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Masculinity and Femininity in Politics: Explicit and Implicit Gendered Images of the Political Parties

Abstract
Over the past few decades American voters have gradually come to analyze political parties in the gendered terms of masculinity and femininity. By using the 2000, 2004, and 2008 National Annenberg Election Survey pre-election data, this paper illustrates that the connections between gender stereotypes and party images are embedded at the explicit level of the traits that individuals associate with each party, as well as at the implicit level of unconscious cognitive connections between party and gender stereotypes. Furthermore, these gendered connections have a significant impact on citizens’ political cognition and on the study of American political behavior, campaign strategy, and public opinion.

Keywords
Party images, Masculinity, Femininity, Public opinion, Gender, Cognitive behavior

For years party identification has been the basis for voting behavior; however, over the past few decades other factors, such as cognitive behavior, have begun to influence the overall patterns of Americans’ voting behavior. The interaction between the field of politics and cognitive psychology has become quite prominent in the study of political behavior. Such an interdisciplinary approach allows for the establishment of more developed theories and practices concerning party cognition. On the other hand, since the early 1920s gender stereotypes have also gained quite a bit of prevalence. With the increase in female participation in government, gendered stereotypes have become more widespread in politics as mental shortcuts have
gradually developed as an aid to the individual decision making process. The explicit and implicit cognitive connections that have thus been made between gender and party have impacted party and candidate perceptions on a micro level. Although the emerging interaction concerning voting behavior is relatively recent, it has made a significant impact on candidate choice and party image.

**Literature**

Past research indicates that over the years the central frame of reference for the American public has been the notion of party; however, there also exists a probability that citizens’ ideas regarding gender may also have an impact on how political evaluations are shaped on a more broad scale (Geer 1988; Baumer and Gold 1995; Dolan 2004). Over the past forty years the United States has been the witness to several large-scale and controversial shifts, not only in women’s rights, but in men’s and women’s societal roles as well (Winter 2010). Therefore, a natural increase in female candidacy within the Democratic Party has occurred, thus leading to the creation of a gender gap in electoral politics (Baker 1984; Carpini 1993; Dolan 2008). The Republican Party, from the time of President Reagan to that of President George W. Bush, has been rather successful in framing itself as the more “manly” party, thus leading to developments in Americans’ images of political parties in the direction of more gendered characteristic association (Winter 2010).

One of the most prominent examples of this phenomenon is the presidential campaign of 2004, in which the main candidates, Democrat John Kerry and Republican George W. Bush, fought over whom more could accurately present the “masculine” image to the general voting
population. If fact, many political scientists, gender experts, and historians have agreed that a large portion of the presidential image-making in 2004 was centered on the notion of masculinity. Driving this paternal imperative was the anxiety Americans felt due to the war in Iraq and the threat of terrorist attacks at home, salient issues that are typically associated with male characteristics (Rainey 2004). Moreover, the “manly” theme was also cast in a more subtle manner through the use of candidate language which included terms such as “authenticity,” “toughness,” and “decisiveness,” all of which signify typical characteristics associated with leadership. American politicians have feminized their opponents dating back to the era of powdered wigs, playing on the idea that only the “manly” have the ability to lead. For example, in 1840 President Martin Van Buren, who was accused of taking too many baths and wearing a corset, lost to challenger William Henry Harrison, who made sure “not to be seen in the tub.” Al Gore also had a difficult time overcoming his “whimp” label in 2000 when it was revealed that feminist author Naomi Wolfe recommended him what colors to wear (Rainey 2004).

Kerry, on the other hand, was well aware of the many Democratic presidential contenders who were demolished by the idea that they were “soft” and fought hard to establish a manly image for himself and the party even going as far as challenging President Bush to a debate over national security. Bush also had pragmatic political reasons for sending reminders that he’s a masculine candidate considering the fact that he had to appeal to his electoral base, white men, who favored him by 59% to 37% over Gore in 2000 (Rainey 2004). In fact, according to Eric Davis, a political science professor at Middlebury College, the Bush campaign was primarily “using the masculinity and macho themes.” In the aftermath of September 11th terrorist attacks, Bush’s campaign provided him with a vast array of opportunities to display the masculine bravado. Moreover, Bush’s plainspoken manner compared to Kerry’s verbose and intellectual
speaking style created a better opportunity for him to connect with the average voter. The American definition of masculinity thus implies that if one is intellectual and has “a lot of book learning and talk[s] in ways that make that clear, then [one is] feminized” (Rainey 2004).

