2003

Gender Stereotyping in State Executive Elections: Candidate Selection and Success

Richard L. Fox
Loyola Marymount University, richard.fox@lmu.edu

Gender Stereotyping in State Executive Elections: Candidate Selection and Success

Richard L. Fox
Union College
Zoe M. Oxley
Union College

Research on gender stereotypes has found that voters ascribe certain beliefs and traits to candidates based on the candidate's sex. Most of this research relies on experimental data and examines stereotyping solely in terms of voter decision making. In contrast, we examine state executive office elections to determine if stereotypes influence both candidate selection and success. State executive elections are ideal for studying gender stereotypes as many of the offices focus on specific policy issues that correspond with stereotypical competencies of male and female candidates. We find considerable support for our expectation of an interaction between candidate sex and office type in candidate selection: women are less likely to run for offices that are inconsistent with their stereotypical strengths and, beginning in 1990, somewhat more likely to run for stereotypically consistent offices. In terms of candidate success, however, we do not find that women's likelihood of winning varies strongly across office types. Ultimately, our work demonstrates that stereotyping is more likely during candidate selection than has previously been documented, and strongly suggests that we must examine more closely the processes by which women become candidates for elective office.

Historically, American political life has been dominated by sex-role orientations that prevented women from being seriously considered as candidates for public office (Baxter and Lansing 1980; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994). Blatant and widespread discrimination against female candidates has, however, diminished substantially. Female candidates now attract votes, raise money, and win at the same levels as similarly situated men (Burrell 1994; Dolan 1998; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). This is not to suggest, however, that candidate sex has become irrelevant in the electoral arena. To the contrary, many scholars find that gender stereotyping, linked to traditional sex roles, still pervades the electoral environment (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Flammang 1997; Fox 1997; Niven 1998; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Many actors—voters, party officials, candi-

This research was funded by a grant from the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Union College. For assistance with data collection, we thank Bethany Machacek, Zachary King and, especially, Mark Anderson. We also thank Kathy Dolan and Carole Kennedy for their helpful suggestions.

dates, journalists—transfer their stereotypical expectations about men and women to male and female candidates. The result of this stereotyping is that certain personality traits and areas of policy expertise come to be regarded as "feminine" and others "masculine."[1]

Studying the impact or prevalence of gender stereotyping in the electoral environment is a very difficult task as stereotypes can often be subtle and difficult to measure empirically. As a result, most analyses of gender stereotypes in the electoral arena have relied on experimental research (Dolan 1997; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b; Leeper 1991; McDermott 1998).[2] While this research has been an important first step, we must find ways to examine the influence of gender stereotypes in real electoral environments (Huddy 1994). Pursuing this goal, we analyze election data from all state executive office contests occurring between 1978 and 1998 to determine if stereotyping influences women's likelihood of running for and winning election to these offices.

Beyond the critical step of extending the gender stereotyping literature to an actual electoral environment, our research makes a number of other important contributions. First, examining election returns allows us to separate out different stages of the electoral process and determine whether stereotyping is more influential in candidate recruitment and selection or in the number of votes won on election day. Prior gender stereotyping research has focused nearly exclusively on the second stage. Second, we turn our attention to a previously unexplored electoral venue—state executive offices. State executive offices provide fertile ground for studying gender stereotypes as many of the offices focus on specific policy issues that correspond with stereotypical competencies of men and women. These offices allow for a more specific analysis of gender stereotypes than previous examinations that have categorized offices by level (local, state, or national) and/or by type (executive or legislative). Third, by examining elections over a 20-year period we are able to assess the influence of gender stereotypes in the political process over time. Assessing this trend is particularly important as the environment for female candidates has changed dramatically since the early 1990s (Thomas and Wilcox 1998).

Gender Stereotyping in the Electoral Arena

Gender stereotypes are rooted in the historically socialized roles that have encompassed the lives of men and women. Pamela Johnston Conover and Vir-

[1] Consistent with most gender stereotyping research, we use the terms "feminine" and "masculine" when discussing the traits, issues, or offices that are associated with the stereotypical strengths of women and men. In contrast, we use "male" and "female" when referring to a person's sex. Although some researchers employ the labels "men's" and "women's" and/or "male" and "female" to policy issues and traits, we believe that "masculine" and "feminine" best connote the social construction of gender.

[2] Exceptions to this trend include studies that incorporate surveys of citizens or in-depth interviews with elite political actors (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Fox 1997; Koch 2000; Niven 1998), or content analysis of campaign commercials or news coverage (Kahn 1996).

ginia Gray (1983, 2–3) concisely define traditional sex-role socialization as a "division of activities into the public extra-familial jobs done by the male and the private intra-familial ones performed by the female." While the conception of a rigid set of gender roles as an expected norm is certainly on the decline, the effects of traditional socialization continue to exist in the electoral arena generally. Most notably, male and female candidates are often attributed with certain characteristics that are consistent with the traditional roles of men and women. In conceptualizing the types of attributes often assigned to women and men, Leonie Huddy and Nayda Terkildsen (1993a) make a distinction between two types of gender stereotypes—belief stereotypes and trait stereotypes.

