

GENDER STEREOTYPES AND THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study analyzes the effects of gender stereotypes on women gubernatorial candidates in the post “Year of the Woman” era to determine whether or not the electoral gains made by women running for legislative office in 1992 also extended to women contesting executive elections in subsequent years. This study proceeds in two parts. The first part of this study provides an empirical analysis of contextual and candidate specific factors thought to affect the way in which gender stereotypes surface during gubernatorial campaigns and how they affect women candidates accordingly. The contextual factors include state culture, party dominance, and tradition of electing women in each state. Candidate specific factors include prior campaign and or office holding experience. The second part of this study adopts a case study approach and focuses on two gubernatorial elections – New Jersey and Virginia – to provide a more detailed examination of how gender stereotypes emerge when women are candidates for governor.

The findings from the empirical analysis show that women are more likely to contest gubernatorial elections that are Democratic in their partisanship and non-traditionalist in their political culture. However, these variables did not explain whether women were successful in winning gubernatorial elections. The second part of the analysis expanded on these findings by examining the dominant role gender stereotypes played in a traditionalistic state (Virginia) and the minimal role they played in a non-traditionalistic state (New Jersey).

Generalizations were made based on the findings that indicate the importance of the campaign in light of contextual factors and how this affects women candidates in executive elections. Recommendations for a future research agenda regarding elections in which women are candidates for various levels of office are also discussed.

To my mother, Sharon, who, through, example raised me to believe that every job is a woman's job.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

Current literature on women candidates for elected political office shows that on an aggregate level, women win as often as men when they run (Seltzer, Newman, and Voorhees-Leighton, 1997). However there remains a lack of representation by women in all levels of government. The current numbers as of 2006 show women hold 22.8 percent of the seats in state legislatures, 15.1 percent of the seats in the United States Congress, and 25.1 percent of statewide elective executive offices across the country (CAWP, 2006a). These numbers indicate that substantial gains have been made by women since they began winning elections to political office more regularly in the 1970's but these gains are incremental. Women are still far from reaching parity in numbers with men in similar offices. Of particular interest is the slow pace at which women are being elected to governorships. As the highest of the chief executive offices besides the Presidency, the lack of women as heads of state raises questions as to the level of inclusion women have achieved in the political arena.

It was not until 1974 that Ella Grasso became the first woman elected to the governorship in her own right – nearly 60 years after the first woman was elected to the U.S. Congress. Electoral gains made by women running for governor are still quite modest; by 1993, almost twenty years later after Grasso's election, only seven more women were elected to governorships and to date, a mere 28 women have ever held this executive office. Of those 28, only 18 were elected in their own right while three replaced their husbands and seven took office by constitutional succession (CAWP, 2006b). Even though recent gains made by women in

gubernatorial elections are respectable by historical standards, there remains a lack of representation by women as state governors that calls for specific analysis of elections to this office.

### **The Relevance of Women Governors**

The benefits of descriptive representation would increase if more women were elected to higher levels of executive office. Governors experience a high level of visibility relative to other elected officials. While substantive benefits are gained by women serving in the legislative branch through policy making, descriptive benefits continue to be unrealized. Furthermore, support for women candidates at one level of office but not at another may send signals that women are only welcome in the political arena up to a certain level, perpetuating the idea of a “glass ceiling” for women in politics, and discouraging full citizen participation. More women as governors would most likely provide descriptive benefits that would increase the political legitimacy of women candidates overall, and for women holding higher level offices.

The political relevance of electoral success for women candidates seeking governorships should not be understated. Governors occupy an executive post and serve as the chief administrator of the state, head of government, as well as head of the party (Barth and Ferguson, 2002). The office of governor has grown in prominence in recent years and the governor’s scope of authority in state constitutions has grown as well (Barth and Ferguson, 2002). Over the past three decades, the governorship has become a stepping stone to the United States presidency; four of the past five presidents previously served as governor. The mere attribute of being elected governor gives legitimacy to the notion of statewide electability, a desirable trait for candidates for national office.



