particularly useful because the method's



Table 1: Experimental Conditions (N=1195)

<b>Democrat Candidate</b>	<b>Republican Candidate</b>
Group 1: Woman, Control (n=101)	Group 7: Woman, Control (n=103)
Group 2: Woman, Feminine (n=101)	Group 8: Woman, Feminine (n= 104)
Group 3: Woman, Masculine (n=98)	Group 9: Woman, Masculine (n=93)
Group 4: Man, Control (n=97)	Group 10: Man, Control (n=102)
Group 5: Man, Feminine (n=96)	Group 11: Man, Feminine (n=98)
Group 6: Man, Masculine (n=98)	Group 12: Man, Masculine (n=104)

high level of internal validity can identify the underlying psychological process behind how stereotypes affect candidate evaluations (Brader 2005; McDermott 2002).

The study relies on a 2x2x2 design manipulating three factors: the gender of the candidate, the activation of feminine or masculine stereotypes, and whether the candidate was a Democrat or a Republican. Table 1 displays the full design. With this design, it is possible to test the relationship between partisanship and gender stereotypes for both female and male candidates. The names Karen and Kevin Bailey cued candidate gender, and Karen and Kevin were either a Democrat or Republican.<sup>1</sup>

Following psychology research, I use *traits* and *gender roles* to activate feminine and masculine stereotypes (Kunda and Thagard 1996; Prentice and Carranza 2002). Participants read a newspaper article about each candidate that described them as having feminine or masculine characteristics, along with general information about the campaign. A newspaper article is an appropriate vehicle for embedding the manipulation because most individuals learn about candidates through the media, and because research shows that news coverage of candidate traits can affect voter decision-making (West 2005; Fridkin and Kenney 2011).<sup>2</sup> The feminine article described the candidate as caring, sensitive, and compassionate, all of which are traits traditionally associated with feminine stereotypes (Eagly and Karau 2002). The feminine manipulation also mentioned the candidates children to cue communal gender roles. The masculine condition used agentic traits to describe the candidate including outspoken, decisive, and assertive (Koenig et al. 2011). In the masculine article there was

<sup>1</sup>A pre-test showed no differences in the perceived age, education level, or backgrounds based on the candidate names.

<sup>2</sup>Existing research does show that feminine traits appear in candidate ads, websites, and news coverage, though masculine traits appear more frequently. Additionally, there are few gender differences in how male and female candidates become attached to feminine traits in campaigns (Hayes and Lawless 2013; Sapiro et al. 2011).

Table 2: Sample Demographics

	<b>Sample</b>	<b>ANES 2013</b>
Age (Modal Category)	30 to 40 (M=35)	55 to 65
% Female	49%	52.35%
Income % 50,000+	41%	52.62%
% Very Interested in News	33%	43.21%

no mention of the candidates family, but the article mentioned that the candidate was a business leader. For each type of candidate, there was a control condition that included no mention of feminine or masculine traits or gender roles. The text of the manipulation is included in Appendix 1.

### Sample

A sample of adults in the U.S. were recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk following the method of Berinsky et al. (2012). Table 2 compares the demographic characteristics of the MTurk sample to the 2013 American National Election Study. The sample does skew ideologically liberal, but it is generally representative of the U.S. adult population. A total of N=1195 participants completed the study.

### Measures

I measure stereotype activation with an implicit stereotype measure asking participants to place the candidate on a scale ranging from zero to seven with the ends defined as follows: (1) strong-weak (2) harsh-lenient, (3) hard-soft, (4) cold-warm, and (5) distant-caring (Rudman et al. 2001). The implicit stereotype scale is the averaged index of these items. The final scale ranges from 0 to 7, and higher values indicate stronger feminine stereotype activation and lower values indicate masculine stereotype activation. Rudman et al. (2001) created the scale to measure implicit stereotyping along dimensions of power and warmth, and these dimensions closely align with the concepts of agency and communality. This measure is appropriate as a test of gender stereotype activation because it measures the strength of “the automatic concept-attribute associations that are thought to underlie implicit stereotypes”

(Rudman et al. 2001; p. 1165). This scale is especially beneficial because the labeling of the scale ends limits the potential of social desirability bias in the responses. With this scale, feminine stereotype activation should occur most strongly in the Democrat female candidate, feminine stereotype condition.