Belief stereotypes refer to the ideologies and policy preferences that are ascribed to men and women, and trait stereotypes refer to personal qualities that are inferred about men and women. In terms of belief stereotypes, female candidates are viewed as more liberal than male candidates (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Koch 2000; McDermott 1998). Beyond this general characterization, researchers have found that female candidates are perceived as better suited than men to address the following issues: education, health care, the environment, the arts, consumer protection, and helping the poor. Male candidates are seen as more competent to address issues such as military or police crises, economic issues, business issues, agriculture, and crime control. As for trait stereotypes, women have been identified as more compassionate, willing to compromise, and oriented toward people, while men have been viewed as more assertive, active, and self-confident (Burrell 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b; Leeper 1991; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989).

The continued presence of gender stereotypes in the political arena has a number of important electoral consequences. First, many of the gender stereotypes continue to work to favor male candidates. Some voters prefer candidates that possess masculine traits and thus are unlikely to vote for female candidates who are stereotyped as not possessing these traits. Shirley Rosenwasser and Norma Dean (1989) found that masculine characteristics were perceived as being more important than feminine characteristics across many different types of offices (see also Huddy 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b). Second, the role gender stereotyping plays in an election may depend on the specific electoral environment. For instance, female candidates may fare better in electoral atmospheres where "women-friendly" issues dominate the agenda (Burrell 1994; Fox 1997). Another result of gender stereotyping is that men and women are viewed as better suited for certain types of elective positions. Leonie Huddy and Nayda Terkildsen (1993b) found that candidates who possess masculine personality traits and expertise in masculine policy areas are preferred for national and executive office. In contrast, their respondents preferred feminine issue expertise for local or legislative office (see also Adams 1975; Dolan 1997).

All of this research demonstrates that when women run for elective office, gender stereotyping occurs, sometimes to their advantage but more often to their detriment. However, ignored in most prior research is the candidate selection

stage of elections. David Niven (1998) is one of the few scholars who has directly examined stereotyping during the candidate recruitment process. He surveyed county party chairs and concluded that they preferred candidate traits that are usually associated with men (such as individualistic, aggressive, competitive, and outspoken). Beyond Niven's work, direct investigations of gender stereotyping during the recruitment process have been quite rare. Other studies do hint that stereotyping might be at work during recruitment. In an early analysis, Irene Diamond (1977) found that women were less likely to be recruited to run for prestigious positions. Additionally, the political parties have only been likely to specifically recruit female candidates in years when the likelihood of women winning is higher because of the electoral issue environment (Biersack and Herrnson 1994).

Gender stereotyping might also influence candidates' decisions whether to run for office, regardless of whether they have been recruited to run. For instance, women have been found to express lower levels of ambition to hold high-level elective office than their male counterparts (Bledsoe and Herring 1990; Carroll 1994; Fox, Lawless, and Feeley 2001). Further, general beliefs that men are better suited for politics than women have caused many women who do enter politics to emphasize their credentials (Kahn 1996). Because women are more conscious of appearing credible in the election process, they may be less likely to seek any office or more likely to seek offices that are consistent with the perceived strengths of women (Fox 1997).

Finally, we must consider the broader context of gender dynamics in the United States and cannot ignore that the historical patterns of career segregation have led to women and men developing different areas of professional expertise (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994). Education, for example, is one field where women have been able to excel without violating the gender role norms of the recent past (Astin and Leland 1991). Conversely, women's prior exclusion from management and leadership positions in the business sector has not provided women with business-related experience (Clark 1994). In fact, to this day, women still compose less than 1% of CEOs in Fortune 500 companies (Abercrombie 1998). It is very likely that these differences in career patterns lead male and female candidates to seek different types of elective office.

Hypotheses and Data

The day-to-day duties of state executive officers vary substantially because most focus on a narrowly defined issue or set of issues. For instance, the attorney general's position is associated with crime control, the state treasurer with managing a state's finances, and the superintendent of education with the functioning of public schools. Many of these policy responsibilities correspond to stereotypically feminine and masculine issues. Thus, the experiences of women in elections for state executive offices should depend upon the type of executive office being contested. We suspect that women are not recruited for or that they choose not to run for all offices equally and that they will have different success

rates depending on the office. More specifically, we identify two hypotheses. First, women will be more likely to seek executive offices that correspond with women's stereotypical strengths (those that focus on feminine issues) and less likely to seek offices with a policy emphasis on masculine issues. Second, we hypothesize that female candidates will be more successful when they run for offices that focus on feminine issues compared to masculine issues.

To test our hypotheses, we analyzed returns from elections for state executive office positions held between 1978 and 1998. We analyze these aggregate electoral data rather than individual-level data (from either surveys or experiments) for a few reasons. First, a thorough test of our hypotheses necessitates that we consider the full range of executive office positions. Exit polls generally only include vote choice questions for the most prominent offices, such as governor and attorney general. Similarly, we would only be able to consider a handful of offices if we conducted an experiment to test our hypotheses. Incorporating the 27 different executive offices from across the states would produce an unwieldy experimental design. Second, using aggregate returns allows us to examine whether the experience of female candidates differs across offices in actual elections, a topic that has been understudied (Huddy 1994). Despite this advantage of political realism, using aggregate data to examine gender stereotypes has limitations. Notably, we cannot measure the presence of stereotyping directly. Instead, based on existing literature, we assume that male and female candidates are stereotyped to be experts in specific policy areas, and we predict that women will be more likely to run for and to win election to offices that highlight expertise in feminine compared to masculine issue areas. If gender stereotyping by executive office occurs in the electoral environment, we should find evidence of the hypothesized patterns in our analysis.

