

Measuring Stereotypes of Female Politicians

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One explanation for the dearth of women in elected office is that voters stereotype candidates based on their gender. Research in this vein often assumes that female candidates will be stereotyped similarly to women (e.g., as compassionate) and measures stereotypes as such. We question this assumption, proposing instead that female politicians constitute a subtype—a new stereotypical category with its own qualities—of the broader group of women. We compare the content of female politician stereotypes to other relevant comparison groups including politicians, male politicians, and female professionals. Using a classic methodology to determine stereotype content (Katz & Braly, 1933), we find that female politicians do not share the qualities that are ascribed to women (e.g., warm, empathetic). Our results show that female politicians seem to be “losing” on male stereotypical qualities while also not having any advantage on qualities typical of women. The content of female politician stereotypes is nebulous and lacks clarity in comparison to all other groups examined. We discuss implications for the future measurement of politician stereotypes.

KEY WORDS: gender stereotypes, stereotype content, female politician, subtype, subgroup, measurement

Introduction

For decades, scholars of American politics have tried to understand why women do not have parity in elected offices (Center for American Women and Politics, 2011). One explanation for this puzzle is that voters have expectations of the traits that women possess (e.g., women are compassionate) that are applied to their impressions of female politicians; for example, a voter might expect a female politician to be compassionate because he believes that women are compassionate (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a). Accordingly, female politicians might be negatively evaluated because these feminine qualities are inconsistent with the masculine traits necessary for leadership roles (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011).

We propose that female politicians do not have the same stereotypes of women and offer critiques of the measures of female politician stereotypes. We draw from psychological literature on subtyping, and we suggest that female politicians will require the formation of a *subtype*—a new stereotypical category with its own unique stereotypical qualities—because female politicians are so different from women in general (Richards & Hewstone, 2001). Male politicians may rather constitute a *subgroup* where they share many qualities with men. Our work contributes to the understanding of the nature and structure of trait stereotypes of female politicians. A comprehensive theory

of stereotypes as applied to female and male politicians will ultimately lead to better research on the problem of the lack of women in elective office.

Literature Review and Critique

A large literature explores the nature and effects of gender-based stereotypes. The basis for the inquiry is the documented disparity between female and male politicians in competency at handling different issues (e.g., Sapiro, 1981). To the extent that this relates to vote choice, these differences are politically significant (Sanbonmatsu, 2002). Two main explanations have been tested as to why voters perceive male and female politicians as differently able to handle particular issues, most notably by Huddy and Terkildsen (1993a). A first explanation suggests that issue perceptions diverge because voters see female politicians as having traits similar to women (the “trait” approach). In particular, traits falling under the broader category of empathy are part of the defining traits of women in general (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). Empathy, along with leadership, integrity, and competency, are usually important in predicting candidate vote choice (Funk, 1999; Kinder, 1986). A second explanation posits that these differences result from voters viewing female politicians as having more liberal beliefs than male politicians (the “belief” approach). While there is evidence for *both* of these paths (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Sanbonmatsu, 2003), there remains significant debate over whether and how these stereotypes are consequential (for example, Dolan, 2010; Hayes, 2011; King & Matland, 2003).

Trait measures used in the typical study of female candidates reflect the dominant assumption of the “trait” approach, that female politicians will be seen similarly to women. Our goal in this article is to question the theory behind the “trait” approach and the measures used to explore the hypothesis that trait evaluations matter both for predicting issue competency differences and subsequent vote choice. We have several reasons to suspect that an alternative theory of female politician stereotypes and a reevaluation of the assumptions of common measurements will be useful.

First, and most importantly, we note that trait stereotypes of women in general may not apply to female politicians. Stereotypes of women are generally related to being beautiful, intuitive, and warm (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000) and are typically unrelated to ideas about those who engage in leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Koenig et al., 2011). We develop an alternative to this idea below.

Second, we note that the operationalization of what constitutes “female” traits, which might describe female politicians, varies considerably across studies (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Dolan, 2010; Huddy & Capelos, 2002; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Kahn, 1994; Lawless, 2004; Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989; Sanbonmatsu, 2002, 2003).¹ We summarize this variability in Table 1. Measurement variation could be positive: Multiple measurements can lead to evidence of construct validity and of the robustness of theory. Alternatively, variability in the measures could signify that there is no agreed upon operational definition of gender stereotypes, which can lead to an inability to connect stereotypes to political behaviors.

To illustrate, the earliest study (Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989) used a measure of masculinity and femininity usually applied to individuals, called the Bem Sex Role Inventory. In an often cited experimental study, Huddy and Terkildsen (1993a) ascribed the feminine traits of compassion, trustworthiness, being family-oriented, and having people skills to a target candidate. Participants then rated the candidate on a different set of feminine traits—warm, gentle, sensitive, emotional, talkative, and cautious. Common to most of the studies are traits such as compassionate, warm, and

¹ In most experimental studies, respondents evaluate one candidate on such items. However, another approach is to ask respondents to rate male and female candidates relative to one other. For example, Sanbonmatsu (2002) asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement that men are more emotionally suited for politics than women.

Table 1. Masculine and Feminine Trait Stereotype Measures as Applied to Politicians

	Feminine Traits	Masculine Traits
Rosenwasser & Dean (1989)	Affectionate Cheerful Compassionate Sensitive to the needs of others Warm	Assertive Defends own beliefs Forceful Self-sufficient Strong personality
Alexander & Andersen (1993)	Ability to compromise Compassion Compassionate Gets things done Handles family responsibilities while serving in office Hardworking Honesty Liberal Moral Speaks out honestly Stands up for what they believe Struggled to get ahead Works out compromises	Ability to handle a crisis Conservative Decisiveness Emotional stability Tough
Huddy & Terkildsen (1993a)	Cautious Compassionate Emotional Family oriented Gentle People skills Sensitive Talkative Trustworthy Warm	Active Administrative skills Aggressive Ambitious Articulate Assertive Coarse Rational Self-confident Stern Tough
Fridkin Kahn (1994)	Integrity Honesty Compassion	Knowledge Leadership
Huddy & Capelos (2002)	Caring Honest Kind Moral Trustworthy Warm	Competent Dynamic Effective Inspiring Qualified Strong leader
Sanbonmatsu (2002, 2003)		Emotionally suited for politics
Lawless (2004)	Compassionate Compromising Emotional Sensitive	Aggressive Assertive Self-confident Tough
Dolan (2010)	Compassionate Consensus-building	Assertive Ambitious

sensitive. Traits used less consistently include emotional and emotional suitability (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Lawless, 2004; Sanbonmatsu, 2002, 2003), honesty (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Huddy & Capelos, 2002), and being moral (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Huddy & Capelos, 2002). Traits can have both positive and negative connotations: Optimistically, a woman could have the ability to compromise (Alexander & Andersen, 1993) or build consensus (Dolan, 2010), but pessimistically, she is compromising (Lawless, 2004).