The main problem with overworking the manly pose, however, is the fact that women, the main voters in November, are often times overlooked. Although some female voters desire a paternal figure that can protect the country, polls indicate that women are too preoccupied with “soft” issues such as education, healthcare, and jobs to fully rely on the macho image (Rainey 2004). It is therefore no accident that Bush swiftly moved the focus of his campaign to women after completing his rodeo and NASCAR events by posing in front of female entrepreneurs in Cleveland to discuss his job-creation plans and later on hosting a White House event to emphasize his efforts to improve the rights of women worldwide (Rainey 2004).

Current problems facing the country and salient issues shape the competitive environment of political elections, thus as a result Democrats “own” some issues, while Republicans “own” others. Historically Democrats have had an electoral advantage when issues regarding social welfare and intergroup relationships are salient, while Republicans, on the other hand, have had an upper hand when issues regarding taxes, the size of the government, and spending are more prominent within the public agenda (Campbell 1960; Hamill, Lodge, and Blake 1985; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003; Damore 2004). Nevertheless, performance issues, such as the state of the economy, the nation’s status and security among other countries, and conduct of government officials, are not instinctively owned by a specific party, but have the ability to provide an advantage to a candidate when events, policy successes and failure, and official behavior all him or her to gain credit for good times or place blame in bad times (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). Therefore, candidates tend to campaign on issues that
create an advantage for them in an effort to prime their salience in the decision calculus of the voting public.

The dynamics of this aspect of campaigning have been labeled as the issue-ownership theory of voting. The theory suggests that the parties hold specific reputations for their ability in handling certain issues, which in turn provides candidates with credibility over issues associated with their party. Thus, by increasing the salience of party-owned issues candidates can fill the campaign agenda with topics that emphasize their strengths and accent their opponent’s weaknesses (e.g., the Dominance Principle) (Ricker 1993; Damore 2004). Analogous conceptualizations, such as directional theory as described by George Rabinowitz and Stuart Macdonald (1989) and the selective emphasis formulation of Ian Brudge and Dennis Farlie (1983), share a similar proposition that the concerns of voters create an advantage due to the fact that parties have specific issue reputations. Nevertheless, they disagree on what actually provides this reputation and they also have different interpretations about what voters see as an incentive to support party (Budge and Farlie 1983; Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003).

However, for the concept to be docile indicators of credibility must be observable. Previous research suggests that policy reputation, incumbency, and candidates’ backgrounds all serve as sources of credibility (Carmines and Kuklinski 1990; Kahn and Kenney 1999; Damore 2004). Nevertheless, integration of these criteria into a general model of agenda competition is problematic due to the fact that they are mainly idiosyncratic and thus do not lend themselves to systematic evaluation. Based on this restriction, a more generalizable construct of analyzing the agenda competition process in presidential campaigns is utilized in candidates’ partisanship and the theory of issue ownership (Petrocik, 1991, 1996; Damore 2004).
Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen (2003) conducted a content analysis study through a direct measurement of campaign substance (1952-2000), which also included a highlight of the discrepancy between the issue agenda of campaigns and the media’s report of the topics accentuated by candidates. Past analyses of issue-ownership dynamics have depended upon media reports or surveys responding to what topics were raised in speeches and advertisements to determine whether candidates participated in issue-ownership campaigning (Petrocik 1996). However, Petrocik et al.’s (2003) content analysis of acceptance speeches and ads allows for a more direct measurement of the issues raised by candidates, those reported by the media, and the issue concerns of the voters. The study found that there exists a considerable correlation between the balance of Democratic and Republican-owned balance of issues stressed by candidates, thus filling a substantial gap in the empirical links proposed by the previously mentioned theory. Nevertheless, this relationship is not proof that candidates create the problem concerns that aid in the shaping of voter choices. In fact, the influence could possibly run in the opposite direction since campaigns attempt to inform themselves about the worries of the electorate and then utilize said concerns to their advantage. Even in the latter case, however, there is a possible campaign influence due to the fact that campaigns prime these issues and make them more likely to influence voter’s judgment (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003).

After a careful analysis of thirteen (13) presidential elections through nomination acceptance speech and television campaign spot mentions of specific issues Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen (2003) determined which salient issues are “owned” by each party and how often they are discussed by the opposing party (Issue Trespassing) (Damore 2004). The following chart illustrates some of their findings (Petrocik 2003 Appendix Table 3):
The fact that today’s society connects the Democratic Party with more feminine characteristics, as opposed to the more masculine Republican Party implies that there are implicit and explicit levels of gendered associations to citizen’s images of the parties. On a more explicit level, gendered characteristics are embedded within the traits that people associate with each party, while the implicit level, on the other hand, implies that these characteristics can be found within a set of unconscious cognitive connection between gender stereotypes and the parties (Winter 2010). Therefore, this suggests that political evaluations are shaped more broadly than originally expected through citizens’ ideas of masculinity and femininity.