I include a second method for testing stereotype activation using a word-stem completion task (Derrick et al. 2009). For the task, participants were given the first three letters of a series of words and asked to complete the word with what first came to mind. The word-stems included items that could be completed with feminine stereotypic words and filler words. The feminine stereotypic word-stems were *caring*, *compassion*, *empathy*, *vulnerable*, *honest*, and *affectionate*. Participants filled in a total of ten word-stems, and the order of the word-stems was randomized. The dependent variable is the total number of feminine words a participant completed. If a female candidate's gender activates feminine stereotypes then participants should complete more feminine words after seeing a female candidate compared to seeing a male candidate. This task is more cognitively demanding compared to the implicit stereotype scale, and offers a more stringent test of feminine stereotype activation.

The candidate evaluation items included both feminine and masculine characteristics that previous research identifies as important qualities individuals look for in political candidates (Miller et al. 1986; Funk 1999). The feminine leadership items asked participants to rate how well the words "caring" and "trustworthy representative" described the candidate. These characteristics are ones where female candidates are generally thought to have an advantage over male candidates (Fridkin and Kenney 2009). For the masculine leadership items, participants rated the candidates on "knowledge" and "experience." Both of these areas are ones where female candidates have traditionally been at a disadvantage (Brooks 2013). Each of these evaluative items was measured on a seven point scale with higher values indicating a more positive evaluation. Including both feminine and masculine leadership qualities allows me to test how feminine stereotypes and partisanship might combine in a way that can provide female candidates an advantage on some evaluations.

## Results

The first hypothesis investigates how partisanship affects feminine stereotype activation for female candidates, and the analysis starts with tests of feminine stereotype activation. Following these analyses, I turn to investigating how voters apply feminine and masculine stereotypes to Democrat and Republican female candidates.

### The Effect of Partisanship on Feminine Stereotype Activation

The first hypothesis predicts that partisanship and candidate gender combine to strengthen feminine stereotype activation for Democrat female candidates. This hypothesis predicts an interactive relationship between Democrat female candidates and feminine traits. I test feminine stereotype activation two ways: first, I use the implicit stereotype measure, and second, I confirm these findings with the word-stem completion task. I use a three-way ANOVA analysis including a factor between candidate gender, candidate party, and the feminine stereotype condition. Starting with the implicit stereotype scale, the hypothesized interaction is significant,  $F=3.64$ ,  $p=0.0565$ . There are also significant main effects for each of the experimental factors. The first row of Table 3 displays these results.

The feminine stereotype activation levels for the Democrat and Republican female candidates do not differ in the control conditions,<sup>3</sup> but differences do emerge in the feminine stereotype condition. For the Democrat female, feminine stereotype activation increases by a value of 0.56, and this is less than the 0.19 stereotype activation increase for the Republican female candidate. The difference-in-difference for the Democrat female candidate is significantly higher compared to the Republican female candidate,  $p \leq 0.001$ .<sup>4</sup> For the male candidates, partisanship does not matter for feminine stereotype activation. Feminine stereotype activation increases for both the Democrat and Republican male candidates from the feminine to the control condition, but comparing these differences shows that the size of

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<sup>3</sup>Comparing the feminine stereotype activation levels in the control conditions for female and male candidates also shows no significant differences. At a baseline level, feminine stereotype activation does not occur regardless of candidate gender or party.

<sup>4</sup>This comparison uses a difference-in-differences method (Jerit et al. 2013). This compares the difference from the feminine to the control condition for the Democrat female candidate to the difference from the feminine to the control condition for the Republican female candidate.