Table 2. Trait Stereotype Dimensions of Women and Men

	Women	Men
<i>Positive Personality</i>	Affectionate	Competitive
	Sympathetic	Daring
	Gentle	Adventurous
	Sensitive	Aggressive
<i>Negative Personality</i>	Spineless	Egotistical
	Gullible	Hostile
	Servile	Cynical
	Subordinates Self to others	Arrogant
	Whiny	Boastful
	Complaining	Greedy
	Nagging	Dictatorial
	Fussy	Unprincipled
	<i>Cognitive</i>	Imaginative
Intuitive		Analytical
Artistic		Good at problem solving
Creative		Quantitatively skilled
<i>Physical</i>	Cute	Rugged
	Gorgeous	Muscular
	Beautiful	Physically Strong
	Pretty	Burly

Source: Cejka & Eagly (1999); Deaux & Lewis (1984); Diekman & Eagly (2000); Spence et al. (1979).

The common masculine traits are assertive, aggressive, self-confident, and tough. Despite research showing that competence is a trait valued by voters (Funk, 1999; Kinder, 1986) and women in general may be seen as less competent across situations (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003), the idea of possessing skills related to office only makes a sporadic appearance. In particular, Rosenwasser and Dean (1989) operationalize this trait as defends own beliefs, but other measures include the ability to handle a crisis (Alexander & Andersen, 1993), administrative skills (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a), and competent, effective, qualified, and strong leader (Huddy & Capelos, 2002).

Our third observation is that the trait measures do not always cover all of the dimensions of gender stereotypes in current psychological measures. Psychologists divide gender stereotypes into specific, independent components: physical, cognitive, and positive and negative personality (Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Diekman & Eagly, 2000), summarized in Table 2. For men, physical stereotypes include assessments of bodily strength and for women, bodily attractiveness. Cognitively, women are thought of as being more artistic, while men are rational and analytical. Personality stereotypes have both a positive and a negative dimension (Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Spence, Helmreich, & Holahan, 1979). Positive stereotypes for women are the warmth and communal qualities most akin to the empathy dimension in political leadership studies (Funk, 1999; Kinder, 1986). Negative personality traits for women focus on emotional weakness, such as whiny and spineless. For men, positive personality traits include agency-related traits of active and tough and negative personality traits include egotistical and greedy.

These dimensions are not fully captured by the scales used in examining female and male candidate traits.² In Table 1, reflective of the “trait approach” assumption, we see that most of the

² It seems reasonable that gender scholars have faced difficulty in choosing how to measure stereotypes of women. Indeed, the nuances of both the positive and negative aspects of gender stereotypes makes good measurement more complicated and is part of a likely explanation for the discrepancies in the operationalization of these traits. One might imagine that if the stereotypes of women were either invariably positive or invariably negative, the effects of stereotypes of women on female politicians might be more consistent. Because both positive and negative aspects of these stereotypes exist, we can surmise that if both are activated they could mitigate one another and wash out any effect of candidate gender.

feminine traits applied to politicians would fall into the positive personality traits of women (affectionate, gentle, sensitive) and the masculine traits applied to politicians have overlap with both positive and negative personality. At a minimum, we prefer the approach of examining what respondents dictate as the stereotype rather than eliminating certain categories in advance. In our analysis of female politician stereotypes, we offer a test of whether or not these dimensions are particularly important to the stereotype content of female politicians.

Fourth, the research measuring gender stereotypes of politicians has now spanned over 30 years without consideration of changes in gender stereotypes over time. The stereotypes of men and women may be converging such that men are seen to be adopting more feminine qualities and women more masculine (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). Yet, there has only been a slight decline over time in the assessment that leadership roles require masculine qualities (Koenig et al., 2011); to the extent that being a politician is a leadership role, it should also require masculine traits. The clear distinctions of female politicians from men found in earlier research may still hold true on masculine qualities because these are still most associated with leadership, but not necessarily on feminine qualities as the two sexes converge.

Subtyping Theory

Upon the entry of women into the political arena, scholars began to question where female politicians “fit” with relation to their superordinate groups of women and politicians, mainly concluding that female politicians are “isolated” from both groups (Githens & Prestage, 1977; also see Kirkpatrick, 1974). Yet, as noted previously, current measures of female politician traits rely on the assumption that members of the group are viewed similarly to women. We turn to theories of subtyping and subgrouping to understand better the relationship between female and male politicians and their superordinate groups, women and men. In particular, a subtype is a new stereotypical category, created when perceivers encounter a group that deviates from a larger stereotype category. In other words, consistent with the idea that they are an entity unto themselves, perceivers create an entirely different stereotypic category for female politicians—a subtype—in order to accommodate the differences between female politicians and women (Richards & Hewstone, 2001).

H1: The stereotype content for female politicians will be largely distinct from the content of stereotypes of women, constituting a *subtype* of the broader group.

The relationship between female politicians and women, we argue, is different from that of male politicians with men. Male politicians likely constitute a *subgroup* of men, where a subgroup is defined as a smaller group which shares many characteristics of the larger group; for instance, “the elderly” can be broken down into smaller subgroups, such as “grandmotherly type,” “elder statesman,” and “senior citizen” (Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; McCabe & Brannon, 2004; Richards & Hewstone, 2001). Male managers are seen as similar to men in their traits (Heilman, Block, & Martell, 1995) because masculine traits are seen as requisite for leadership roles; likewise, male politicians should share substantial stereotype content with the superordinate group of men. In sum, whereas female politicians are a *subtype* of women because they share little stereotype content, male politicians are a *subgroup* of men because of their overlapping traits.

H2: Stereotypes of male politicians should constitute a *subgroup* of men; that is, the stereotypes should share significant content.

Supportive of the argument that the group women can be broken down into subtypes, existing evidence already demonstrates that the group female professionals constitutes a group unique from

women. Not only have researchers demonstrated that there is little overlap between the characteristics of businesswomen and the characteristics of women more generally (Clifton, McGrath, & Wick, 1976), but also that the categories can be separately activated (Hugenberg, Blusiewicz, & Sacco, 2010). A comparison of women in general with female managers yielded the finding that female managers were different from women in general (Heilman, et al., 1995). Moreover, “successful” female managers were rated more highly than “successful” male managers on a scale entitled hostility towards others, comprised of devious, vulgar, quarrelsome, selfish, bitter, and deceitful. The possibility that female politicians are similar to female professionals and have the potential to possess these negative traits has not been explored.

H3: Female politician stereotype content will overlap with stereotypes of female professionals, another documented subtype of women, particularly in negative traits associated with female managers.

Finally, we assess whether the content of stereotypes of female and male politicians converges on feminine traits similar to the convergence of men and women on these traits (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). We also evaluate the theory that female and male politicians will fail to converge on masculine traits, due to the masculine nature of the politician leadership role (Koenig et al., 2011).

H4: Female politician stereotype content should be similar to male politicians on typically female, but not typically male, stereotypical qualities.

In sum, we observe that current measures of stereotypes of female politicians are based on a questionable assumption—that female politicians are similar to women. As a result, measurements are inconsistent, may be incomplete, and the fact that they have not been adjusted over time could matter considerably for connecting stereotypes to political behaviors of interest. While the “trait approach” may work well to guide measures of the subgroup male politicians, given their overlap with male stereotypes, if female politicians are indeed a subtype, the approach fails to capture the content of female politician stereotypes. We argue that the subtyping lens offers a powerful tool for examining existing measures and their assumptions. By testing this model, we challenge the assumptions behind prior measures and are able to test the overlap between male and female politicians. Importantly, we utilize an established methodology which can be used successfully to create measurements driven by the perceptions of citizens rather than by the assumptions of the researcher. Overall, given our observations and test of the subtype model, our work can help build a case for whether and how these measures should change.