Since the 1980s scholars have illustrated that parties have become more polarized at the elite level when dealing with controversial issues such as abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, and women’s equality and role within society (Wolbrecht 2000, Freeman 1987, Costain 1991). Moreover, Greg Adams (1997) suggests that this elite polarization on the topic of abortion alongside rather clear signals from each party on the issue has created a mass-level of
partisan realignment. Other than abortion, however, parties have avoided placing emphasis on particular gender issues (Sanbonmatsu 2002). Nevertheless, none of the previous concepts directly addresses the public’s broader image of party (Sanders, A. 1988; Geer, J. G. 1991; Zaller, J. 1992; Baumer, D.C., and Gold, H. J. 1995); hence they do not explore the ways in which ideas about gender are captured by issue positions that may shape party images without inducing people to change party affiliation. Other literature suggests that gender stereotypes shape issue opinion and candidate evaluation by focusing gender and political behavior upon the gender gap in partisan identification, public opinion, and vote (Winter 2010).1

The influence of gender on American political behavior has become much more prominent since the gender gap first surfaced in the 1980 presidential election, yet most explanations for the effects of gender on voting behavior tend to focus on the differences between men and women without taking into consideration how campaign strategies may highlight or conceal these differences (Schaffner 2005). Since the 1980 election female voters have been more likely to show support for Democratic candidates based on their more liberal preferences on specific issues (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986; Conover 1988; Conway, Steurnagel, and Ahern 1997; Norrander 1997; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999; Piven 1985; Schaffner 2005). Because the gender gap emerged at that time some have asserted that it resulted from the Republican Party’s rejection of the Equal Rights Amendment and its strong antiabortion platform, though others have rejected this explanation (Cook and Wilcox 1991).2 Differences in socioeconomic status have also caused an expansion in the gender gap due to the fact that

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1 A rather significant recent line of work on female candidates looks at the interactions between party stereotypes, which are oftentimes more dominant, and gender stereotypes, which in some cases manage to interact with the other in more complex ways (Dolan 2004; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Koch 2002; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009; Huddy and Capelos 2002; Matland and King 2002; Hayes 2009a).

2 The gender gap emerged in 1972, but disappeared in 1976. Only since 1980 has the gender gap been a persistent aspect of presidential elections (Schaffner 2005).
women are oftentimes less affluent than men and are more likely to benefit from social welfare programs that are supported by the Democratic Party (Erie and Rein 1988; Piven 1985; Schaffner 2005). Nevertheless, women’s support for Democratic candidates varies across elections thus suggesting that the effect of gender may depend on exactly how central women’s issues are to the campaign agenda. If the issue-content does not in fact affect the votes of women then candidates may act strategically in deciding whether to focus any attention on women’s issues when developing their campaign messages (Schaffner 2005).

Candidates learn whether appeals to female voters are beneficial to their campaign by observing how gender gaps have affected recent campaigns. Because they are closer to the views of women on particular issues, Democratic candidates who decide to target female voters are more likely to utilize their campaigns to prime women’s issues while Republicans will attempt to draw attention away from those topics and toward other issues (Schaffner 2005). Therefore, female voters are more likely to support Democratic candidates when a campaign is dominated by women’s issues, while men will remain unaffected by the focus on these issues. The ultimate influence of gender on voting behavior thus does not result only from the existence of policy differences between men and women, but also from strategic decisions made by candidates determining whether to focus their efforts on such issues (Schaffner 2005).
The study of gender and politics has considerably expanded since the emergence of women and politics scholarship as a field in the 1970s and since the creation of the APSA Women and Politics section in 1986 (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2007; Tolleson-Rinehart and Carroll 2006). It appears that voters have a tendency to draw on the broad categories of “male” and “female” when it comes time to evaluate candidates; however, these gender stereotypes are also found to pervade American politics with implications on vote choice and political participation as well (Winter 2010). Some research suggests that voters hold gender stereotypes about politicians (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2007). In fact, Huddy and Terkildsen define “political stereotyping” as “gender-based ascription of different traits, behaviors, or political beliefs to male and female politicians” (1993: 120). The impact of stereotypes depends upon the electoral context throughout the election period. Kahn’s work on U.S. Senate candidates (1996) attained information that illustrates that voters hold more favorable evaluations of female candidates who

(Schaffner 2005 pp. 806)
participate in campaigns that highlight a greater number of “female” issues as compared to the much lower evaluations of women who run in more “male” issue dominated environments.

Scholars have examined the circumstances under which voters rely on gender stereotypes; however, they have failed to investigate individual information about candidates (Koch 2002). Stereotypes are typically seen as more influential in the absence of other information, thus the less information a voter possesses concerning a particular candidate or party the more he or she is likely to utilize gender stereotypes in order to make inferences (Huddy 1994; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2007). Nevertheless, even if voters have an abundance of information regarding a party and its candidates, stereotypes may still be utilized as a form of decision making. Voters, in fact, rely on both individuating information and stereotypes in their evaluations of candidates and parties (Bodenhausen, Marcrae, and Sherman 1999). Moreover, stereotypes can be further used to predict future behavior and may even effect the processing of information. Since gender stereotypes are prescriptive, nonconformity to stereotypical behavior, however, is likely to be punished (Glick and Fiske 1990).