Five states elect only the governor, while North Dakota elects 11 executive officials; the state average is 5.7 (for a list of elected executive officials, see Table 1). For our analyses, we required information about each election to every state executive office, such as the sex, party affiliation, incumbency status, and percentage of the general election vote for all candidates. This information is readily available only for gubernatorial races. For the 45 states that elect officials in addition to the governor, we requested the information that we required directly from the state office responsible for archiving election returns.

Between 1978 and 1998, there were 1,696 races for state executive offices across the 50 states. We excluded any races that did not involve a Democratic candidate versus a Republican candidate. The largest categories of excluded contests were those in which a Democratic candidate did not run (57) or a Republican candidate did not run (153). Also excluded are 27 nonpartisan races and 12 run-off elections in Louisiana that featured two Democrats. After these exclusions, and the elimination of 55 cases with missing data problems,[3] the maximum number of cases (electoral contests) in our analyses is 1,392.

[3] Despite repeated queries to the state election officials, we were unable to obtain complete information for all electoral contests. For some races, we were unable to determine the sex of both candidates while for others the type of contest (incumbent/challenger vs. open seat) remains unknown.

TABLE 1

Gender Categorization of State Executive Offices

Masculine Offices	Feminine Offices	Neutral Offices
Governor (50)	Supt. of Education (18)	Lt. Governor (19)*
Attorney General (43)	State University Regent (1)	Secretary of State (36)
Treasurer (37)	Education Board Member (1)	Labor Commissioner (5)
Auditor (24)	School Supt./Public Lands (1)	Election Administrator (1)
Comptroller (10)	WA Public Lands Comm. (1)	Secretary of State/Lt. Gov. (1)
Agriculture Commissioner (10)	State Mine Inspector (1)	
Insurance Commissioner (10)		
Public Service Commissioner (4)		
Corporation Commissioner (2)		
Railroad Commissioner (2)		
AR, TX Public Lands Comm. (2)		
Adjutant General (1)		
Public Utility Commissioner (1)		
Tax Commissioner (1)		
Agriculture/Commerce Comm. (1)		
Agriculture/Industries Comm. (1)		
Treasurer/Insurance Comm. (1)		

Note: Figures in parentheses are the number of states where each official is elected.

*In many other states, the lieutenant governor is elected on the same ticket with the governor. We include only the 19 states where the lieutenant governor is elected separately.

Critical to successfully investigating our hypotheses is our ability to establish a reliable means of classifying the executive offices as favoring either the stereotypical strengths of men or women. Our classification scheme is based on matching previous researchers' identification of stereotypical masculine (such as finance or crime control) and feminine policy issues (education, for example) with the primary policy responsibility of each office. We then classified each office as either masculine, feminine, or neutral (see Table 1).[4] Neutral offices are those with responsibility for issues that are neither clearly masculine nor femi-

[4] In coding the offices, the office title clearly matched the lists of gendered policy issues for nearly all of the 27 offices (e.g., superintendent of education a feminine office, comptroller a masculine office, and so forth). The policy focus of four offices was not clearly identifiable based on the title of the position (e.g., public service commissioner). To code these offices, we gathered detailed information about them from state Web sites. The final two offices—governor and lieutenant governor—preside over a wide range of policy positions; thus we could not utilize belief stereotypes to classify these positions. Instead, we rely upon the trait stereotyping literature. A consistent finding from this literature is that men are preferred by voters for chief executive positions, so we classified governor as a masculine office. For the office of lieutenant governor, valid arguments can be made for different classifications. Because of the position's broad policy interests and because the trait stereotyping literature does not directly address positions that are subordinate to the chief executive, we feel it is best classified as neutral. For a more detailed discussion of the coding procedures, please contact the authors.

nine.[5] This method of classification is common in the gender and politics literature and has been used to categorize the content of campaign messages (Fox 1997; Kahn 1996) and examine the priorities of state legislators (Reingold 2000; Thomas 1994).

Women's Candidacies by Executive Office Type

We posit that women are most likely to run for state executive offices that correspond with their stereotypical policy competencies and least likely to run for offices affiliated with stereotypically male competencies. If this hypothesis is correct, races for feminine offices will be more likely to involve female candidates than will either neutral or masculine offices. Overall, nearly 30% of the state executive office races between 1978 and 1998 included at least one female candidate (see Table 2). Importantly, though, the presence of female candidates depends upon the type of office. While less than a quarter of the races for masculine offices involved female candidates, over 40% of the races for neutral offices and nearly 60% of the races for feminine offices contained a female candidate. This relationship between the presence of female candidates and type of office is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 69.0$, $p < .001$).

Women were much more likely to run for electoral office in the 1990s than in the 1970s. As women have become more frequent, and less novel, candidates, it is possible that they are less likely to pursue only those offices that correspond to women's stereotypical strengths. To explore this possibility, we examined the relationship between office type and women's candidacies separately for elections occurring between 1978 and 1989 and between 1990 and 1998. During the 1990s, 38.2% of all races contained at least one female candidate, while only 20.8% of the earlier races did. Despite this increase in women's candidacies, though, women were significantly more likely to run for feminine than neutral or masculine offices for both time periods (refer to Table 2).[6]

While these cross-tabulation results are instructive, office type is only one characteristic of an electoral contest that influences the likelihood that a woman will

[5] One could argue that because of the long-term masculine nature of politics, any office that is not specifically beneficial to female stereotypes must therefore favor males (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995). While we are sympathetic to this argument, we believe that the gender stereotyping literature supports the use of the neutral category. This literature identifies some issues as stereotypically male and others as stereotypically female. Yet, not all possible issues are classified (e.g., Fox 1997; Reingold 2000; Thomas 1994). Since we rely on these studies as the foundation for our classification of offices, we opted to employ a neutral category rather than making assumptions about any nonclassified issues.