## **Women as Political Candidates**

1992 has been heralded as “The Year of the Woman” based on gains made by women candidates for political office that year. A record number of women ran for and won election to legislative posts by running “as women”, they stressed their differences from male candidates, centered their campaigns around women’s issues such as reproductive rights, and embraced perceptions of themselves as “outsiders”. At the same time, three women contested gubernatorial elections in 1992, none won election on election day. While these achievements in Congressional elections should be celebrated, it should not go unnoticed that women are not experiencing the same success in gubernatorial elections.

There have been many inquiries into possible reasons why women are underrepresented in elected political office in general. In the past there has been evidence of voter prejudice against women candidates (Carroll, 1994; Freeman, 2000) as well as a lack of support among party elites (Carroll, 1994), but most of the more recent research indicates that, over time, women as candidates have become more acceptable to voters (Dolan, 1997; Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1994; Leeper, 1991) as well as within the party structure (Seltzer, Newman, Voorhees-Leighton, 1997).

A commonly held belief about the electoral disadvantages that women face as candidates is their inferiority to men in terms of fundraising abilities (Carroll, 1994). On an aggregate level, fundraising records indicate that women are able to raise money just as well if not better than their male counterparts (Burrell, 1998) Women’s groups such as EMILY’s List and the WISH List have been very effective at raising money for women candidates (Thomas, 1999). Some of the literature shows that women actually have a fundraising advantage over men in open seat

House elections (Burrell, 1998) while in judicial campaigns, it has been shown that women raise and spend more than men do (Reid, 2004).

In spite of a decrease in voter prejudice and advancements in fundraising abilities, there continue to be obstacles that women face as candidates which help to explain why women continue to be a minority in elective political office. These obstacles include, but may not be limited to, lack of experience, lack of media coverage of women candidates, differences in socialization of boys and girls, the electoral structure, the incumbency factor (Thomas, 1998), and the political culture of a region (Fox and Oxley, 2003). Of particular interest is the obstacle of contending with gender stereotypes held by voters. It is possible that the varying success among women in different political offices could be better explained by the stereotypes voters hold about particular offices and the appropriate roles for men and women in general and how these views tend to vary among regions with different political cultures.

Even though the number of women in all levels of government is small, the bulk of the literature concerning this trend focuses much of the attention on and draws most of its conclusions from studies based on the legislative branch of government. The literature on the judicial and executive branches remains quite limited. It is misleading to generalize trends in women's candidacies in elections to legislative office to elections in the other branches of government. Most studies of elections in which women compete indicate that women win as often as men when they run – for Congress (Seltzer, Newman, and Voorhess-Leighton, 1997; Burrell, 1996; Carroll, 1994). But this may not necessarily hold true for women seeking executive or judicial office. Elections to these offices require specific analysis as the duties associated with them are quite different from legislative offices which may result in a difference in how willing voters are to support women who contest them.

Women face obstacles in regards to their perceived leadership qualities (Mueller, 1986) which affects them in elections to executive office. Some research suggests that voters are more willing to support a woman as an elected member to a representative body than to occupy an executive position where a woman would be expected to “run things” (Tolleson Rinehart, 1994a). A study conducted by the National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC) demonstrated equal support among voters for women and men in the House of Representatives but not for women in the Senate or Governor’s seats (Seltzer, Newman, Voorhees-Leighton, 1997). In fact, it showed that in terms of women’s success as candidates for governor, women in these races tended to fare worse than the men. However, because of the small number of women as candidates for governor (only forty two had run by 1992 and only eight won), these results were not statistically significant.

As some judgeships are elected, some of the same issues will arise in those elections as well. Differences between men and women in terms of success rates and fundraising have been documented (Reid, 2004). In a study of judicial candidates in elections in North Carolina, women did not win as often as men, even when they ran as the incumbent (Reid, 2004). The study also showed women incumbents in these races tended to be challenged more often than male incumbents, suggesting perhaps they were perceived as more vulnerable. The author concluded that perceptions of women likely influenced voters’ decisions given the low information about judicial candidates and that voters may be likely to use the candidate’s sex as a voting cue. The role of judge might be seen as a “man’s job”, and therefore voters would be more inclined to support male candidates (Reid, 2004, p. 841). Both of the above studies provide evidence that among different branches of government, competition between women and men varies.