Furthermore, studies of legislative behavior have demonstrated that the presence of women in office greatly affects policymaking on issues that are seen as important to the female population. In fact, female legislators are more likely to experience a “special responsibility” to act for women as a collection, which in turn implies that improving the representation of female interests in politics greatly relies on the increase of female presence in office (Sanbonmatsu 2003). The perceived underrepresentation of women in office may also have a rather significant effect on the way in which voters classify major political parties in terms of masculinity and femininity. Due to the fact that there exists a great deficiency of female representatives within the Republican Party, constituents have a much more difficult time of associating any female
qualities to the party in general. The Democratic Party, on the other hand, with its more abundant source of female legislators, currently 66 within Congress (United States House of Representatives 2013) is able to create a more intricate image designed to target the female and liberal populations. Moreover, it also allocates an appropriate amount of attention to issues that are characterized as “feminine” in nature, such as abortion and women’s rights, thus creating a particular standard for future endeavors in such fields.

There are two reasons for why the gendered facets found within citizen’s party images might have the potential to alter political cognition in significant ways. The first of these is that people have a natural tendency to apply gender stereotypes, in terms of masculine and feminine aspects, to inanimate objects that are not literally male or female (Deaux, Kay 1985; Deaux, K. 1987; Winter 2010). This may lead one to expect that citizens are more likely to utilize partisan-based gender associations to formulate opinions on political candidates, groups, and issues. Secondly, due to the fact that gender-related issues have not been incorporated into the current party alignment, gendered trait associations are more likely to establish or reinforce cross-pressures for a vast amount of citizens (Winter 2010). The modern American idea of masculinity and femininity consists of unclear clusters of attributes that are said to define the characteristics of men and women (Deaux 1987); however, there is a core set of instrumental personality traits for males, as well as expressive personality traits for females. Therefore, men are thought to be more “active, independent, and decisive,” while women are seen as “compassionate, devoted to others, emotional, and kind” (Winter 2010, p. 590).

These traits further link onto other core features of each gender. For example, men are seen as more practical, aggressive, hierarchical, and hardworking, while women are associated with characteristics such as submissive, egalitarian, and gentle. Nevertheless, it must be noted
that the general stereotypes of masculinity and femininity also hold certain negative attributes. Physical characteristics, sexuality, as well as social roles and occupations all play a major role in defining each gender (Winter 2010). Furthermore, the cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity tend to act as one consistent package that is defined by the opposition of one to the other (Foushee 1979). Interestingly enough, a 20th century study by Nancy Chodorow actually depicts these gendered concepts through the study of character development in childhood.

In her book *The Reproduction of Mothering* Chodorow portrays masculinity as psychologically inhibited and emotionally restrictive, thus making American men fearful of intimacy yet prepared for competition in the capitalism marketplace. Using the framework of object-relations psychoanalysis, she demonstrated how the personalities of mid-20th century, middle class American girls and boys developed in "diverging directions" (Gardiner, Judith Kegan 2013). Chodorow assumed that both genders would be reared in mother-dominated households where women were the primary housewives and child-rearers, while fathers were physically absent due to the fact that they are in the paid workforce much of the day and emotionally absent at all times due to their own emotional inhibitions. Girls, on the other hand, are able to form close personal identifications with their mothers, thus developing traditional psychological traits of empathy and nurturance. Boys identify less with their absent fathers and more with cultural stereotypes of the masculine role like those illustrated by comic book heroes or television action heroes (Gardiner 2013). Furthermore, boys also strive to secure masculine selves through the disparagement of women, whom, according to Chodorow, they feared, and through the establishment of rigid superegos and abstract ideals. Hence, their masculinity forms negatively in denial of their connections with femininity in others and in aspects of themselves. Due to the fact that these hypothetical boys had never developed an intense interpersonal
connection that bonds mothers to daughters adult men fear intimacy as "overwhelming and engulfing." Although such second wave "cultural feminism" is no longer in mass circulation, Chodorow’s theories continue to be widely accepted (Gardiner 2013).

Chodorow’s entire concept can be applied within the public and politics as well, due to the fact that the public/private duality is gendered and that traditionally men are associated with the public sphere (e.g. Phillips 1991). On the other hand, even though formal gender segregation has now been removed it is still quite obvious that the political realm, as well as leadership, continues to maintain its symbolically masculine connotations (Ridgeway 2001).