Table 3: Summary Results for Feminine Stereotype Activation

	Cand. Gender	Cand. Party	Feminine Stereo	Cand. Gender Party	Cand. Gender Fem. Stereo	Cand. Party. Fem. Stereo	Gender x Party x Fem. Stereo
Implicit Stereotypes	7.42 p=0.006	19.47 p≤0.001	165.37 p≤0.001	0.12 p=0.73	0.04 p=0.84	0.19 p=0.66	3.64 p=0.05
Feminine Word Stems	3.49 p=0.06	1.01 p=0.31	9.16 p=0.003	4.10 p=0.04	0.19 p=0.66	0.14 p=0.71	4.10 p=0.04

N = 1195. *Note:* The F-statistic is reported for each factor, as well as the p-value.

the increase is similar for both candidates,  $p=0.5939$ .

Next, I test this hypothesis with the word-stem variable. Replicating the three-way ANOVA with the number of feminine words completed as the outcome variable shows that the key interaction reaches significances,  $F=4.10$ ,  $p=0.043$  – these results are displayed in the second row of Table 3. There are no differences in the strength of feminine stereotype activation in the control conditions. Participants completed about 1.5 words for Democrat and Republican female candidates. But, the increase in feminine stereotype activation is greater for the Democrat female candidate than for the Republican female candidate. Participants completed an additional 0.47 more words for the Democrat female candidate and this is more than the 0.09 increase for the Republican female candidate,  $p=0.0036$ .

On the word-stem completion task, the results differ for the male candidates. There are no differences for the Democrat male candidate in the strength of feminine stereotype activation from the feminine to the control condition. However, there is an increase in feminine stereotype activation for the Republican male candidate, and the difference-in-difference is significant,  $p=0.0364$ . This increase in feminine stereotype activation for the Republican male candidate suggests that under some conditions feminine stereotypes can override partisanship, but the next set of analyses show that feminine stereotypes affect female and male candidates very differently.

### The Effects of Partisanship & Feminine Stereotypes on Candidate Evaluations

The second hypothesis predicts that activated feminine stereotypes will lead participants to evaluate Democrat and Republican female candidates differently. This hypothesis sets up the

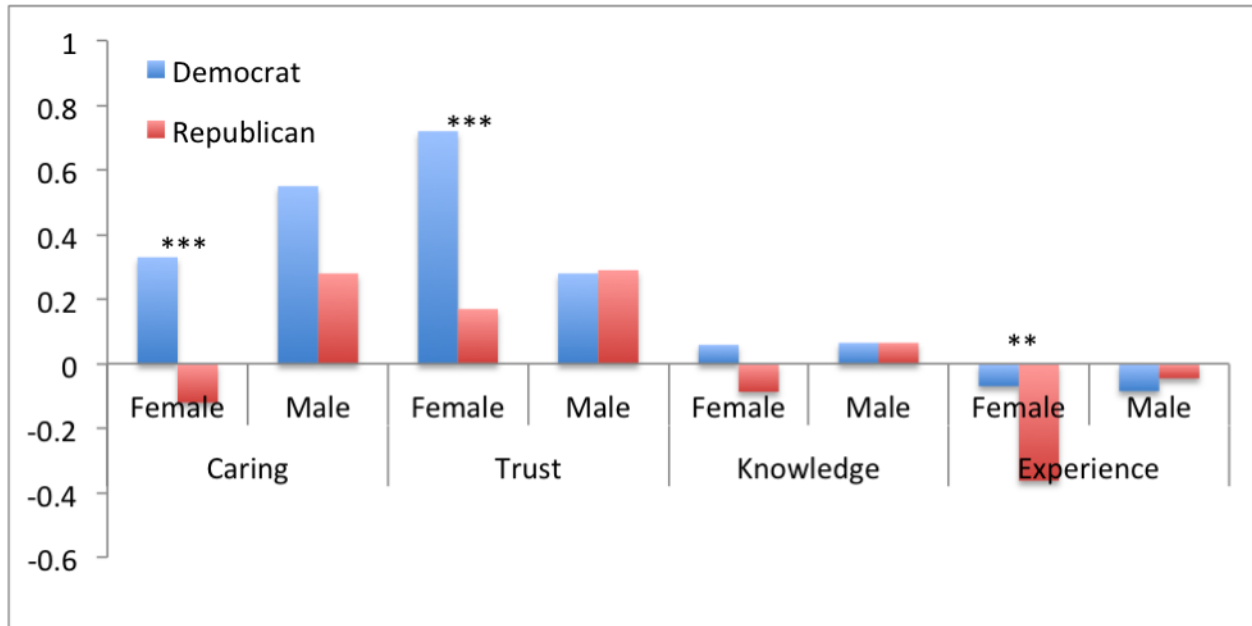
relevant comparisons as being across party but within gender, and to test these differences t-tests using the difference-in-differences from the feminine to the control condition are the appropriate analytical technique. I focus on comparing the difference-in-differences from the feminine to the control condition for the Democrat and Republican female candidates.