Methods

To test these hypotheses, we measured the stereotype content of the relevant groups using an experimental paradigm created by Katz and Braly (1933) where participants identified which adjectives from a master list were descriptive of the group.

Pretest. To create a master list of traits, we followed Katz and Braly (1933) in conducting a pretest where participants generated a list of adjectives to describe the groups of interest. Forty-two participants, who received extra credit for participation at a large, Midwestern university, were asked to “list as many specific characteristics or traits as people in general think are typical of the

following groups.”³ The groups included male professionals, female professionals, male politicians, female politicians, politicians, and men and women. From the adjectives generated by pretest respondents in addition to traits used in prior research, we created a master list of 111 traits (see Appendix A).⁴

Main Study. In April, 2011, we recruited undergraduate participants for the main study from classes at the same large, Midwestern university. All participants could put their name into a “lottery” for one \$100 gift card and receive either \$2 or extra credit for participation. Two hundred and eighty-four participants completed the survey, and, after dropping the non-U.S. citizens, the final sample consisted of 276 participants who each reacted to only one randomly assigned treatment groups: males (N = 47), females (N = 48), female professionals (N = 42), male politicians (N = 46), female politicians (N = 50), and politicians (N = 41).⁵ The sample mean age was 20.3 (SD = 1.68), and participants were 52% female, 27% freshman, and 88% white. Participants were asked to place a mark next to every adjective⁶ that they thought “people in general” would use to describe a particular group and then chose the five most important adjectives.⁷

We note that there does not seem to be much of a bias against holding and reporting gender stereotypes, especially in contrast to a strong social desirability bias when reporting racial stereotypes (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). Regardless, we attempted to minimize social desirability bias in response to a criticism of this research (Gaertner, 1976; Sigall & Page, 1971) by using instructions which told respondents to consider what “people in general” think rather than asking about individual commitment to the stereotype (Garcia-Marques, Santos, & Mackie, 2006). We also reminded participants that categorizing people into groups is a normal process.⁸ These instructions have been tested by prior research (see Devine & Baker, 1991; Garcia-Marques et al., 2006; Schneider & Bos, 2011).

³ We used the pretest to test the descriptive adjective “successful.” Heilman, Block, and Martell (1995) found that women were evaluated negatively when described as successful female managers. To determine if this adjective is crucial, 25 of 49 participants gave information about all of the politician and professional groups with the word “successful” attached. We found that the label did not make a difference in the adjectives respondents generated. For example, multiple respondents classified female politicians as ambitious, intelligent, and driven and classified successful female politicians as intelligent, ambitious, well spoken, and smart.

⁴ To create the final list of traits, we counted the number of mentions of each adjective within groups and classified similar adjectives into larger categories. The final list included any adjective with three or more mentions and one adjective from each larger category. We included traits used in prior research, including research on female and male politicians (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a), male and female stereotypes (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000), female leader stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, et al., 1995) and traits of politicians (Funk, 1999; Kinder, 1986).

⁵ Note that we use the category “female politicians” rather than “female candidates” or “female officeholders.” Citizens could have differing expectations of these groups, which could be explored in future research. We use the descriptor “politician” as it follows from prior stereotype content research (Schneider and Bos 2011).

⁶ We also asked participants to check the issues that the politician group was able to handle, select the top five issues, and place the group on scales measuring issue positions.

⁷ Like prior research (Katz & Braly, 1933), we chose to use a binary choice, as opposed to a Likert scale. Binary choice creates a high threshold: they have to be confident the trait “fits” to select it. This approach is prudent because of the high number of attributes in the master checklist (111) necessary to test our hypotheses. Asking participants to rate each item would be too demanding and would introduce measurement error. In addition to the checklist, we asked participants to select the “top five” traits or issues to get at the degree of trait perception. We also compared the gender composition of the experimental groups, and the results showed that gender composition and group were independent ($\chi^2 = 5.170$ (6), $p = .52$).

⁸ The full instructions read as follows: “Society is composed of many different groups about whom people in general have some knowledge. In fact, the ease with which people form relatively well-defined impressions about the individuals and social groups that surround them greatly simplifies their social life. On many occasions, either through hearsay or direct contact, we find out something about the impressions that people in general have about social groups. In this study, you will be asked to give your opinion about what people in general think about some social groups. Naturally, the impressions that people in general have about social groups may or may not reflect your personal beliefs. So give your answers based on what you know to be the culturally shared beliefs people in general have about those social groups, whether or not you believe those ideas to be true.”

We rely on a student sample to understand stereotypes. When using a student sample, researchers must consider its strengths and weaknesses and whether or not differences in the student population compared to a nationally representative sample would produce differences in the results and conclusions of a study (Druckman & Kam, 2011; Sears, 1986). We first considered whether college students would be familiar with the groups under investigation. This is important since we are relying on them to generate stereotype content. Certainly all college students are familiar with the groups men and women, and likely are familiar with male and female professionals (e.g., doctors, professors). Since the majority of politicians are male, this group should also be a familiar one.

Respondents might be the least familiar with female politicians because of their minority status. Two-thirds of the students at the university are from Ohio, which is ranked 28th of 50 states for the percent of women in the state assembly (Center for American Women and Politics 2011). Ohio has never had a female U.S. Senator but has had a female Secretary of State (Jennifer Brunner). This indicates a significant portion of our sample has some experience with women in political office.

To understand further the familiarity our student sample might have with female politicians, in October, 2011, we conducted a test of knowledge of female politicians among a group of 47 students comparable to those in our main sample. The results suggest respondents are familiar with national and local female politicians from both political parties. In rating familiarity with a list of politicians,⁹ nearly all of the respondents claimed that they had heard of Clinton, Palin, Pelosi, Rice, Bachmann, and O'Connor, almost a quarter of respondents had heard of a historical female politician (Geraldine Ferraro), and 56% of the sample had heard of at least one of the local female politicians (Kilroy, Brunner, Schmidt, Jones, Qualls, and Cafaro) on the list. That over half of our sample had heard of at least one of these politicians is encouraging because the list was not only very limited, but it was also likely that about one-third of our sample was from outside the state, making this a very stringent test. These findings lead us to conclude that (1) respondents in our sample have at least some familiarity with prominent female Republican and Democrat politicians, and (2) respondents have some familiarity with at least one local female politician. Thus, we feel confident that those in our sample are drawing on a variety of experiences with female politicians for their responses.¹⁰

Second, we considered whether our student participants' educational status would affect stereotyping in a way that makes them different from a nationally representative sample. We note two studies that examined gender stereotypes in both student and adult samples and found no substantive differences in stereotype content. Diekman and Eagly (2000) experimentally manipulated the year in which a male or female target lived (i.e., 1950, the present, or 2050) and found that the age of participants plays no role in their willingness to stereotype or the content of stereotypes. Brown, Diekman, and Schneider (2011) found that adult sample participants possessed explicit stereotypes associating female candidates with change and men with stability and a test of implicit stereotypes

⁹ The list composed of: Condoleezza Rice, Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, Michele Bachmann, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sandra Day O'Connor, Nancy Pelosi, Geraldine Ferraro, Mary Jo Kilroy (U.S. House member from Ohio), Stephanie Tubbs Jones (former U.S. House member from Ohio), Jennifer Brunner (former Ohio Secretary of State), Roxanne Qualls (Cincinnati City Council), Capri Cafaro (Ohio General Assembly), Jean Schmidt (U.S. House member from Ohio), and Jennifer Granholm (former Michigan Governor).