Incumbency is generally regarded as the best explanation for slow gains made by women running for office (Seltzer, Newman, Voorhees-Leighton 1997). Most incumbents are men and incumbents win far more often than challengers or candidates for open seats (Seltzer, Newman, Voorhees- Leighton, 1997). In the NWPC study mentioned above, it was found that in congressional races, incumbents were more than sixteen times more likely to win than are challengers, whereas in races for governor, incumbents won elections less than four times more often (1997). The office of governor is least affected by the incumbency variable: as all but fourteen states have constitutional term limits for governorships,<sup>1</sup> this office holds the highest percentage of open seat elections (Seltzer, Newman, Voorhees-Leighton, 1997), and should therefore, theoretically, present women with the best opportunity to run for office without challenging an incumbent. Yet even in an office with a minimal incumbency effect, women are still far from reaching parity with men in terms of number.

Still, voters remain less likely to support women candidates. Despite the opportunities presented to women candidates at all levels of government, coupled with recent success, women do not enjoy the same electoral success rates as men do at all levels of government. Aggregate studies of women candidates often produce findings that do not necessarily hold true when applied to a subset of women candidates such as those for the judiciary or executive office. Furthermore, most of the studies based on aggregate data do not take into consideration variations of support for women candidates that may be affected by cultural factors such as differences in views on the “role of women” which could prevent women from becoming candidates in the first place. Therefore, generalizations based primarily on legislative races do

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin do not have term limits in place for governors. The remaining 36 states have a limit of two consecutive terms, except for Virginia which allows only one consecutive term.

not provide an adequate explanation of how women contend with various elements in gubernatorial elections which vary in context from state to state.

It is possible that the sex of the candidate is a more significant factor in elections outside of the legislative arena as well as more significant in states which hold a more traditional set of values in regards to the role of women in society. This paper will focus on the effects of gender stereotyping in gubernatorial campaigns in light of contextual conditions in order to expand the research available on the electoral success of women in gubernatorial elections.

### **Concerns for Democracy**

When women do not have equal nor sufficient political power, the effects are experienced by society on many levels. The overarching concern regarding the under representation of women in elected office is the democratic cost to society as a whole. One point of agreement among “classic democratic” theorists is the “emphasis on popular participation in governing, either through an elaborate system of representation as favored by James Madison, or a direct and extensive involvement of all citizens, as suggested by Thomas Jefferson.” (Admundsen, 1971, p.131) By these standards, limited representation by women in government has direct implications concerning the legitimacy of the democratic system (Admundsen, 1971).

First, failure to fully incorporate women into the political office costs society the benefit of expertise women can bring to the job based on different socialization experiences of men and women (Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1994). Exclusion of half of the population from the political process denies society of the benefits that could be gained through employing intelligent and informed individuals who have been politically disarmed solely on the basis of sex (Mill, 1869; Amundsen, 1971).

Second, the lack of women running for political office causes the existence of an unrealized competitive potential among candidates (Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1994). Competitive elections are a characteristic of a democratic society (Fine, 2005). If women enter into electoral politics with the same intensity as men, elections would become more competitive simply by increasing the pool of qualified candidates (Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1994). This would also create the potential for an increase in the quality of leadership as voters would have more options from which to choose.

Third, a healthy democracy encourages full participation of its electorate (Admunsen, 1971). There is a widespread notion that a representative body should look like those it represents (Pitkin, 1967). Exclusion of a group from that body can give the impression that the group is not integral to the political process. According to Susan Carroll, the small number of women visible in government is a contributing factor to the belief that the system actually discourages meaningful participation by women (1994, 13). A citizenry that does not feel fully engaged in the political process violates yet another measure of democracy. An increase in women involved in the political process would most likely enhance participation by women at the mass level.