I start by examining how Democrat female candidates fare on the caring and trustworthy ratings. Both of these items reflect stereotypical strengths of female politicians (McDermott 1997; Alexander and Anderson 1993); thus, if party, gender, and feminine stereotypes reinforce one another the Democrat female candidate should receive a stronger boost on these characteristics compared to the Republican female candidates. The left side of Figure 1 shows the shifts in evaluations from the feminine to the control condition for each candidate type on caring and trust.

The Democrat female candidate's ratings do improve in the feminine stereotype condition by a value of 0.33 from the control condition ratings, and the Republican female candidate's evaluation decreases by a value of .12. The difference-in-difference between the Democrat and Republican female candidates is significant,  $p=0.0113$ . Similar results emerge on trustworthiness. The Democrat female candidate receives a significant boost of 0.72 points while Republican female candidates evaluations only improve by a value of 0.17. The difference-in-difference is significant,  $p=0.0004$ . These two sets of comparisons suggest that the Democrat female candidate can benefit from feminine stereotypes, but the advantage may be limited to areas that reflect stereotypical strengths of women. The differences for the male candidates on these items do change from the feminine to the control condition. Both Democrat and Republican men are rated more positively in the feminine condition, but the difference-in-difference between Democrat and Republican men do not reach significance on either variable.

Next, I turn to examining how feminine stereotypes affect evaluations of Democrat and Republican female candidates on experience and knowledge – areas where female candidates may have a disadvantage. The right side of Figure 1 displays these results. Both Democrat and Republican female candidates receive less positive evaluations in the feminine stereo-

Figure 1: Partisan Differences in the Effects of Feminine Stereotypes



\*\*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \* $p \leq 0.10$

*Note:* Each bar is the difference in the feminine subtracted from the control condition. Negative values indicate a less positive evaluation and positive values indicate an improved evaluation. The significance levels indicates a significant difference-in-differences when comparing the across party, within gender differences.

type condition relative to the control. The Democrat female candidate's evaluation drops by .07, but the Republican female candidate's evaluation drops by 0.36, and these differences are significant,  $p=0.0513$ . Feminine stereotypes lead participants to evaluate the Republican female candidate as less experienced compared to Democrat female candidates. On knowledge, the Democrat female candidate receives a small boost of 0.06 points, but the Republican female candidates rating decreases by 0.09 points. However, the difference-in-difference on knowledge is not quite significant,  $p=0.3268$ . Male candidates, on the other hand, are more protected from the harms of feminine stereotypes as neither the Democrat nor Republican male are rated any differently on experience and knowledge in the feminine condition compared to the control condition.

These first set of results suggest that feminine stereotypes do affect how Democrat female candidates are evaluated compared to Republican female candidates, but that Democrat women can only benefit on stereotypically feminine characteristics. I next turn to considering

the overlap between masculinity and characteristics of Republicans.