Shift towards Masculinity and Femininity

Considering the differentiation between the two genders as discussed above one might ask how exactly the Democrats acquired their feminine image over the years. To answer this, one may have to look at five interrelated developments in the late 1970s and early 1980s that are believed to have mapped the masculinity and femininity of the Republican and Democratic Parties, respectively. As previously mentioned, Wolbrecht (2000) documents the polarization of party elites over the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s, and Greg Adams (1997) maps out the polarization of the parties over the issue of abortion during the same time period. Before this; however, the Republican Party was found to actually be more supportive of women’s rights than the Democrats even if neither party paid much attention to the issue. Nonetheless, by 1980 the parties had already established the positions they hold to this day, thus causing differences over abortion to become a significant feature of the elite-level party alignment. Moreover, these differences are further reflected in bill sponsorship rates, platforms, and roll-call votes
(Wolbrecht 2000, Adams 1991). In fact these partisan differences were only reinforced and made salient by the increasing role of antifeminist groups and the social conservative movement within the Republican coalition, as well as the increase in alliances of feminist groups with the Democratic Party (Freeman 1975, 1993; Spruill 2008).

The interaction between conscious attitudes and implicit attitudes and concepts is a rather active area of social psychological inquiry. Although individuals are mostly aware of their explicit thoughts, there exists a large amount of implicit cognitive activity outside of their awareness (Bargh and Morsella 2008; Dijksterhuis and Nordgren 2006; Greenwald and Banaji1995; Wilson 2002). Implicit cognition does, in fact, affect conscious thoughts; however, people are usually not cognizant of these effects and have limited control over them (Winter 2010). For example, a long line of research (Deaux, K. and Emswiller, T. 1974; Glick, Peter and Swan T. Fiske 2000; Ridgeway, C. L. 2001; Bargh, J. A. and Morsella, E. 2008) on how gender stereotypes impact attributions for successes and failures has indicated that in a male-dominated age people have the tendency to attribute men’s successes to aptitude and determination, and to attribute women’s successes to luck and the lessened difficulty of the task (e. g. Deaux and Emswiller 1974).

With the relatively recent shift in voters’ tendency to draw on the broad categories of “male” and “female” when evaluating candidates, as well as when considering specific positions on salient issues, it appears that gender stereotypes have gradually pervaded American politics to the point at which vote choice and political participation have been significantly impacted. The impact of this “political stereotyping,” however, all depends upon the specific electoral context at the time, as well as, as previously mentioned, on the salient issues that arise throughout the election period. Although scholars have examined specific circumstances under which voters
rely on gender stereotypes, such as individual candidate evaluation, they have yet to apply these stereotypes to the parties as a whole. It is necessary to analyze how these stereotypes can be influential in party assessment in general in the absence of other information, such as that regarding a specific candidate.

Theory and Hypothesis

Over the years a vast amount of studies have been conducted in support of the notion that gender stereotypes and party identification are both consciously and unconsciously linked within the assessment process of potential political candidates by eligible voters. Thus depending on the issues that are considered salient at a particular point of time, voters are more likely to be drawn to a certain party or candidate. For example, after the September 11th tragedy eligible voters were more likely to cast their vote for George W. Bush due to the fact that the salient issue of terrorism at the time was associated with the perception that more “masculine” approaches will be effective in solving the problem. This in turn leads to my hypothesis that since the Republican Party is known to exhibit more masculine characteristics, individuals will utilize their unconscious voting cues to select a more capable candidate to deal with the perceived “manly” issue. On the other hand, if the salient issues at the time are seen as more “feminine,” such as global warming or health care for example, then a Democratic candidate will have a greater chance of gaining voter approval. By taking this under consideration political parties will be able to establish more specialized candidate images based on issue salience at a particular point of time.
Methodology

In order to explore the gendered trait associations found within Americans’ images of the contemporary political parties over the past decade, the NAES\(^3\) (the National Annenberg Election Survey) open-ended questionnaire regarding participants’ favorability of party and perception of the most important problem facing the nation was utilized. The NAES is only conducted during presidential years throughout the 14 months of campaigning, as well as after the actual election. Participants were interviewed by phone about their perceptions and behaviors relevant to the campaign and the general political system. The answers that were recorded as a response to “what is the most important problem facing the nation” each year were then categorized as either male or female issues based on my own past knowledge of gender stereotypes and associations\(^4\). These salient issues were then compared to the issue ownership of each party in order to see which party owns more masculine or feminine issues. Moreover, as there is no thermometer rating for each party in the NAES the average favorability of the two main candidates for each party was determined and utilized as a signifier of overall party favorability. For example, in 2004 the main presidential and vice presidential Republican candidates were George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, respectively; therefore, if a respondent rated Bush as a 10 (out of 10) and Cheney as an 8 on the favorability scale then the party’s overall favorability would be a 9. This number would then be compared to the average of the Democratic Party overall favorability. If it is larger than the second number then the Republican Party favorability variable for the respondent would be coded as a 1 (and as a 0 if it less than the

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\(^3\) This study originally utilized data from the ANES open ended questionnaire from 1972 to 2008; however, due to the inaccessibility of the data halfway through the study I was forced to select a new source of data. A suggestion to use the NAES by my thesis director was made, thus I decided to alter my approach and focus on a shorter time frame with a higher response rate.