[6] Another way to assess whether women have become increasingly more likely to pursue offices that run counter to their stereotypical strengths is to inspect trends within individual states. Specifically, we examined states that have feminine offices to see if women first ran for feminine offices then gradually entered races for masculine offices. For the 20 years beginning in 1978, such a trend existed for about half of these states. Unfortunately, though, we do not know what types of offices women ran for before 1978, so we are unable to explore this topic fully.

TABLE 2

Races Involving Female Candidates by Office Type and Year

	All Years	1978–1989	1990–1998
All Offices	29.2	20.8	38.2
	(1392)	(716)	(676)
Type of Office:			
Masculine	23.6	14.9	32.7
	(1019)	(523)	(496)
Neutral	41.1	34.6	47.9
	(297)	(153)	(144)
Feminine	59.2	45.0	75.0
	(76)	(40)	(36)
	$\chi^2 = 69.0$	$\chi^2 = 43.0$	$\chi^2 = 32.9$
	$p < .001$	$p < .001$	$p < .001$

Note: Entries are the percentages of races in which at least one of the candidates was a woman, with the number of cases in parentheses.

run for the office. To test our first hypothesis more fully, we conducted a multivariate analysis, controlling for other relevant characteristics. The dependent variable for this analysis is whether a ***woman ran in a race***, coded 0 for races involving no women and 1 for races with at least one woman. We included two office type independent variables, both of which are dummy variables. The first is coded 1 for races for masculine offices and 0 for races to all other types of offices. The second is coded 1 for feminine office contests and 0 for neutral or masculine office contests. We expect ***masculine office*** to be negatively related and ***feminine office***, positively related to our dependent variable. Our model includes a number of control variables. Since women were more likely to run for contests in the 1990s than in previous decades, we include a dummy variable for ***election year*** (coded 0 for races between 1978 and 1989 and 1 for elections between 1990 and 1998). Candidacy decisions are, of course, also influenced by whether the incumbent is running or the seat is open. Between 1978 and 1998, men held most state executive offices. Thus, we expect that women were more likely to run in open seat contests rather than incumbent versus challenger contests, and our model includes an ***open seat variable*** (coded 0 for incumbent vs. challenger races and 1 for open seat contests).

The likelihood that women will run for office is also influenced by the political atmosphere of the state. Party competition matters: female candidates are more common in Republican party dominant than Democratic party dominant states (Nechemias 1987; Rule 1981, 1990). Thus, we included Austin Ranney's (1976; Bibby et al. 1983, 1990; Bibby and Holbrook 1996, 1999) index of ***state party competition*** in our model. This variable is coded on a five-point scale with a higher number indicating more Republican dominance. Political culture also influences women's electoral candidacies as women are less likely to run in states

with a traditional culture (Hill 1981; Nechemias 1987; Rule 1981, 1990). Some researchers also conclude that women are more likely to run in states with moralistic cultures (Hill 1981; Rule 1981, 1990), although Carol Nechemias (1987), when controlling for Southern states, finds no such relationship. To measure political culture, we used Daniel Elazar's (1984) classification, although we include only a ***moralistic culture*** variable in our model (coded 1 for moralistic states and 0 for all others). Many of the traditionalistic states are in the southern United States; thus, there is a high correlation between states with a traditional culture and region (the Pearson's *r* between traditional culture and Southern region is greater than .8 for our data). Because such a large correlation between variables can produce inflated standard errors in a regression model, we did not include both traditional culture and Southern variables. We selected the ***Southern*** variable (coded 0 for non-Southern and 1 for Southern states[7]) because it should capture the influence of traditional culture on women's candidacies, it conditions the relationship between moralistic culture and party dominance (Nechemias 1987), and others find that women are less likely to run in Southern states (Huddy 1994; Norrander and Wilcox 1998).

Finally, women's candidacies are more common in areas where other women have previously won elective office. To control for this phenomenon, we included two variables in our model. The first assesses the degree to which a state has a ***history of electing women*** to office, and we assume women will be more likely to run in states with such a tradition (Hill 1981). Values for this variable are the number of women previously elected to an executive office in the modern era (since 1960) divided by the number of executive offices in the state. It is important to control for the number of executive offices in each state. Otherwise, a simple count of the number of women previously elected in the state might capture the number of offices rather than a state's tradition of electing women. We collected the data for this variable from the Center for American Women and Politics Web site ("State by State Historical Summaries" 2000). The second variable captures the short-term effect of having a woman recently elected to a state office. We expect women to be more likely to run for an office that is currently held by a woman, either because the incumbent woman runs for reelection or because the presence of a woman in this specific office encourages the candidacy of another woman. This variable (***woman in office***) is coded 0 for contests for offices that are currently occupied by men and 1 for offices that are held by women.

Because our dependent variable is dichotomous, we use logistic regression to estimate the coefficients of our model. One assumption of logistic regression is that the cases being analyzed are independent from one another. Based on the nature of our data, this assumption might be violated. Each case in our data set corresponds to an election to a specific executive office in a given state and year.