### **The Effects of Partisanship & Masculine Stereotypes on Candidate Evaluations**

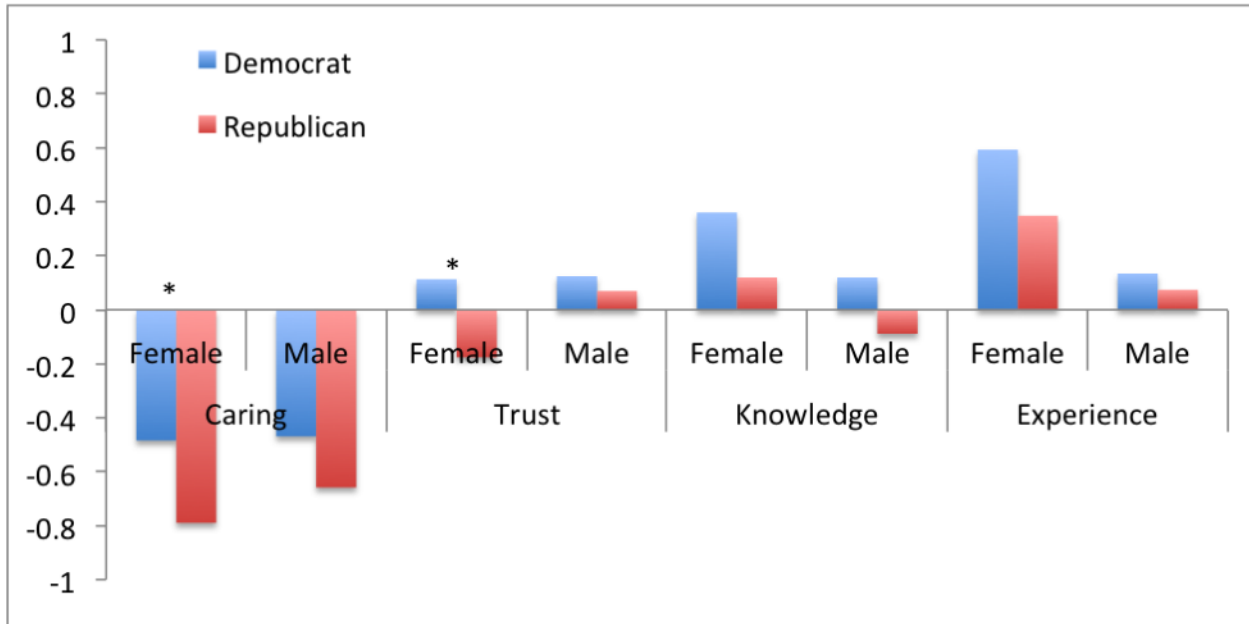
Masculine stereotypes overlap with characteristics about the Republican Party, but they also overlap with the general expectations voters have for political leaders. If party and gender exert a joint influence over evaluations of female candidates, then Republican female candidates should benefit more than Democrat female candidates from being connected with masculine traits. If masculine stereotypes work outside of the influence of partisanship, then Democrat and Republican women should be affected similarly in the masculine trait condition.

I start with the evaluations on caring and trust, and these results are on the left side of Figure 2. Because masculine stereotypes do not match up with feminine characteristics both Democrat and Republican female candidates should have less positive evaluations in the masculine trait conditions compared to the control conditions. Participants rated the Republican female candidate less positively in the masculine condition by a value of .79. The Democrat female candidate also received less positive ratings in the masculine condition with a .48 drop in support. The difference-in-difference is significant,  $p=0.096$ . The pattern shifts slightly on trustworthiness. Participants rate the Republican female candidate as less trustworthy by a value of .18, but the Democrat female candidate received a small boost of .11 points. The difference-in-difference is significant,  $p=0.0601$ . These findings show that being female, a Republican, and linked to masculine traits leads voters to rate Republican female candidates poorly on stereotypically feminine characteristics.

If party and gender work together, the Republican female candidate should gain an advantage on stereotypically masculine strengths - knowledge and experience - when connected with masculine traits. The right side of Figure 2 shows these comparisons. Both the Republican and Democrat female candidates receive more positive evaluations in the masculine condition compared to the control condition. The Republican female candidate's rating increases by .35 and the Democrat female candidate's rating increases by 0.59, but the



Figure 2: Partisan Differences in the Effects of Masculine Stereotypes



\*\*\* $p \leq 0.10$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \* $p \leq 0.01$

*Note:* Each bar is the difference in the masculine subtracted from the control condition. Negative values indicate a less positive evaluation and positive evaluations indicate an improved evaluation. The significance values indicates a significant difference-in-differences when comparing the across party, within gender differences.