\(^4\) Please refer to Appendix 1 for gendered issue coding.
Democratic average). The same procedure thus applies to the favorability of the Democratic Party, thus as a result creating two dependent variables.

Once all of the respondents were coded a linear regression model was run in order to demonstrate the significance of the independent variables in relation to the dependent variable. For the purposes of the study all three election cycles were grouped into one model in an effort to produce a more generalizable result\(^5\). Moreover, IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was utilized to run the data set and determine the relationship between the variables.

There are several important advantages for utilizing this type of analysis. Due to the fact that the questions being asked are open-ended, participants can mention any issue that they consider salient. This in turn reflects their ways of seeing and thinking about the parties, which is a rather significant feature when measuring heterogeneous party images, as well as when searching for themes of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, due to the large scale of the election survey (73,139 respondents total) over the course of 2000, 2004, and 2008, a more comprehensive analysis can be completed regarding the gendered associations of the two major parties (National Annenberg Election Survey 2000). However, due to the limitations of this study I chose to only utilize the responses of 30,000 participants\(^6\).

One negative aspect of this measure, however, is non-response. Each verbatim question on the NAES allows for a “don’t know” or “refuse to answer” option, which would omit a

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\(^5\) Individual years were also run in order to demonstrate how gender associations vary throughout the three elections; however, this is an area for future research and will not be included within this particular study.

\(^6\) All 6,509 respondents in 2000, all 8,666 in 2004, and only 14,825 from 2008 in order to keep the data consistent as there were a total of 57,964 respondents, which would put more weight on one election. A caveat that arises with the respondent selection from the 2008 election is that it may not be a random enough sample in terms of which respondents were in and out. Therefore, for future research a complete sample or a more random selection, as well as a consideration for other parties (other than Democratic and Republican), may provide us with more complete results.
number of respondents from the analysis. Although the number of nonresponses is minimal on such a large scale it still illustrates that such respondents are rather detached from politics in general and they are more likely to identify themselves as “pure” independents in order to avoid rating each party as neutral on the thermometer scale. Nevertheless, their absence from the data does not harm the ability to characterize the gendered features of the collective images of the parties within the citizenry.

Variables

In order to examine my cross-sectional hypothesis among respondents to the NAES studies in 2000, 2004, and 2008 I created a model of the individual-level antecedents of mentioning salient issues. I also generated a set of dichotomous variables that indicate whether each respondent referred to a masculine or a feminine salient issue and paired it with their favorability of each party. Thus the dependent variables are the favorability of each party in regards to issue salience. The independent variables are, on the other hand, more limited within the research due to the fact that it is being done on such a large scale. Nevertheless, these include gender, party affiliation, political knowledge, party issue ownership, and the gendered association of these salient issues. Gender is coded as zero for male and one for female. This classification question is based upon the gender with which the participant identifies with rather than their actual biological sex. Party affiliation is also coded in a similar manner in which zero corresponds with Republican and one with Democrat. Participants who identify with the Independent party or any other political party will be coded as 0.5. Political knowledge, on the other hand, as assessed by the NAES interviewers is coded as zero for least informed to one for
the most informed\textsuperscript{7}. Salient issues once again are coded as zero if they are to be associated with
the Republican Party and as one if they are associated with the Democratic Party. This variable is
based on the mentions probed by the “what is the most important problem facing the nation”
question within the NAES questionnaire. Similarly to the way in which the gendered
characteristics are tallied, salient issues are also categorized into stereotypically male and female
issues, which are then used to determine the effect on what types of gendered traits are
mentioned as likes or dislikes for each party based on the party’s ownership of the issue. Thus,
masculine issues are coded as zero and feminine issues are coded as one. Moreover, a control
variable in this case is non-response on the NAES questionnaire, which is excluded from the data
in order to avoid any undesired outliers within the results.

\textbf{Results}

The results indicate that the general public associates more masculine characteristics with
the Republican Party and more feminine characteristics with the Democratic Party. This further
suggests that the notions regarding these political parties are mapped onto the two genders, both
in the implicit connections between party images and their gendered features and in the images
voters consciously hold of the parties. Therefore, this suggests that the previously mentioned
party associations have some sort of cognitive effect on the way in which individuals will vote,
both consciously and unconsciously, in upcoming elections.