[7] The Southern states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

TABLE 3

Logistic Regression Models Predicting Contests with Female Candidates

	All Years	1978–1989	1990–1998
Masculine Office	−.74***	−.80**	−.66**
	(.16)	(.26)	(.21)
Feminine Office	.53	.16	.92†
	(.32)	(.47)	(.50)
Year	.73***		
	(.15)		
Open Seat	.13	.22	−.01
	(.14)	(.23)	(.17)
State Party Competition	.26*	.26	.34*
	(.11)	(.15)	(.15)
Moralistic Culture	−.20	−.22	−.29
	(.15)	(.22)	(.22)
South	−.81***	−.45	−1.09***
	(.21)	(.36)	(.24)
Tradition of Electing Women	−.06	.36	−.29
	(.18)	(.31)	(.21)
Woman in Office	2.50***	3.21***	2.09***
	(.22)	(.40)	(.26)
Constant	−1.66***	−1.89***	−.91*
Number of cases	1356	686	670
Model chi-square	198.23***	107.61***	127.21***

Note: Entries are logistic regression coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is whether a woman ran in the election, coded 0 for no female candidates and 1 for at least one female candidate. See text for the coding of independent variables. Levels of statistical significance are noted as follows: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$ and †$p < .07$.

There were, for example, three elections for executive offices in New York in 1998 (governor, attorney general, and controller); thus, our data set contains three cases from this state and year. Because these three cases likely share certain characteristics, we cannot assume that they are independent of each other. Therefore, we relaxed the assumption of independence for cases from the same state and year.[8] This procedure results in robust, rather than conventional, standard errors (Huber 1967).

We first examined all races between 1978 and 1998 (see Table 3). The coefficient for masculine office is in the expected direction and is statistically significant. This result strongly supports half of our first hypothesis: women are much less likely to run for masculine compared to nonmasculine offices. Women are not, however, more likely to run for feminine offices, as we had hypothesized.

[8] To conduct this analysis, we used the "cluster" option with the "logistic" command in Stata 7.0.

The feminine office variable missed an acceptable threshold of statistical significance ($p = .095$). Among control variables, the year, party competition, South, and woman in office variables were statistically significant and in the predicted directions. Substantively, these results indicate that women were more likely to run for a state executive office in the 1990s, in Republican-dominant states, in non-Southern states and for offices held by a woman. Women's likelihood of running was not significantly related to whether the race was for an open seat,[9] in a moralistic state, or in a state with a tradition of electing women.

Since logistic regression coefficients are difficult to interpret directly, we calculated the predicted probabilities that a masculine office race would contain a female candidate, holding all other variables constant. To do so, we set all other variables at their mean values. Given these values, the probability that an election for a masculine office will contain a female candidate is .224. In contrast, the likelihood of a nonmasculine office contest containing a woman is 69% higher (predicted probability = .378).

Prior researchers have found that the factors influencing the recruitment of women to state legislatures have not remained constant over time (Nechemias 1987; Rule 1990). We also consider over-time variation in our results by reestimating our logistic regression model separately for the two time periods of 1978–1989 and 1990–1998. We had to exclude the year variable from these models; otherwise they are the same as the initial model. These results demonstrate that our earlier finding is not time specific—women less frequently ran in elections for masculine offices for both time periods (see Table 3). However, the likelihood of a feminine office race containing a female candidate did change over time. The feminine office variable is not statistically significant for races between 1978 and 1989, but is marginally significant ($p = .066$) for more recent races. Turning to the control variables, whether a woman currently holds the executive office is the only one that has a consistent influence on the presence of women's candidacies over time (in both time periods, women were more likely to run for offices that were occupied by a woman). Consistent with Nechemias' (1987) and Rule's (1990) studies, we find that women were more likely to run outside of the South only in the latter time period. Contrary to these analyses of state legislatures, though, women's candidacies for executive office are more common in Republican-dominant states in the latter but not the earlier time period.[10]

[9] While women were equally likely to run in open-seat versus incumbent/challenger contests, it is possible that women's candidacies differed among contests of the latter type. Specifically, women may have been more likely to run as challengers against very safe incumbents (as the "sacrificial lamb" hypothesis suggests; see Carroll 1994, 36–40). Our data suggest that this did not happen. Women were no more likely to be challengers in races where the incumbent won safely (with more than 60% of the vote) compared to incumbents who received 60% or less. This conclusion holds when we analyze all races together or in separate analyses of masculine, feminine, and neutral office contests.

[10] Office prestige can influence whether women run, and female candidates are more common in races for less prestigious offices (Diamond 1977; Mandel 1981). We assessed in two ways whether

The Success of Female Candidates by Executive Office Type

The pattern of results presented in Tables 2 and 3 is consistent with our first hypothesis that female candidates are less likely to run for executive offices that are inconsistent with their stereotypical policy expertise. Are female candidates also less likely to win races for these offices compared to feminine offices? To address this question, we examined the success rates of female candidates, only for the 344 races where a woman ran against a man. Women won 50.3% of these races. There is some variation in women's success by office type, as the percentage of women winning a race is higher for feminine (67.7%) versus masculine (48.2%) offices. Despite this trend, the overall relationship between the sex of the winning candidate and type of office is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4.19$, $p > .10$).