¹⁰ We note that an alternative conclusion from these data might be that our student sample has too much knowledge of female politicians; indeed, if our student sample had *more* knowledge of female politicians than the general population, this could be a concern for our findings and conclusions. Examining knowledge surveys from the Pew Research Center, however, reveals that the students are not unusual in their awareness of these major political figures. For example, a May, 2011 poll showed that 97% of a nationally representative sample had heard of Sarah Palin (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011a). Over three-fourths of a sample in September 2011 correctly identified Clinton as Secretary of State (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011a) and in September 2007, approximately three-fourths knew Nancy Pelosi was Speaker of the House (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2007). If anything, Pew Research Center data show that younger people tend to know less about politics (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2011b). Therefore, we can conclude that our student sample is "just right" in terms of its knowledge levels compared to the general population.

found that the student sample shared these same stereotypes. Based on these considerations and other justifications of the usefulness of student samples (e.g., Druckman & Kam, 2011), we believe we can draw valid conclusions from this data.

Analysis Plan

We tested our hypotheses by first comparing the relevant groups on the percentages of respondents who chose particular attributes. We discuss only traits that fit two criteria: the trait had to be mentioned for one of the two comparison groups by 67% or more respondents *and* a chi-square analysis had to reveal a significant difference between the two groups at the $p < .10$ level.¹¹ The two-thirds cutoff was used by prior research because if at least that many respondents agree on a specific trait, this signals the trait is agreed upon more than chance as a descriptor of that group (McCabe & Brannon, 2004).¹² Next, we examined the top five traits chosen by participants, reporting those where 15% or more respondents mentioned the trait for one of the groups and the difference was significant at the $p < .10$ level.

We also compared the groups on several scales used by prior researchers. The scales include politician trait measures from political science (Funk, 1999; Kinder, 1986): leadership (e.g., commands respect), competence (e.g., intelligent), empathy (e.g., compassionate), and integrity (e.g., moral). In addition, we included each of the gender stereotype dimensions from psychology: positive and negative personality, physical, and cognitive. Finally, we created a scale, “negative female leader traits,” to capture the negative traits found in research on female business leaders that could apply to female politicians (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman et al., 1995). The scales, their alphas, number of scale items, and descriptions are included in Table 3. The correlations between the scales are included in Appendix B. There are significant positive correlations among groups on female traits, male traits, and politician traits. All scale means presented in Table 5 have been standardized on a 0–1 scale.

Results and Discussion

To recap, our hypotheses are as follows: respondents will not view female politicians as having female stereotypical traits in the same way that these traits are ascribed to women; rather, female politicians will be a subtype of women (Hypothesis 1). In contrast, male politician stereotypes should overlap greatly with male stereotypes since masculine traits are associated with leadership roles (Hypothesis 2). This finding would indicate that male politicians are a subgroup of men. If female politicians are indeed a subtype of women, they may be viewed similarly to another subtype of women, female professionals, particularly in terms of female leader traits (Hypothesis 3). Finally, we suspect that the current measures of stereotypes have not accommodated changes over time in gender-based stereotypes, and, as a result, our data will show that female and male politicians differentiate on masculine, but not on feminine, traits (Hypothesis 4).

To test Hypothesis 1, we compare female politician stereotypes to stereotypes of women. We find significant support for the hypothesis that there is little stereotype content overlap between women and female politicians. Women have a set of 18 traits that describe them but that do not describe female politicians, notably caring, beautiful, motherly, feminine, emotional, compassionate,

¹¹ Our data are nominal because we are counting whether or not an individual chose a trait for each group; thus, a chi-square test is the appropriate choice.

¹² The 67% cutoff is guided by prior research; however, we explored other possibilities to confirm that this cutoff was a good fit for the data. In particular, we graphed the percentages of trait mentions in descending order for each group to examine if there were any “bends” or obvious drop-off points in the data that would indicate where respondents start to wane in their agreement. Such an analysis revealed that the bend point was approximately the same as the agreed-upon cutoffs.

Table 3. Trait Scales

Scale	Traits	Cronbach's alpha	Number of Scale Items
<i>Politician Traits</i>			
Leadership	Commands Respect, Inspiring, Leader, Gets Things Done	0.62	4
Empathy	Compassionate, Really Cares, In Touch with the People	0.67	3
Integrity	Moral, Decent, Honest	0.63	3
Competence	Intelligent, Hardworking, Knowledgeable	0.70	3
<i>Female Stereotypes</i>			
Positive Personality	Affectionate, Sympathetic, Gentle, Sensitive	0.88	4
Negative Personality	Spineless, Gullible, Servile, Subordinates Self to Others, Whiny, Complaining, Nagging, Fussy	0.77	8
Cognitive	Imaginative, Intuitive, Artistic, Creative	0.75	4
Physical—Female	Cute, Gorgeous, Beautiful, Pretty	0.91	4
Negative Female Leader Traits	Driven, Uptight, Hardnosed, Aggressive, Dictatorial, Egotistical, Tough, Assertive, Ambitious	0.71	9
<i>Male Stereotypes</i>			
Positive Personality	Competitive, Daring, Adventurous, Aggressive	0.60	4
Negative Personality—Male	Egotistical, Hostile, Cynical, Arrogant, Boastful, Greedy, Dictatorial, Unprincipled	0.78	8
Cognitive—Male	Good with Numbers, Analytical, Good at Problem Solving, Quantitatively Skilled	0.62	4
Physical—Male	Rugged, Muscular, Physically Strong, Burly	0.89	4

Source: Cejka & Eagly (1999); Deaux & Lewis (1984); Diekmann & Eagly (2000); Funk (1999); Kinder (1986); Spence et al. (1979).

and affectionate (included in Table 4). An examination of the top five traits replicated these conclusions: Of 14 significant traits mentioned by 15% or more respondents that were significantly different between groups, the nine traits which were chosen more often to describe women compared to female politicians included emotional, feminine, motherly, caring, affectionate, beautiful, sensitive, loving, and compassionate (in descending order of percentage chosen).

Similarly, in the comparison of female politicians to women on scales of politician traits, female stereotype traits, and male stereotype traits, adjectives related to integrity and empathy were chosen significantly more often for women compared to their female politician counterparts (see Table 5). The same pattern is true for every scale pertaining to stereotypes of women from the psychology literature—positive and negative personality traits, physical traits, and cognitive traits. The only difference between female politicians and women on any of the male stereotypical dimensions from the psychology literature was on male positive personality, where female politicians are higher than women. On the other male stereotypical dimensions, both groups had similarly low levels of these traits.