The following tables demonstrate the results produced after the completion of the two
regression models. Table 1 illustrates the significance of each of the independent variables in
regards to the first dependent variable, Republican Party favorability. The first column lists all of

\textsuperscript{7} Political knowledge is based on the NAES re-election interviewer’s assessment of a participant’s level of political
information. This assessment has proven to be a reliable measure of political knowledge due to the fact that it is
reasonably comparable across years (Zaller 1992).
the independent variables, as well as the constant (or the y intercept of the line graph produced).

The following beta column represents the coefficients that were obtained when all of the variables in the regression are standardized, including the dependent and all of the independent variables, as opposed to the chronologically second \( \beta \) column that is unstandardized. By standardizing the variables before running the regression, the variables are placed on the same scale, thus allowing the model to compare the magnitude of the coefficients to see which one has more of an effect. The larger betas are associated with the larger t-values and lower significance values (p-values). The standard error column, on the other hand, measures the accuracy with which the sample represents the overall population. Moreover, the smaller the standard error, the more representative the sample is of the said population. The standard error is also inversely proportional to the sample size, thus, the larger the sample size, the smaller the standard error due to the fact that the statistic approaches the actual value. The last column labeled Sig. refers to the significance of each variable. The closer the values in this column are to .000 (or less than 0.05) the more significant the effects of the independent variables are to the dependent variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
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<td>.008</td>
<td></td>
<td>114.147</td>
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<td>.009</td>
<td>-.235</td>
<td>-26.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>-.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political_Knowledge</td>
<td>-7.193E-005</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.815</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender_of_Issue</td>
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<td>.010</td>
<td>-.452</td>
<td>-42.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party_Ownership_of_Issue</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>-.045</td>
<td>-4.429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1*

*a. Dependent Variable: REP_Fav*
The data thus demonstrates that party affiliation, the gender of salient issues, and the party ownership of said issues have a significant effect on the way the party is perceived and, hence, rated on the favorability scale. The negative directionality of the Beta coefficients in Table 1 signifies that the more Democratic the respondents are the lower the support for the Republican Party. For example, for every unit Democratic Party affiliation increases a -.256 unit decrease in Republican favorability is expected, holding all other variables constant and taking into account the standard error of .009. Furthermore, this same negative directionality is also seen in the subsequent significant variable, the gender of salient issues, which indicates that the more masculine the issue is the less Democrats approve of it. This notion can also be applied when analyzing the next variable, party ownership of salient issues, which would accordingly signify that the more the Republican Party owns a specific issue the less Democrats are likely to approve of it.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>9.895</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party_Affiliation</td>
<td>.255</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>26.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.008</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political_Knowledge</td>
<td>7.179E-005</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender_of_Issue</td>
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<td>.010</td>
<td>.453</td>
<td>42.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party_Ownership_of_Issue</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.007</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>4.390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: DEM_Fav
Table 2, on the other hand, illustrates the significance of each of the independent variables in regards to the second dependent variable, Democratic Party favorability. Once again the data demonstrate that party affiliation, the gender of salient issues, and the party ownership of said issues have a significant effect on the way the party is perceived and evaluated on the favorability scale. The now positive directionality of the Beta coefficients signifies that the more Democratic the respondents are the higher the support for the Democratic Party. For example, for every unit Democratic Party affiliation increases, a .255 unit increase in Democratic favorability is expected, holding all other variables constant and taking into account the standard error of .009. Furthermore, this same positive directionality can also be seen in the subsequent significant variable, the gender of salient issues, which indicates that the more feminine the issue is the more Democrats approve of it. This notion can also be applied when analyzing the following variable, party ownership of salient issues, which would accordingly signify that the more the Democratic Party owns a specific issue the more Democrats are likely to approve of it. Although this may seem like a common sense result there are differences in the t-values of both tables, which illustrates that there are some voters that either do not associate gendered images with each of the parties or associate some masculine characteristics with the Democratic Party and some feminine characteristics with the Republican Party.

These results, thus, provide us with a better comprehension of the cognitive underpinnings of partisan attitudes. The connections made between gender and party stereotypes have huge implications of how interactions between the two will be further studied. Political affiliation appears to have an enormous effect on gendered quality association due to the fact that party loyalty is a huge factor in the characteristic allocation process. Moreover, the gender of the salient issue, combined with party issue ownership, has an even greater effect on the way in
which voters perceive each political party in terms of gender. The results also illustrate that
gender has little to no significance in terms of party favorability regarding issue salience. Also,
the amount of political knowledge a respondent has also does not have an affect the way in
which he or she views the party in its entirety.