To test thoroughly the relationship among candidate sex, office type, and electoral success, we estimated a logistic regression model, analyzing only those races that featured a woman versus a man. The dependent variable for the model is the ***sex of the winning candidate***, coded 0 for men and 1 for women; thus the model predicts the likelihood that the female candidate won. The independent variables in the model are nearly the same as in the prior multivariate analysis. We deleted the woman in office variable as we expect that whether or not a woman is currently serving in the office not to have an influence on the sex of the winning candidate running for that office. Rather, we expect that whether the incumbent candidate is a woman will have an influence on her likelihood of winning. Thus, we include a ***woman incumbent*** variable, coded 1 if the incumbent candidate is a woman and 0 if the incumbent is a man or if the contest is for an open seat. In regard to the other variables, we expect women to be less likely to win races for masculine offices. In contrast, women should be more successful in contests for feminine offices, in more recent elections, in open seat contests, and for races in states with the following characteristics: Republican party dominance; a moralistic political culture; non-South; and a tradition of electing women.

We first ran our model for all years (see Table 4) and find that neither masculine office nor feminine office is significantly related to the female candidate's likelihood of winning. The only variables that are statistically significant predictors of the sex of the winning candidate are whether the contest is for an open

the prestige of executive offices influences the likelihood that women will run for these offices. First, we excluded races for governor from our analysis. Within any state, the governor's office is the most prestigious office. Since it is also a masculine office, it is possible that our coding has conflated the masculinity of the office with office prestige. However, our results did not change when we re-ran our model excluding the races for governor, suggesting that prestige of office does not account for our findings. Second, we incorporated the number of executive offices within a state into our analysis. In states with few offices, each one could be considered more prestigious than offices in a state with many more elected executive officials. We tested whether women are more likely to run in states with more offices (which should occur if the executive offices are less prestigious in these states) by adding a number of office variable to the model. This variable did not significantly influence the likelihood that women will run for executive office nor did it change the results from our original model.

TABLE 4

Determinants of the Success of Female Candidates, Only for Contests between a Man and a Woman

	All Years
Masculine Office	.05
	(.32)
Feminine Office	.45
	(.49)
Year	.33
	(.27)
Open Seat	1.72***
	(.30)
Woman Incumbent	3.44***
	(.40)
State Party Competition	.18
	(.23)
Moralistic Culture	−.04
	(.30)
South	−.13
	(.39)
Tradition of Electing Women	−.43
	(.36)
Constant	−2.12**
Number of cases	340
Model chi-square	83.74***

Note: Entries are logistic regression coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is the sex of the winning candidate, coded 0 if a man won and 1 if a woman won. See text for the coding of independent variables. Levels of statistical significance are noted as follows: *** $p < .001$ and ** $p < .01$.

seat and whether either of the candidates is a woman incumbent: women are more likely to win when they run in open seat contests or when they are incumbents. Furthermore, these findings are not time-bound—with one exception, the results of the full model are identical (in the direction and significance of the independent variables) to the results for the models from both time periods.[11] The only other statistically significant variable was the tradition of electing women for races between 1978 and 1989. However, the relationship between this variable and the sex of the winning candidate was opposite of our expectation: during these years, men were more likely to win in states that had previously elected women. Overall, though, these results demonstrate that when a woman runs against a man for a state executive office, factors other than office type account for the sex of the winner.[12]

[11] For space reasons, the results for the 1978–1989 and 1990–1998 models have been omitted.

[12] While we believe that our office classifications are the most consistent with the literature identifying gender stereotypes in the political process, we realize that some of the offices could reasonably

Discussion and Conclusion

We find considerable support for our expectation that women are not equally likely to run for all types of state executive offices. Our primary finding is that women are less likely to run for masculine offices across the entire time period that we examine. This finding held even when we controlled for a number of factors that influence the decision to run for office. This result demonstrates not only that gender stereotyping occurs in state executive office elections, but also that its impact has not declined over time. Even as the political system became more inclusive of women candidates in the 1990s, prevailing gender stereotypes continued to influence where women became involved in the electoral arena. Our analysis also suggests that during the 1990s women appeared to be more likely to run for feminine offices. We are hesitant to draw a strong conclusion from this result, though, as the relationship was only marginally statistically significant. Clearly, additional analyses need to be conducted to see if this trend grows stronger in the future.

In contrast, we do not find support for our hypothesis that women will be more successful when they run for feminine compared to masculine offices. Importantly, this is consistent with the expanding body of literature that finds that when women do in fact enter races for public office, they are just as likely to be successful as their similarly situated male counterparts (e.g., Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). From this result, we could infer that voters do not apply gender stereotypes in state executive office elections. We are not prepared to draw this conclusion. Voters, after all, play an important role in the candidate selection process by choosing the party nominees. In fact, voters are more likely to apply gender stereotypes in situations where they distinguish candidates primarily by their sex rather than by other characteristics, such as party affiliation (McDermott 1998; Riggle et al. 1997). In this respect, primary elections resemble the hypothetical electoral contests of experimental research. Since much of our knowledge about the conditions when voters will apply gender stereotypes is based on experimental research, the results of these studies may be less applicable to general elections in which voters use multiple cues when making their voting decisions.