We have demonstrated that there are many characteristics of women that are absent for female politicians; yet, we find only a few agreed-upon trait items that truly characterize female politicians. There are no traits that meet our criteria to describe female politicians, although well-educated and competitive were just below our threshold (data not shown). Well-educated, confident, assertive, well-spoken, and hardworking were chosen as top five traits more often for female politicians than women. Notably, no traits stereotypical of women in general emerge as strong descriptors of female politicians. Female politicians were perceived to have twice as many “negative female leader traits” as women. Negative female leadership traits and male positive personality were the scales where female politicians were both rated the highest and differed significantly from women. In sum, these results lend significant support to Hypothesis 1 that female politicians have little overlap with the group women.

Table 4. Percent of Participants Selecting Specific Traits to Describe Women or Female Politicians

N=	Female Politicians 51	Women 46	Chi-Squared Statistic χ^2 (1 df, N = 97)
Traits (Chosen by over 67% of Respondents)			
Feminine	45.1%	93.5%	26.03**
Emotional	29.4%	93.5%	41.29**
Talkative	29.4%	80.4%	25.32**
Caring	27.5%	97.8%	50.27**
Motherly	25.5%	95.7%	49.13**
Compassionate	21.6%	91.3%	47.46**
Affectionate	19.6%	91.3%	49.99**
Sympathetic	17.6%	76.1%	33.33**
Sensitive	13.7%	87.0%	51.93**
Warm	11.8%	76.1%	41.01**
Beautiful	11.8%	95.7%	68.14**
Creative	9.8%	67.4%	34.37**
Gentle	9.8%	84.8%	54.86**
Loving	7.8%	82.6%	55.07**
Cute	5.9%	82.6%	58.35**
Pretty	5.9%	87.0%	64.42**
Artistic	3.9%	67.4%	43.41**
Gorgeous	0.0%	84.8%	72.31**
Top Five Traits (Chosen by over 15% of Respondents)			
Well-educated	22.6%	2.0%	10.16**
Confident	20.8%	5.9%	4.94*
Assertive	20.8%	2.0%	9.00*
Well-spoken	18.9%	2.0%	7.86*
Hardworking	15.1%	3.9%	5.67 ⁺
Motherly	7.5%	27.5%	7.19*
Emotional	5.7%	35.3%	14.16**
Feminine	5.7%	27.5%	9.03**
Caring	3.8%	25.5%	9.93**
Sensitive	3.8%	21.6%	7.53*
Beautiful	3.8%	21.6%	7.53*
Compassionate	1.9%	19.6%	8.63*
Affectionate	0.0%	25.5%	15.44**
Loving	0.0%	21.6%	12.78**

Note. cell entries are the percentage of respondents in each condition who selected the particular attribute as one “people in general” would use to describe their assigned group. We present only traits for which a chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups at the $p < .10$ level. In the top half of the table, we only include traits mentioned for one of the two comparison groups by 67% or more respondents whereas for the top five analysis, in the bottom half of the table, we include traits mentioned for one of the two groups by 15% or more of respondents. ⁺ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

To test Hypothesis 2, we examine the similarities and differences between stereotypes of male politicians and men. Our hypothesis stated that there will be significant overlap between the two, consistent with the idea that leadership roles are still largely associated with male characteristics and consistent with the idea that male politicians are a subgroup of men (see Table 6). The traits leader, driven, competitive, and aggressive were chosen by more than two-thirds of respondents to describe both male politicians and men alike, though respondents chose leader and driven significantly more often for male politicians and competitive and aggressive significantly more for men. In addition, over two-thirds of respondents chose assertive, confident, dominant, and hardworking to describe both male politicians and men with no significant differences between them (data not shown).

Table 5. Standardized Mean Comparisons on the Trait Scales Between Female Politicians and Relevant Comparison Groups Including Women, Female Professionals, Female Politicians, Male Politicians and Politicians (T-test)

	Comparison 1: Female Politicians and Women		Comparison 2: Female Politicians and Female Professionals		Comparison 3: Female Politicians and Male Politicians		Comparison 4: Female Politicians and Politicians	
	Women	T-test	Female Professionals	T-test	Male Politicians	T-Test	Politicians	T-Test
N=	46	46	43	46	46	43	43	43
<i>Politician Traits</i>								
Leadership	.29 (.32)	.81	.54 (.35)	3.63**	.62 (.23)	5.73**	.56 (.30)	4.15**
Competence	.48 (.40)	.47	.67 (.36)	2.33*	.70 (.36)	2.76**	.67 (.38)	2.26*
Integrity	.16 (.25)	4.88**	.29 (.34)	2.02*	.13 (.22)	-.69	.12 (.24)	-.77
Empathy	.18 (.29)	7.79**	.33 (.34)	2.17*	.20 (.26)	.22	.17 (.22)	-.23
<i>Female Stereotypes</i>								
Positive Personality	.15 (.26)	14.13**	.31 (.38)	2.43*	.02 (.07)	-3.28**	.03 (.10)	-2.77**
Negative Personality	.09 (.16)	5.93**	.12 (.21)	.84	.04 (.11)	-1.89 ⁺	.06 (.10)	-1.30
Physical	.06 (.15)	21.16**	.22 (.36)	2.87**	.03 (.11)	-.98	.03 (.13)	-.83
Cognitive Traits	.11 (.21)	8.58**	.26 (.32)	2.72**	.11 (.18)	-.06	.08 (.17)	-.67
<i>Negative Female Leader Traits</i>								
Negative Female Leader Traits	.32 (.22)	-3.93**	.36 (.21)	.93	.51 (.17)	4.67**	.49 (.22)	3.85**
<i>Male Stereotypes</i>								
Positive Personality	.34 (.23)	-3.68**	.38 (.28)	.77	.49 (.23)	3.19**	.50 (.22)	3.34**
Negative Personality	.09 (.18)	-.80	.08 (.19)	-.38	.24 (.22)	3.52**	.31 (.24)	5.04**
Physical Traits	.005 (.04)	.07	.03 (.16)	1.07	.11 (.23)	3.14**	.02 (.06)	1.20
Cognitive Traits	.19 (.26)	1.49	.31 (.35)	2.02*	.37 (.26)	3.46**	.35 (.30)	2.90**

Note. These data are generated from the checklist data where respondents selected each trait that “people in general” would use to describe their randomly assigned group. The cell entries are the mean number of scale attributes chosen for each group. Standard deviations are in parentheses. All scales are standardized on a 0–1 scale. ⁺ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 6. Percent of Participants Selecting Specific Traits to Describe Men or Male Politicians