difference-in-difference is not quite significant,  $p=0.1147$ . Noteworthy about these changes in evaluations is that the Democrat female candidate receives a slightly more positive boost over the Republican female candidate. The findings are similar on the experience evaluations. The Republican female candidate receives a small boost, 0.12 points, and the Democrat female candidate also receives a small boost, 0.36 points, but the difference-in-difference is not significant,  $p=0.1244$ . While masculine stereotypes do overlap with Republican stereotypes, this overlap does not provide Republican female candidates with a boost. Rather, the results suggest that masculine stereotypes and party do not combine to shape how voters form impressions of female candidates.

Evaluations of the male candidate on knowledge and experience do not change from the masculine to the control condition for either the Democrat or Republican candidates. Social role theory argues that men are seen as naturally having leadership qualities because historically men have traditionally held leadership roles (Eagly and Karau 2002). Thus,

these results are not surprising as there is a high level of role congruity between being a man and being a leader. Voters most likely make the assumption that men have the traits needed to excel as political leaders, regardless of whether they are described as having masculine traits.

### **Alternative Explanations**

The main results suggest that activating feminine stereotypes leads voters to evaluate Democrat female candidates differently than their Republican counterparts, but only on characteristics that more closely reflect feminine stereotypes. The main set of analyses did not consider the role of the voter's partisanship in these dynamics. An alternative explanation is that voters more favorably evaluated the candidate with whom they shared partisanship. There were more Democrats in the sample, and this could explain the Democrat female candidate's more positive ratings. Motivated stereotype theory argues that voters of the opposite political party may be more motivated to negatively evaluate a female candidate according to feminine stereotypes compared to a woman of their own political party (Sinclair and Kunda 1999; Krupnikov and Bauer 2014). To see how relative partisanship affects the candidate evaluations I separated the sample based on whether the candidate was of the same party or a different party as the experimental participant.

Democrat voters evaluating a Republican female candidate may be more motivated to negatively evaluate this candidate when feminine stereotypes are activated. The different partisan identity between the participant and the candidate could serve as a point of disagreement that motivates negative evaluations. This analysis compares the difference in the female candidates rating from the feminine to the control condition across relative partisanship. This can clarify whether participants used feminine stereotypes to rate the out-party female candidate negatively as opposed to using feminine stereotypes to give the Democrat female candidate a boost.

On trust, the candidates received a boost from the feminine to the control condition when voters were of the same and of a different political party. The difference-in-difference com-

parison shows that the value of these boosts are not statistically different from one another,  $p=0.4327$ . With the caring evaluation, the results differ a little. The same-party female candidate receives a boost with feminine stereotypes while the out-party female candidate suffers a drop, and the differences here are significant from one another,  $p=0.0513$ . The evidence for motivated stereotyping offers somewhat mixed results. On the masculine characteristics, both the same-party and out-party female candidate are evaluated more negatively in the feminine condition, but on these items the difference-in-differences are not significant. Thus, participants of the other political party may be more motivated to negatively rate an out-party female candidate, but the effects appear to be limited.

The focus of this paper is to clarify the relationship between partisan and gender stereotypes, but ideology might also affect how voters process feminine information about female candidates. Ideology may be most likely to influence the activation stage of feminine stereotype reliance. Those identifying as more liberal may be less likely to have feminine stereotypes activated because beliefs on this end of the spectrum focus on gender egalitarianism. Those identifying as more conservative may see feminine traits as upholding traditional family structures and maintaining conventional gender roles. Thus, liberals and conservatives may respond differently to female candidates connected to feminine traits. I replicated the stereotype activation ANOVAs and controlled for participant ideology. Participant ideology had a significant main effect with the implicit stereotype measure,  $F=3.54$ ,  $p=0.0018$ , but did not reach significance on the word-stem measure  $F=1.67$ ,  $p=0.1254$ . This suggests that participant ideology may influence the activation of feminine stereotypes.