Our analysis allows us to pinpoint the stage during the election process when gender stereotyping by office type is most likely to occur. In separately considering the stages of candidate selection and the success of candidates who run for

be coded differently. To be certain that our findings were not a result of our coding decisions, we analyzed the data in two alternative ways. First, since the literature is not conclusive regarding how to code the office of lieutenant governor, we re-ran all of our analyses with this office coded as masculine and then with it coded as feminine. Our major conclusions remain the same when comparing these new results to our initial analysis with lieutenant governor coded as neutral. Second, we analyzed only the positions with office titles that clearly matched the belief and trait stereotypes identified in the literature. These new analyses produced the same results as did our original analyses, with one exception: the likelihood that a race contained a woman did not depend upon office type for elections occurring between 1990 and 1998.

office within the same study, we are able to conclude that the evidence of stereotyping is considerably stronger in the selection stage. This finding has important implications for other analyses of women and electoral politics. Most analyses of women in state legislatures, for example, attempt to explain variation in the recruitment of women across states (or over time) by analyzing the numbers of women serving in the legislatures (see, for example, Nechemias 1987; Rule 1981, 1990). Whether women are state legislators depends, of course, on whether they run and whether they win. Examining aggregate totals of women serving makes it impossible to know in precisely which of these two stages women run into electoral difficulties or if the factors influencing women's candidacies are the same as those influencing whether female candidates win.

While our evidence points to the existence of gender stereotyping during candidate selection, we are less able to conclude how this stereotyping occurs. Existing research provides minimal guidance here, as the mechanisms by which women are recruited to and/or decide to run for office have not received extensive scholarly attention. This is not surprising, given that many of the decisions and actions that lead an individual to enter an electoral contest are neither public nor fully documented. Regardless, at least three avenues of research suggest ways to examine how stereotypes influence men's and women's candidacy decisions. First, the recruitment practices of state and local party leaders across the nation could be examined to determine whether the matching of female candidates with gender stereotypical offices is the result of party gatekeepers. A study of this type would be an extension of David Niven's (1998) analysis of party officials in four states. A second approach would be to survey citizens across the nation who might be considered part of the eligibility pool of potential candidates. The stereotyping that appears in the selection stage may ultimately be a result of candidate self-selection, with women choosing to run for offices that match their stereotypical strengths. A third, and related, approach would be to examine the professional and occupational backgrounds of candidates for elective office. An investigation of these backgrounds would allow for an assessment of whether the history of gendered career paths has influenced which offices women and men tend to seek. Studies such as these three are necessary to determine exactly what occurs during the candidate selection stage of elections.

In conclusion, our findings speak to the importance of studying the role of gender stereotyping in real electoral environments. They also demonstrate why women continue to be underrepresented in elective office. The beliefs of earlier decades that women are not suited for politics have been replaced by more subtle stereotypes whereby men and women are perceived to have specific personality traits and policy competencies. Despite this transformation, gender stereotyping can, and does, directly contribute to the underrepresentation of women in state executive offices. The majority of state executive positions (61%; refer to Table 1) are associated with the stereotypical strengths of men. Furthermore, these masculine offices accounted for 73% of all election contests to state executive offices between 1978 and 1998. Since women are less likely to run for masculine offices,

a majority of executive office elections do not contain female candidates. As long as gender stereotyping in the electoral arena continues to occur, and our research does not indicate that it will disappear anytime soon, women will occupy only a minority of executive offices across the American states.

Manuscript submitted 24 September 2001
Final manuscript received 10 May 2002

References

Abercrombie, Paul. 1998. "Women Scarce on Boards." *The Business Journal, Tampa Bay*, 3 August, online without pagination.

Adams, William. 1975. "Candidate Characteristics, Office of Election and Voter Response." *Experimental Study of Politics* 4: 76–91.

Alexander, Deborah, and Kristi Andersen. 1993. "Gender as a Factor in the Attributions of Leadership Traits." *Political Research Quarterly* 46(3): 527–45.

Astin, Helen S., and Carole Leland. 1991. *Women of Influence, Women of Change: A Cross-Generational Study of Leadership and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Baxter, Sandra, and Marjorie Lansing. 1980. *Women and Politics: The Invisible Majority*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Bibby, John F., Cornelius P. Cotter, James L. Gibson, and Robert J. Huckshorn. 1983. "Parties in State Politics." In *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 4th ed., eds. Virginia Gray, Herbert Jacob, and Kenneth N. Vines. Boston: Little, Brown.

Bibby, John F., Cornelius P. Cotter, James L. Gibson, and Robert J. Huckshorn. 1990. "Parties in State Politics." In *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 5th ed., eds. Virginia Gray, Herbert Jacob, and Robert B. Albritton. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.

Bibby, John F., and Thomas M. Holbrook. 1996. "Parties and Elections." In *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 6th ed., eds. Virginia Gray and Herbert Jacob. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Bibby, John F. and Thomas M. Holbrook. 1999. "Parties and Elections." In *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 7th ed., eds. Virginia Gray, Russell L. Hanson, and Herbert Jacob. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Biersack, Robert, and Paul S. Herrnson. 1994. "Political Parties and the Year of the Woman." In *The Year of the Woman: Myths and Realities*, eds. Elizabeth Adell Cook, Sue Thomas, and Clyde Wilcox. Boulder: Westview Press.

Bledsoe, Timothy, and Mary Herring. 1990. "Victims of Circumstances: Women in Pursuit of Political Office." *American Political Science Review* 84(1): 213–23.