<i>N</i> =	Male Politicians 46	Men 47	Chi-Squared Statistic χ^2 (1, <i>N</i> = 93)
Traits (Chosen by over 67% of Respondents)			
Leader	93.5%	74.5%	6.21*
Educated	91.3%	46.8%	21.45**
Driven	91.3%	70.2%	6.63*
Ambitious	84.8%	59.6%	7.34**
Well-spoken	84.8%	36.2%	22.93**
Competitive	82.6%	95.7%	4.18*
Well-educated	82.6%	34.0%	22.52**
Commands respect	80.4%	59.6%	4.81*
Knowledgeable	73.9%	48.9%	6.11*
Determined	73.9%	57.4%	2.79 ⁺
Aggressive	71.7%	87.2%	3.43 ⁺
Motivated	69.6%	44.7%	5.87*
Charismatic	69.6%	44.7%	5.87*
Active	63.0%	85.1%	5.91*
Arrogant	63.0%	78.7%	2.77 ⁺
Masculine	60.9%	87.2%	8.44**
Strong	45.7%	72.3%	6.85**
Egotistical	43.5%	68.1%	5.71*
Tough	34.8%	76.6%	16.49**
Adventurous	26.1%	89.4%	38.22**
Physically strong	15.2%	87.2%	48.28**
Muscular	13.0%	78.7%	40.34**
Athletic	10.9%	91.5%	60.50**
Top Five Traits (Chosen by over 15% of Respondents)			
Educated	41.7%	12.2%	10.70**
Charismatic	41.7%	8.2%	14.62**
Well-spoken	37.5%	2.0%	19.36**
Leader	35.4%	12.2%	7.20*
Well-educated	33.3%	4.1%	13.73**
Ambitious	27.1%	6.1%	7.73*
Driven	22.9%	6.1%	5.54 ⁺
Competitive	8.3%	30.6%	7.64**
Masculine	8.3%	32.7%	8.76**
Independent	0.00%	30.6%	17.38**
Strong	0.00%	30.6%	17.38**

Note. Cell entries are the percentage of respondents in each condition who selected the particular attribute as one “people in general” would use to describe their assigned group. We present only traits for which a chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups at the $p < .10$ level. In the top half of the table, we only include traits mentioned for one of the two comparison groups by 67% or more respondents whereas for the top five analysis, in the bottom half of the table, we include traits mentioned for one of the two groups by 15% or more of respondents. ⁺ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Men differentiate the most from male politicians on physical traits: men are more likely to be described as masculine, tough, adventurous, physically strong, muscular, and athletic. Male politicians have a few differences compared to men that reflect some characteristics necessary to be a politician: educated, ambitious, well-spoken, well-educated, commands respect, knowledgeable, determined, motivated, and charismatic. The results for the top five traits confirm these conclusions since male politicians are seen as possessing the traits necessary for the politician role: educated,

Table 7. Percent of Participants Selecting Specific Traits to Describe Female Politicians or Female Professionals*

<i>N</i> =	Female Politicians	Female Professionals	Chi-Squared Statistic
	51	43	χ^2 (1, <i>N</i> = 94)
Traits (Chosen by over 67% of Respondents)			
Educated	68.6%	93.0%	8.61**
Ambitious	58.8%	76.7%	3.39 [†]
Driven	52.9%	76.7%	5.73*
Intelligent	49.0%	67.4%	3.24 [†]
Hardworking	49.0%	74.4%	6.31*
Motivated	39.2%	72.1%	10.16**
Organized	37.3%	81.4%	18.60**
Gets things done	29.4%	72.1%	17.01**
Top Five Traits (Chosen by over 15% of Respondents)			
Independent	13.2%	34.9%	6.31*
Organized	3.8%	20.9%	6.89*

Note. Cell entries are the percentage of respondents in each condition who selected the particular attribute as one “people in general” would use to describe their assigned group. We present only traits for which a chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups at the $p < .10$ level. In the top half of the table, we only include traits mentioned for one of the two comparison groups by 67% or more respondents whereas for the top five analysis, in the bottom half of the table, we include traits mentioned for one of the two groups by 15% or more of respondents. [†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

charismatic, well-spoken, leader, well-educated, ambitious, and driven. Men are described again in terms of physical traits such as competitive, masculine, independent, and strong.¹³

Overall, male politician stereotype content overlaps with stereotypes of men on key traits consistent with male stereotypes. However, there is some evidence that being a politician is somewhat emasculating: male politicians lack physical masculine traits and certain traits such as tough, arrogant, and active, but have elevated levels of empathy.

We compare female politician stereotypes to those of female professionals in order to test Hypothesis 3 that there may be significant overlap for these two groups. If female politicians are a subtype of women, they may not only be different from women, as shown above, but they might also be similar to another known subtype of women, namely, female professionals, because of the roles they fill outside the home. Further, the negative stereotypes related to women in leadership more generally might be one dimension in particular where the two groups overlap.

In short, we find support for the conclusion that female politicians are a subtype similar to female professionals but, relative to other traits, neither group was defined by negative female leader traits. An analysis of the top five traits shows the similarities between the two groups: The two significant traits on which female professionals are superior—*independent* and *organized*—show no particular pattern (see Table 7). The groups do have some differences. The particular traits that respondents chose more often for female professionals—*educated*, *ambitious*, *driven*, *intelligent*, *hardworking*, *motivated*, *organized*, and *gets things done*—fall under a broader theme that female professionals are viewed more positively and are perceived to have more professional ability than female politicians.

On the trait factors, the groups do not differ on three of the four male stereotypical trait factors, including negative and positive personality and physical traits, though overall levels of these traits

¹³ We compare male politicians to men on the various factors (data not shown) and find men are rated significantly ($p < .05$) higher than male politicians on male positive personality, negative personality, and physical traits; male politicians were viewed as more empathetic and as stronger leaders than their male counterparts. Even though there are significant differences between the two groups, the absolute levels of male politicians and men on leadership and male positive personality were high.

were low (Table 5). When we compare the groups on the negative female traits and the negative female leader scale, the two groups are indistinguishable. However, female professionals are significantly more likely to be described using adjectives falling under the categories of leadership, competence, integrity, empathy, male cognitive traits, as well as the stereotypically female categories of positive personality, physical, and cognitive traits.

The similarity between the groups on negative female leader traits is consistent with our argument that female politicians are a subtype of women similar to female professionals. Neither female politicians nor female professionals overlap appreciably with stereotypical traits of women. If the three groups were on a continuum of female trait stereotypes, female professionals would be closer to women as a group than female politicians (e.g., on positive personality, physical, and cognitive dimensions). Notably, female politicians lack some of the positive professional traits of female professionals, who are more likely to be seen as stronger leaders and as more competent. This suggests that female politicians are viewed as less equipped to handle a leadership role but also as possessing fewer womanly traits (e.g., less empathic) than their female professional counterparts. Here again, we observe that female politicians do not possess unique stereotype content, even in terms of negative female leader traits. We return to this in the discussion.

Hypothesis 4 stated that male and female politicians will differentiate on male stereotypic qualities, but not on feminine qualities where the sexes have converged. To test this, we compare female politician traits to those listed for both their male politician and politician counterparts (see Table 8). We include both groups for comparison to demonstrate the overlap between politicians and male politicians. The data confirm Hypothesis 4; in particular, female politicians were characterized not by possession of typically female traits but by their deficiency in masculine traits. In both the total trait list and the analysis of the top five traits, female politicians are not seen to possess any traits, even feminine ones, more than their male politician or politician counterparts. Moreover, male politicians and politicians are identified as having a multitude of traits essential to the politician role, such as educated, confident, determined, well-spoken, hardworking, intelligent, knowledgeable, leader, charismatic, and commands respect. The discrepancy between female politicians and male politicians in this analysis demonstrates that female politicians are simply not seen as having qualities requisite for the politician role in comparison to their male colleagues.