In terms of the benefits of women's expertise, increased competition, and mass participation, democratic institutions are compromised due to the under representation of women in political office.

### **Benefits of Representation by Women**

There are two types of representation which women provide by holding elective office: substantive representation and descriptive representation. Substantive representation by women

refers to the type of representation provided when a woman is elected under the assumption that she will “act for” the interests of women (Mezey, 1997 p. 258). Descriptive representation by women refers to the type of representation given by simply “standing for” women (Mezey, p.260).

Among the tenets of substantive representation is the belief that female elected officials will behave differently than male elected officials. They will have different policy priorities from male elected officials and make issues of concern to women top priorities (Mezey, 1994; Thomas, 1994). Analyses have shown that women will be better suited to provide representation on issues that are likely to have a more immediate and direct effect on significantly larger numbers of women than of men (Carroll, 1994; Mezey, 1994). Based on these findings, electing women to office is beneficial to society overall in terms of policy concerns that affect women (Mezey, 1994).<sup>2</sup>

Descriptive representation provides a governing body that looks more like America and lends support to the notion of equal opportunity within the system. Descriptive benefits include adding to the legitimacy of the system through inclusion, drawing upon more of the available political talent; thereby increasing competition, and providing women with positive role models (Mezey, 1994). According to the theory of descriptive representation, more women serving in government would stimulate greater participation among women at the mass level (Mezey, 1994).

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<sup>2</sup> It has been noted that women will pursue policy agendas dealing with issues pertaining to women, children, and families more often than men. It has been argued that women do not necessarily behave differently from men once in office. Still, female legislators have demonstrated the same levels of constituency service, lobbying, and policy making as male legislators. The presence of women in elected office has not led to any procedural changes in legislative activities although many see women occupying an “intermediate stage” while still holding the promise of procedural change in legislative bodies in the future. (Thomas, 1994)

Despite the steady increase of women in legislative offices of all types, the rate of increase for women in governorships has not been as consistent. The number of cases in which women have launched a gubernatorial campaign is small and, consequently, insufficient to draw the same conclusions drawn from studies of legislative elections. In order to explain the disparity between the sexes among political chief executives, it is necessary to look at elections in which women run from a contextual perspective to determine if and how gender is affecting the outcomes.

### **Research Design**

The gubernatorial elections of 1993 present an interesting starting point in this endeavor to explain which strategies by women have been successful and which ones have not when contending with gender stereotypes. In 1993, only two states held gubernatorial elections and in both states, a woman secured the nomination by one of the two major parties. In Virginia, the Democrats nominated Attorney General Mary Sue Terry as their candidate while in New Jersey, the Republicans nominated Christine Todd Whitman. This year is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, these elections are among the first to take place after 1992 which was dubbed “The Year of the Woman”, not only because of the gains made by women seeking political office, but also because most of these women ran “as women”, hoping to emphasize rather than disguise their differences from their male opponents (Dolan, 1998; Burrell, 1994; Plutzer and Zipp, 1996). Yet these gains affected women primarily in Congressional elections and not realized for those women seeking Governor’s seats that same year. Still, as there were only two races for Governor in 1993, and both pitted a woman against a man, it would be interesting to see if “The Year of the Woman” in Congress created the possibility for a “Year of the Woman” in



executive offices the following year. This research will provide a contrast to those analyses focusing on legislative gains that capitalized on gender issues.

Secondly, off year elections serve to diminish the effects of issues in the national spotlight, Congressional elections, or party influence from the top of the ticket as in presidential election years, making analysis of the actual campaign easier to decipher. With both women running at the top of their ticket at a time when no national elections were taking place, the “coattail effect” cannot be offered as an explanation to their success or loss.

Through media news records and other available documentation, this paper will explore the unfolding of gender stereotypes throughout these campaigns while considering specific contextual factors unique to each campaign. It is expected that gender stereotypes will be more likely to surface under certain conditions outside of the control of the candidate. I will show how gender stereotypes affected each candidate differently under the specific conditions of each campaign. I will then make comparisons based on the characteristics of these two women in particular to how women in general share similar traits and how these traits affect women’s advancement in political office.