Burrell, Barbara C. 1994. *A Woman's Place Is in the House: Campaigning for Congress in the Feminist Era.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Carroll, Susan J. 1994. *Women as Candidates in American Politics*, 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Clark, Janet. 1994. "Getting There: Women in Political Office." In *Different Roles, Different Voices*, eds. Marianne Githens, Pippa Norris, and Joni Lovenduski. New York: Harper Collins.

Conover, Pamela Johnston, and Virginia Gray. 1983. *Feminism and the New Right: Conflict over the American Family*. New York: Praeger.

Darcy, R., Susan Welch, and Janet Clark. 1994. *Women, Elections and Representation*, 2nd ed., revised. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Diamond, Irene. 1977. *Sex Roles in the State House*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dolan, Kathleen. 1997. "Gender Differences in Support for Women Candidates: Is There a Glass Ceiling in American Politics?" *Women and Politics* 17(2): 27–41.

Dolan, Kathleen. 1998. "Voting for Women in the 'Year of the Woman.'" *American Journal of Political Science* 42(1): 272–93.

Duerst-Lahti, Georgia, and Rita Mae Kelly, eds. 1995. *Gender, Power, Leadership and Governance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Elazar, Daniel J. 1984. *American Federalism: A View from the States*, 3rd ed., New York: Harper and Row.

Flammang, Janet. 1997. *Women's Political Voice: How Women Are Transforming the Practice and Study of Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Fox, Richard L. 1997. *Gender Dynamics in Congressional Elections*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fox, Richard L., Jennifer Lawless, and Courtney Feeley. 2001. "Gender and the Decision to Run for Office." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 26(3): 411–35.

Hill, David B. 1981. "Political Culture and Female Political Representation." *Journal of Politics* 43(1): 159–68.

Huber, Peter J. 1967. "The Behavior of Maximum Likelihood Estimates under Non-Standard Conditions." *Proceedings of the Fifth Berkeley Symposium on Mathematical Statistics and Probability*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Vol. I, pp. 221–33.

Huddy, Leonie. 1994. "The Political Significance of Voters' Gender Stereotypes." In *Research in Micropolitics*, Vol. 4, eds. Michael X. Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Y. Shapiro. Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Huddy, Leonie, and Nayda Terkildsen. 1993a. "Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates." *American Journal of Political Science* 37(1): 119–47.

Huddy, Leonie, and Nayda Terkildsen. 1993b. "The Consequences of Gender Stereotypes for Women Candidates at Different Levels and Types of Offices." *Political Research Quarterly* 46(3): 503–25.

Kahn, Kim F. 1996. *The Political Consequences of Being a Woman*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Koch, Jeffrey W. 2000. "Do Citizens Apply Gender Stereotypes to Infer Candidates' Ideological Orientations?" *Journal of Politics* 62(2): 414–29.

Leeper, Mark S. 1991. "The Impact of Prejudice on Female Candidates: An Experimental Look at Voter Inference." *American Politics Quarterly* 19(2): 248–61.

Mandel, Ruth B. 1981. *In the Running: The New Women Candidates*. New York: Ticknor and Fields.

McDermott, Monika L. 1998. "Race and Gender Cues in Low-Information Elections." *Political Research Quarterly* 51(4): 895–918.

Nechemias, Carol. 1987. "Changes in the Election of Women to U.S. State Legislative Seats." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 12(1): 125–42.

Niven, David. 1998. "Party Elites and Women Candidates: The Shape of Bias." *Women and Politics* 19(2): 57–80.

Norrander, Barbara, and Clyde Wilcox. 1998. "The Geography of Gender Power: Women in State Legislatures." In *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*, eds. Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ranney, Austin. 1976. "Parties in State Politics." In *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 3rd ed., eds. Herbert Jacob and Kenneth N. Vines. Boston: Little, Brown.

Reingold, Beth. 2000. *Representing Women*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Riggle, Ellen D. B., Penny M. Miller, Todd G. Shields, and Mitzi M. S. Johnson. 1997. "Gender Stereotypes and Decision Context in the Evaluation of Political Candidates." *Women and Politics* 17(3): 69–87.

Rosenwasser, Shirley M., and Norma G. Dean. 1989. "Gender Role and Political Office: Effects of Perceived Masculinity/Femininity of Candidate and Political Office." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 13(1): 77–85.

Rule, Wilma. 1981. "Why Women Don't Run: The Critical Contextual Factors in Women's Legislative Recruitment." *Western Political Quarterly* 34(1): 60–77.

Rule, Wilma. 1990. "Why More Women Are State Legislators: A Research Note." *Western Political Quarterly* 43(2): 437–48.

Sanbonmatsu, Kira. 2002. "Gender Stereotypes and Vote Choice." *American Journal of Political Science* 46(1): 20–34.

Seltzer, Richard A., Jody Newman, and Melissa Voorhees Leighton. 1997. *Sex as a Political Variable: Women as Candidates and Voters in U.S. Elections*. London: Lynne Rienner.

"State by State Historical Summaries." 2000. *Center for American Women and Politics*, 17 August 2000 <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Facts.html>.

Thomas, Sue. 1994. *How Women Legislate*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Thomas, Sue, and Clyde Wilcox, eds. 1998. *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Witt, Linda, Karen M. Paget, and Glenna Matthews. 1994. *Running as a Woman*. New York: Free Press.

Richard L. Fox is associate professor of political science, Union College, Schenectady, NY 12308-3163.

Zoe M. Oxley is assistant professor of political science, Union College, Schenectady, NY 12308-3163.