These findings are confirmed by the means on the scales: female politicians score significantly lower than both male politicians and politicians on leadership and competence, two characteristics central to being a successful politician. Female politicians are lower than male politicians and politicians on stereotypically masculine personality (both positive and negative) and cognitive traits (see Table 5).¹⁴ While prior research studies would have predicted that female politicians should compare favorably to male politicians and politicians on empathy and integrity, the data show no differences on these traits. Female politicians are only set apart from male politicians and politicians on one of four scales from the psychological literature—female positive personality—yet the overall levels are extremely low. These results give strong evidence for Hypothesis 4 in that female politicians do not rate on par with male politicians on leadership and other male qualities, but male politicians are seen as equal with female politicians on empathy.

Conclusions

In the introduction of this article, we made several observations about the measurement scales—and the assumptions behind them—that scholars use to determine stereotypes of female politicians. In particular, we questioned the assumption that female politicians are stereotyped as similar to

¹⁴ Female politicians are distinct from male politicians, but not politicians, on male physical traits. Absolute levels on this scale are extremely low.

Table 8. Percent of Participants Selecting Specific Traits to Describe Female Politicians, Male Politicians, or Politicians*

<i>N</i> =	Female Politicians 51	Male Politicians 46	Chi-Squared Statistic χ^2 (1, <i>N</i> = 97)	Politicians 43	Chi-Squared Statistic χ^2 (1, <i>N</i> = 94)
Traits (Chosen by over 67% of Respondents)					
Educated	68.6%	91.3%	7.60**	90.7%	6.79**
Well-educated	64.7%	82.6%	3.95*	81.4%	3.25 ⁺
Competitive	62.7%	82.6%	4.75*	86.0%	6.49*
Ambitious	58.8%	84.8%	7.94**	79.1%	4.40*
Confident	58.8%	84.8%	7.94**		
Determined	54.9%	73.9%	3.79 ⁺	76.7%	4.89*
Driven	52.9%	91.3%	17.34**	72.1%	3.62 ⁺
Well-spoken	52.9%	84.8%	11.28**	83.7%	10.00**
Active	51.0%			69.8%	3.42 ⁺
Aggressive	49.0%	71.7%	5.19*	81.4%	10.59**
Assertive	49.0%	82.6%	11.99**		
Hardworking	49.0%	69.6%	4.21*	67.4%	3.24 ⁺
Intelligent	49.0%			67.4%	3.24 ⁺
Knowledgeable	47.1%	73.9%	7.26**		
Leader	39.2%	93.5%	31.28**	79.1%	15.16**
Motivated	39.2%	69.6%	8.96**		
Strong willed	35.3%	67.4%	9.97**		
Charismatic	29.4%	69.6%	15.61**	76.7%	20.92**
Commands respect	25.5%	80.4%	29.23**	60.5%	11.76**
Arrogant	21.6%			67.4%	20.08**
Dominant	21.6%	68.9%	21.75**		
Powerful	17.6%			67.4%	24.02**
Top Five Traits (Chosen by over 15% of Respondents)					
Educated	17.0%	41.7%	7.50*		
Leader	11.3%	35.4%	8.32*	30.2%	5.35 ⁺
Charismatic	0.0%	41.7%	27.54**	37.2%	23.67**

Note. Cell entries are the percentage of respondents in each condition who selected the particular attribute as one "people in general" would use to describe their assigned group. We present only traits for which a chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups at the $p < .10$ level. In the top half of the table, we only include traits mentioned for one of the two comparison groups by 67% or more respondents whereas for the top five analysis, in the bottom half of the table, we include traits mentioned for one of the two groups by 15% or more of respondents. Missing entries are because the rows were not significant or did not meet our 67% cutoff criteria. ⁺ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

women. The idea that female politicians should have unique stereotype content has been posited by other researchers (Githens & Prestage, 1977; Kirkpatrick, 1974), but not within the perspective of subtyping theory. We speculated that female politicians would be a subtype of the superordinate group women.

Indeed, our findings demonstrated that respondents did not view female politicians as possessing female stereotypical traits in the same way that these traits are ascribed to women. This indicated that female politicians are a subtype of women. Female professionals, a known subtype of women, were viewed as having more positive personality traits, as more empathetic and as more competent and capable leaders than female politicians. While female politicians surpassed male politicians in terms of positive female personality traits, they were only on par with male politicians in terms of empathy.

Based on the comparisons we presented, we can see that female politicians are defined more by their deficits than their strengths. In addition to failing to possess the strengths associated with being women (e.g., sensitive or compassionate), female politicians lack leadership, competence, and masculine traits in comparison to male politicians. They are, however, associated with several negative traits (e.g., uptight, dictatorial, ambitious), although not as highly as anticipated. In short,

female politicians seem to be “losing” on male stereotypical qualities while also not having any advantage on qualities typical of women.

Even more problematic for female politicians is that the stereotypes are extremely nebulous and lack clarity. Notably, because our study was asking about female politicians in the abstract, our methodology would seem to be biased in favor of finding clear stereotypes, since the less information voters have about a candidate, the more they seem to stereotype (McDermott, 1997, 1998). Even negative female leader traits, which we hypothesized might define female politicians, were not attributed to female politicians to an overwhelming degree, despite research that showed that successful female managers are ascribed these traits more than male managers (Heilman, et al., 1995). Voters seem to be ambivalent towards female politicians and to have ill-defined ideas about what it means to be a female politician, even as they have somewhat positive impressions of female professionals, a closely related subtype of women. Despite gains in the percentage of politicians who are female, there may still not be enough women in office for voters to form a consensus of stereotypical qualities. The high-level female politicians used as “exemplars” for developing stereotype content are contradictory and changing. For instance, Hillary Clinton seems to act more masculine (even in her style of dress) than Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann, who exude femininity.

Our study takes a necessary step towards refining measures of female politician stereotypes. As other researchers suggest (Dolan, 2010; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993b; Lawless, 2004; Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009, to name a few), contexts including candidate factors (e.g., party identification and incumbency status) and features of the race (e.g., level of office, issues of importance) may be instrumental in shaping stereotype content. Therefore, future work should examine how context helps define gender stereotypes. For example, whereas voters do not seem to ascribe explicitly feminine stereotypes to female politicians in general, they may assign such stereotypes to female Democrats because Democrats are already associated with feminine traits (Winter, 2010). Thus, we agree with others (e.g., Hayes, 2011) that stereotype content and effects may vary across gender and party.

Another way in which context might be important is in defining positive or negative gender stereotypes for female politicians. We speculate that the negative female leader traits might manifest themselves more in specific situations, such as elections for higher level office, or when female politicians behave in ways that are more masculine, as the double-bind literature might suggest (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Jamieson, 1995 but see Brooks, forthcoming). The conditions under which the negative female leader traits emerge as important in overall evaluations—whether based on context or behavior—should be particularly interesting to political scientists as there are many examples of women being hurt by such stereotypes (e.g., Hillary Clinton or Margaret Thatcher). We recommend including the negative female leader traits in future studies to capture the extent to which these traits are identified and are consequential for vote choice.