This thesis will take on the following form: Chapter Two will provide a review of the current literature on the role of gender stereotyping in political campaigns and its implications for women seeking gubernatorial seats.

Chapter Three will examine the factors that might explain some of the variation in the contestation of gubernatorial elections by women and their electoral success. This chapter will provide for a more general assessment of the theme explored in Chapter Four. Specifically, chapter three will identify variables derived from the literature and examine the effects of each on all gubernatorial elections involving women from 1993 to 2005. These variables include

open seat opportunities, the state's political culture, the state's tradition of electing women, and party dominance within the state. An analysis of candidate experience is provided as well to identify if there are patterns related to levels of experience that appear to be beneficial to women candidates.

Chapter Four will provide the case studies of the 1993 gubernatorial campaigns of Mary Sue Terry and Christine Todd Whitman to round out and explain what the data in chapter three means in real elections. While quantitative analyses exhibit strong external validity, by themselves they offer little about the actual dynamics of campaigns featuring women candidates. For example, the direction and significance of a regression coefficient tells nothing about how an issue or theme was interjected into a campaign and how women candidates dealt with (or did not deal with) that particular campaign issue. In other words, the case study will provide the crucial context that regression analysis or cross tabulation cannot provide. The focus of the case studies is on if and how the same conditions analyzed empirically in Chapter Three applied in these two campaigns that were the first to take place in the post "Year of the Woman" era. These case studies will demonstrate how the interaction of state culture, party dominance, a state's tradition of electing women, and the experience of the candidate herself can produce expected or unexpected results.

Chapter Five will conclude with a summary of what can be learned from the 1993 elections and discuss how these lessons contribute to the existing literature on why gains for women in terms of governorships have been so difficult to achieve. By understanding which conditions are most favorable to women gubernatorial candidates through the empirical analysis, and how women best deal with gender stereotypes during the campaign, it may be possible to speculate on if and how women gubernatorial candidates can be more successful in the future.

By analyzing the role of gender in these two gubernatorial races, a clearer picture of the existing gender bias women face as candidates for this executive office will emerge. From combining the two case studies with the quantitative analysis, patterns are likely to emerge that will fill the gaps in the literature on the unique attributes of gubernatorial campaigns in which a woman faces a male opponent. This research will contribute to the understanding of the challenge women face in overcoming the “maleness” of executive office and perhaps further serve to speculate on how women can break the gender incumbency advantage to these offices and position themselves to be viewed as legitimate contenders in the races with national prominenc

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Introduction**

Changing social views concerning the role of women has contributed to the increase of the number of women seeking and winning political office in many respects. Yet women candidates are still likely to encounter obstacles throughout their campaigns as a result of candidate evaluations based on gender stereotyping. Widely held beliefs regarding appropriate sex roles produce various effects for women candidates depending upon the type of public office being sought. The tenacity of these beliefs can vary as well depending upon the location of the office sought.. This chapter provides an overview of the current literature about gender stereotyping and how it affects women candidates seeking elected offices at the legislative, judicial, and executive levels.

### **The Political Relevance of Gender Stereotypes**

Stereotypes are “a cognitive structure that contains a set of expectations about a certain group or category” (Kahn, 1996, p.4). They provide a means to process new information efficiently by relying on stored information regarding the group membership of the object at hand (Kahn, 1996). Often time, stereotypes are based on the social or physical characteristics of the object that is under evaluation as these are the most easily identifiable (Kahn, 1996). Stereotypes concerning race or sex are commonly used not only because this information is readily available in terms of what a candidate looks like

or their name in the case of women or Hispanics, but also because most people have strongly held beliefs about these groups.