Separating the sample by participant ideology and comparing the feminine stereotype activation increases for the Democrat and Republican female candidates shows little differences between liberals and conservatives. All participants, regardless of ideology, had higher feminine stereotype activation levels in the Democrat female candidate condition. Thus, the ability of voters to process partisan and feminine information about female candidates does not seem to be hampered by their own ideological leanings. However, because this experimental sample comes from MTurk, these participants could be more liberal than the general

population. Thus, a more representative sample with more participants on the right of the political spectrum could shift these results.

## **Discussion**

Understanding the way voters consider female candidates is critical to not just clarifying the role of feminine stereotypes on candidate choice, but to identifying the challenges female candidates must overcome in order to win elections. Female candidates, because of their gender, must be incredibly strategic when they construct campaign messages. Activating feminine stereotypes can lead to the perception that female candidates lack agentic qualities, thus putting female candidates at an electoral disadvantage. This study shows that partisanship and gender can combine to increase the strength of feminine stereotype activation for Democrat female candidates.

An important finding from this study is that voters use feminine and masculine stereotypes in very different ways. The connection between feminine stereotypes and stereotypes about Democrats leads voters to rate female candidates positively on stereotypical strengths such as trust. But, the overlap between masculine stereotypes and stereotypes about Republicans do not provide a similar boost to Republican female candidates on agentic qualities. Voters process masculine stereotypic information similarly for Democrat and Republican female candidates. These differences in the connection between different types of partisan and gender stereotypes makes the types of messages female candidates use incredibly important as they can have significant effects on voters. Moreover, more research is needed about how voters process masculine stereotypic, or counter-stereotypic, information for female candidates. The literature on this point offers mixed results with some studies showing that female candidates can benefit from emphasizing masculine issues (Schneider 2014); and other studies showing that female candidates can suffer a backlash when they engage in counter-stereotypic behaviors such as airing a negative ad (Krupnikov and Bauer 2014).

The way female candidates use feminine and masculine stereotypes can also affect their

ability to attract support from the opposite political party. While feminine stereotypes might not help Republican female candidates win support from Democrat voters, masculine stereotypes can help Republican and Democrat female candidates win support from the other political party. The ability of female candidates to attract support from partisans and voters from the other political party is important as women run in statewide and national races.

Additionally, the way voters form impressions about female candidates matters not only for elections, but is also likely to matter for how voters respond to the legislative behaviors of female lawmakers. Whether or not female lawmakers behave in ways that reinforce or contradict feminine stereotypes can influence whether constituents support their representative and whether a female candidate faces a quality challenger in re-elections. Thus, understanding stereotypes matters for not only campaigns, but for understanding the challenges a female politician may face throughout her career.

## **Conclusion**

As higher numbers of Democrat and Republican women continue to run for office, the relationship between gender and partisan stereotypes will be increasingly important to understand. The critical question to ask is not whether partisan stereotypes or gender stereotypes are the sole influence on candidate evaluations, but to examine the overlapping and interconnected relationships between these concepts. Closing the gender gap in representation can only happen if female candidates have a clear understanding of how voters make choices, and this includes clarifying the role of stereotypes. Women must be able to campaign effectively to win support especially as women ascend to higher levels of political office.

## Appendix 1: Stimulus

### Race for the Senate Continues

With Election Day drawing closer, Republican/Democrat Karen Bailey/Kevin Bailey attended a rally today to talk about her/his message of change with members of the community. Baileys children/advisors were at her/his side during the event

Bailey expressed the need for new compassionate/tough and sensitive/assertive in Washington. Speaking to parents/voters she exclaimed, I'm a mother/father (person) who cares about my family, and I know how difficult it is to make ends meet. Families/People today need relief. Bailey's campaign has emphasized improving conditions for American families and children (people).

With parents in the community embracing her/his cause, Bailey's campaign has gained momentum in recent weeks. Her/His caring/outspoken and nurturing/aggressive approach to politics resonates with families/voters throughout the state. Judy Smith/John Smith, a parent/voter in the community said of Bailey, "I feel like she/he really understands the challenges facing our community, and we need someone like that representing us.

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