Discussion

The results demonstrate evidence that the general public associates more masculine
characteristics with the Republican Party and more feminine characteristics with the Democratic
Party. This suggests that the notions about these political parties are plotted onto genders, both in
the implicit connections between party images and their gendered features, and in the images
voters consciously hold of the parties. Although the results were highly expected in terms of
overwhelming support due to the simplicity of the model, that was not the main objective of the
study. The focus of this study was to illustrate that other factors beyond party affiliation
influence the way in which voters perceive the two major political parties. The results suggest
that other factors are at play when shaping party image even though voters don’t have a natural
tendency to think of the parties in a gendered sense right at the forefront.

My results are consistent with that of Nicholas Winter (2010), who has recently written
one of the most influential literature pieces about this understudied phenomenon. Although the
gendered stereotype phenomenon as it exists within political cognition has never been fully
addressed, my purpose is to attack the issue from the completely new angle of party image. The
constantly increasing literature on the roles played by party and gender stereotypes in influencing
voter’s impressions of candidates has been founded upon experimental work illustrating that
gender stereotypes mold voter’s perceptions of candidates’ qualities and issue positions
specifically when party cues are absent. Nevertheless, on a broader scale my results contribute to
the intersectionality of party and gender stereotypes, which is the way in which party and gender
classifications derive their meanings from the relationship they share with one another.

The combination of findings provide support for the premise that party images can be
altered based on salient issues at a particular point of time in order to effectively impact voting
behavior. For example, a candidate’s party affiliation may influence voter’s perceptions of his or
her level of masculinity and femininity, thus allowing them to make further inferences about his
or her strength or compassion in reference to the expectations established by the candidate’s
party and gender. Hence, according to this notion, Republicans, both male and female, are to be
evaluated against a baseline expectation that they are masculine in nature, while Democrats are
to be evaluated along a more feminine baseline. In fact, this provides us with a larger perspective
on coded appeals that would question a candidate’s masculine qualities. This in turn suggests
that various issue agendas and constructions of salient issues will affect the degree to which
voters find the need, both conscious and unconscious, to be represented by a symbolically more
masculine leader. In times of external or international threat and in times of changing gender role
within society, the masculine image may be viewed as more appealing. One might expect that on
the presidential level the Republican Party’s masculinity may hold a certain advantage over the
other party’s feminine nature; however, due to the fact that cultural ideas about gender as it
relates to politics are so complex, the Democrats have much more latitude than one might expect.
Barack Obama is a rather prominent example of this phenomenon; however, there were also
numerous other factors that helped shape his controlled manliness. These findings have
important implications for female candidates running for office as well considering the fact that
they will be able to alter their political image based on issue salience and this idea of cognitive behavior.

**Conclusion**

Recent studies indicate that voters have the tendency to associate certain gendered traits to major political parties. The purpose of this study is to assess and evaluate the gendered qualities of the Republican and Democratic parties over the past decade. Based on the results the Republican Party is seen as more masculine and the Democratic Party is seen as more feminine. Although gendered stereotypes are derived from certain conscious aspects, political behavior is also greatly affected by unconscious associations. These findings suggest that through the manipulation of party images based on issue salience and general population qualities candidates are able to greatly affect voting behavior. Nevertheless, there are certain caveats within the research that may hinder some of the results. The most prominent of these is the fact that a quarter of the NAES respondents do not provide any mentions of salient issues or party affiliation. Due to the fact that this may alter the overall research design, non-response is not added to the complete data in order to continue maintaining the reliability and generalizability aspects of the study. Moreover, with such a large sample size, caution must be applied as the finding might not be applicable to more small scale communities; however for the scope of this study and shedding light into implicit and explicit cognitive political behaviors, the study is appropriate. This research has raised numerous questions in need of further investigation. For example, a question for further research is the net electoral effects of the gendering of political parties. Although this study focuses on the alteration of party image based on issue salience no
concrete data has yet been gathered to observe the actual effects of this phenomenon. Moreover, further work needs to be done to establish how gender stereotypes have had mixed effects on the assessment of female candidates, who are generally seen as less competent or less interested in issues dealing with the economy and foreign policy. Nevertheless, perhaps a more random representative survey, other than the NAES, will be more effective in creating a better overview of this type of political cognitive behavior.

Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine Issues</th>
<th>Feminine Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>Abortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes/The Economy</td>
<td>Health Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of the Government</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Defense</td>
<td>Elderly/Medicare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion/Morality</td>
<td>Youth/Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Social Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Other</td>
<td>*Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gendered associations of salient issues mentioned by respondents for the NAES question “What is the most important problem facing the nation?”

*Other responses that did not fit into any of the above stated major categories were individually judged based on which gender associates more with the issue. For example, porn and censorship were listed as an important problem. These two issues are more associated with men based on typical viewership and court cases regarding censorship, thus it was coded as a 0 for a masculine salient issue.
Reference List