In electoral politics, stereotypes based on sex are an accessible heuristic voters can use to make assessments about candidates often in lieu or in spite of substantive information about the individual (Koch, 2000). Voters may use gender stereotypes to make evaluations about candidates by using the sex of the candidate to infer his or her leadership abilities or ideological position just as they would use party labels to do so (Koch, 2000; Thompson and Steckenrider, 1998). Some research shows that evaluations based on perceived candidate qualities have become even more salient in making voting decisions than party labels (Alexander and Anderson, 1993). For an individual who is lacking the expertise necessary to seek out individuating information on candidates or is simply not interested enough to do so, gender stereotypes offer a quick remedy for inferring something about the candidates' ideology or position on the issues (Koch, 2000).

Ideas about appropriate roles for or qualities of men and women associated with their sex are the basis for gender stereotypes. The explanation of the use of gender stereotypes is rapidly replacing that of gender prejudice in the literature when explaining voters' reactions to women candidates (Leeper, 1991, Huddy and Terkison, 1993a, 1993b). Gender prejudice occurs when voters "hold a rigid set of beliefs (i.e. sex role orientations), and impute characteristics on a female candidate to her disadvantage" (Leeper, 1991, 248) resulting in an outright refusal to vote for a woman candidate simply because she is a woman. Most of the recent research on voter's attitudes towards women candidates points to the diminishing effect of gender prejudice (Carroll, 1994; Thompson

and Steckenrider, 1998; Darcy, Welch, and Clark, 1987) and focuses its attention much more heavily on the effects gender stereotypes (Dolan, 1998; Kahn, 1996; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a, 1993b). Gender stereotypes offer a slightly more sophisticated explanation concerning support for a woman candidate. It is one based on beliefs about gender, specifically how those beliefs relate to the appropriate role of the political office sought or the issues at hand. Employing gender stereotypes requires the voter to do some examination of the candidate to determine if he or she fits into a category for which they have assigned relevant attributes (Koch, 2000) yet imposes only minimal cognitive costs on the individual.

Gender stereotypes are the embodiment of attitudes towards women and men in regards to their specific attributes and their ideological orientation. Huddy and Terkildsen label these trait stereotypes and belief stereotypes (1994a). Trait stereotypes refer to personality qualities attributed to men and women whereas belief stereotypes refer to those which ascribe certain policy preferences and ideologies to each. Belief stereotypes are considered to be the more politically relevant of the two (1993a). For example, women are considered to be more Democratic and more liberal than men (1993a). Accordingly, using belief stereotypes, one would assume a woman candidate may be preferred if the most important issues at hand are considered to be best handled by liberals or Democrats, not just because she is a woman. Belief stereotypes are held about both men and women but Huddy and Terkildsen conclude that they affect only the female candidate, not the male candidate, thus presenting the woman candidate with an additional variable to be dealt with accordingly during her campaign (1993b).

Trait stereotypes had a greater overall effect on candidate perceptions (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a), but belief stereotypes are likely to have a greater influence when combined with the candidates declared partisanship. For example, belief stereotypes could be beneficial to Republican women in general elections, as their perceived liberal tendencies bring them closer to the ideological center and consequently closer to the average voter (Koch, 2000; McDermott, 1997) while when applied to Democratic women candidates, belief stereotypes tend to push them farther to the ideological left, thereby increasing the ideological distance between the candidate and the voter (Koch, 2000; McDermott, 1997).

### **Gender Stereotypes and the Campaign**

While stereotypes were once considered to be a negative obstacle, they have come to be regarded as a normal cognitive process, particularly in low information environments (Kahn, 1996). Gender stereotypes held by the public regarding particular policy issues are strong enough to prompt political parties to specifically recruit women candidates when the electoral issue environment is focused on so called “women’s issues” (Biersack and Hernson, 1994) as was the case in 1992, resulting in record gains for women in elective office. Political candidates have acknowledged this tendency among voters as well and often structure campaigns accordingly attempting to capitalize on these stereotypes.

Kahn observed that stereotypes held by the public can and do influence the central issues of a campaign (1996). A candidate might use his or her gender or that of his or

hers opponent in order to trigger stereotypes among the electorate if those stereotypes are likely to work in their favor (Kahn, 1996; Huddy and Terkildsen). For example, woman candidates may emphasize an area of perceived strength, such as education, as an important theme in the election. By stressing this area of strength when running against a male opponent, the candidate hopes to “prime” the electorate into evaluating her opponent based on his abilities in the same policy area rather than his perceived areas of strength (1996, 11).