We have established that female politicians are not stereotyped as women; male politicians, in contrast, do share key qualities with men, making male politicians a subgroup of men. Male politicians share the positive personality traits of men, even as they are more empathetic and viewed less in physical terms. We note there were a number of traits where over 80% of respondents agreed were central to male politicians. These traits include leader, driven, ambitious, confident, well-spoken, assertive, and educated ($\alpha = .75$). On a scale combining these traits, male politicians score a standardized average of .88 ($SD = .11$), while female politicians average .54 ($SD = .31$). The difference between the two is significant, $t(95) = 6.87, p < .01$. It is worth noting that three of the traits (ambitious, driven, assertive) are also traits used in the scale of negative female leaders (Heilman et al., 1995). This overlap illustrates the classic double bind for women—what might be a positive quality for a man could be a negative quality for women. Future research might examine the valence of these terms as they apply to female and male politicians.

We find some evidence that holding a politician role is somewhat emasculating. Specifically, we observe that male politicians, compared to men, lack physical masculine traits, but they have elevated levels of empathy. Cejka and Eagly (1999) found that occupations that required more masculine qualities for success were more prestigious than occupations that demanded feminine qualities for success. Thus, the feminization of the politician role could be an indication that, relative to other occupations, the occupation of politician is devalued. Still additional research demonstrates that examining gender and party stereotypes together may be particularly insightful to uncover the implications of this finding: Winter (2010) found evidence that Republicans are viewed in masculine terms whereas Democrats are viewed in feminine terms. Winter argued that whether or not the association of gendered terms with party stereotypes is positive or negative depends on context. For instance, masculine traits might be desirable in times of war. The finding that male politicians are somewhat feminized should be explored together with party stereotypes to reveal a true picture of stereotype content.

Incorporating a broader spectrum of stereotype measurements based on the differences we find here between male and female politicians could prove to be particularly discriminating when studying the impact of gender stereotypes on evaluations of politicians. Of the four trait dimensions traditionally used in political science research, male politicians score higher than female politicians on two of them—leadership and competence. A stereotype measure must include both leadership and competence in order to detect the deficiencies voters perceive in female politicians. Traditionally, studies have included positive stereotypes of women, but as mentioned earlier, the negative female leader stereotypes may manifest themselves in particular contexts. It is also worth noting that male politicians surpass female politicians not only on positive male personality stereotypes, but also on negative personality stereotypes and cognitive stereotypes.¹⁵ For instance, male politicians seem to possess negative traits such as hostile, greedy, boastful, and unprincipled as well as the male cognitive traits of analytical and superiority at problem solving, numbers, and quantitative analysis. While many studies might only include one aspect of these stereotypes, our research suggests that positive and negative traits should be included as they also might be influential in predicting vote choice. Simply put, a “one size fits all” approach to stereotype measurement may be inaccurate.

In sum, our findings call into question the assumption in many studies that voters ascribe womanly qualities to female politicians. These conclusions defy much of the work done on female candidates. However, given the inconsistency in prior research measures, our research may provide an explanation for the significant variability in the conclusions of studies that attempt to directly relate stereotypes to vote choice. For example, Dolan (2010) and Lawless (2004) found that trait stereotypes mattered very little, especially when compared to issue stereotypes, in baseline preferences for a male or female candidate. In contrast, Sanbonmatsu (2002) and Kahn (1996) concluded that gender trait stereotypes were influential in baseline preferences and evaluations of female candidates. Our work illustrates the need to examine both our measures of stereotypes and the theories upon which those measures are based thoughtfully and continually in order to explicitly tie stereotypes to a broad range of political behaviors. We also note that our stereotype measures must change with the times, as stereotypes are dynamic constructs.

Given the finding that the content of female politicians stereotypes are nebulous and hard to operationalize, it makes sense that there are instances when scholars have success tying trait stereotypes to outcomes of interest and times when the hypothesized relationships may not be as strong as initially predicted. The refinement and careful consideration of the measures we use may allow us to understand better how and when stereotypes present a barrier to American women in attaining increased descriptive representation in political decision-making bodies.

¹⁵ Male politicians also score higher than female politicians on physical stereotypes but absolute levels on this stereotype were low.

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Appendix A

Trait Checklist

Active	Driven	Organized
Adventurous	Educated	Physically strong
Affectionate	Egotistical	Power hungry
Aggressive	Emotional	Powerful
Ambitious	Ethical	Pretty
Analytical	Feminine	Quantitatively skilled
Arrogant	Fussy	Quarrelsome
Artistic	Gentle	Rational
Assertive	Gets things done	Really cares about people like me
Athletic	Good at problem solving	Rich
Beautiful	Good with numbers	Rugged
Bitter	Gorgeous	Scheming
Boastful	Greedy	Self-interested
Burly	Gullible	Selfish
Caring	Hard-nosed	Sensitive
Cautious	Hard-working	Servile
Charismatic	Honest	Sleazy
Coarse	Hostile	Smart
Cold	Imaginative	Sneaky
Commands respect	In touch with the people	Spineless
Compassionate	Independent	Stern
Competitive	Inspiring	Strong
Complaining	Intelligent	Strong willed
Confident	Intuitive	Subordinates self to others
Corrupt	Knowledgeable	Sympathetic
Creative	Leader	Talkative
Cute	Liar	Tough
Cynical	Logical	Unable to separate feelings from ideas
Daring	Loving	Unemotional
Decent	Manipulative	Unprincipled
Deceptive	Masculine	Uptight
Dependent	Moral	Warm
Determined	Motherly	Weak
Devious	Motivated	Well-educated
Dictatorial	Muscular	Well-spoken
Dishonest	Nagging	Whiny
Dominant	Objective	

Appendix B
Scale Correlations

Scale	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)	(m)
<i>Politician Traits</i>													
(a) Leadership	1												
(b) Empathy	.17**	1											
(c) Integrity	.24**	.57**	1										
(d) Competence	.58**	.21**	.31**	1									
<i>Female Stereotypes</i>													
(e) Positive Personality	-.11	.73**	.49**	.03	1								
(f) Negative Personality	-.14*	.38**	.25**	-.05	.53**	1							
Cognitive	.17**	.67**	.60**	.23	.70**	.36**	1						
(g) Physical—Female	-.07	.67**	.43**	-.01	.83**	.59**	.66**	1					
(h) Negative Female Leader Traits	.48**	-.24**	-.003	.37**	-.40**	-.12 ⁺	-.14*	-.39**	1				
<i>Male Stereotypes</i>													
(i) Positive Personality	.39**	-.22**	.02	.28**	-.35**	-.21**	-.13*	-.35**	.69**	1			
(j) Negative Personality—Male	.26**	-.21**	-.02	.14*	-.26**	.17**	-.11 ⁺	-.21**	.71**	.48**	1		
(k) Cognitive—Male	.50**	.16**	.32**	.53**	.002	-.06	.25**	.001	.42**	.40**	.22**	1	
(m) Physical—Male	.18**	-.21**	.02	.09	-.20**	-.07	-.08	-.15*	.45**	.59**	.48**	.25**	1

⁺*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01