In general, women are stereotyped with certain gender traits such as being more emotional, warmer, more expressive (Kennedy, 2003), more compassionate and more honest than men but not as well suited emotionally for politics (Alexander and Andersen, 1993). Women candidates are perceived by the public as better than men on “women’s issues” such as health care and education (Kennedy, 2003, Fox and Oxley, 2003; Rosenthal, ), helping the poor, consumer protection and the environment (Fox and Oxley, 2003) but as lacking credibility on such issues as the economy and budgeting (Weir, 1999) as well as law and order (Clift and Brazaitis, 2003), national security and foreign policy (Kennedy, 2003); policy areas considered to be with in the male domain (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993b). Thus, masculine traits are beneficial in order to succeed in these policy areas which are often associated with executive office. Huddy and Terkildsen have noted that especially in elections for national office, women run combative campaigns in which they emphasize “typically male qualities” such as their “toughness and aggressiveness” while men are strive to reach the same balance in similar campaigns by stressing their possession of “typically feminine traits” of being “sympathetic, kind, and accessible” (1993a, 120. See also Kahn, 1996). This



observation supports the idea that women have made considerable progress in claiming their right to hold elective office and that the attributes gained from their perceived inherently feminine traits are valuable and unique to government, yet it also suggests there is an appropriate place or role for women in electoral politics (Mueller, 1986). Gender stereotypes may no longer block women's entrance into elective office, but they constrain public attitudes in regards to women's areas of expertise and appropriate level of public office (Alexander and Andersen, 1993).

Gender stereotypes are further perpetuated through the media coverage of campaigns (Kahn, 1996). The amount of attention given to a candidate or issue influences the public perception of which aspects of the campaign are most important. Not all campaigns will necessarily be affected by gender stereotypes; however, the effects of news coverage are likely to be more influential (Kahn, 1996) in high profile races, such as those for Senate and Governor. The majority of the voters have very little, if any, personal interaction with the candidates and get most their election related information through media outlets such as television and newspapers. When these sources do not provide equitable coverage for men and women candidates, they are framing how the public views the candidate through content selection. How the media portrays women candidates is likely to be more influential to voters than how the candidate portrays herself throughout the campaign. (Kahn, 1996).

While studies have indicated that there is not much of a discrepancy in the quantity of media coverage of male and female candidates for governor (DeVitt ND; Kahn, 1996), coverage does vary qualitatively between women and men. Press coverage of candidates in governor's races created the impression that women were both less

electable and as less competitive than their men candidates (Kahn, 1996). A study of newspaper coverage suggested that male candidates were more prepared and more qualified to be governor than were female candidates (Devitt, ND). DeVitt also found newspapers to state the issue positions of men candidates or their record more often than those of women candidates. Men executive candidates were also more likely than women executive candidates to have their claims supported with evidence or reason. Newspaper reporters were found to consistently quote women candidates less substantively than men candidates (11). Women executive candidates were more likely to have their age, marital status, and children (or lack thereof) reported than were men candidates. At the same time, the media also focused more on the appearance, personality, and qualifications of women candidates in newspaper coverage (6). If a woman candidate's issue positions are unclear to the voters due to the substantive differences in press coverage given to men and women candidates, this may cause the voters to be uncertain as to whether or not the woman candidate is capable of holding office. Hence, media coverage which is not qualitatively equitable can affect the decision making process of the voters.

### **Gender Stereotypes and the Office of Governor**

The focus here is how gender stereotypes affect gubernatorial elections among various electoral conditions. The responsibilities associated with various offices linked to different branches and levels of government make it incumbent upon researchers to identify and analyze how gender stereotypes affect races for particular offices. The

effects of gender stereotypes may vary across offices and levels of government rendering blanket statements on the success rate of women candidates misleading. The complex nature of this issue means that, failure to focus on the particularities of a race may lead to careless generalization to all races where gender issues are present.

There has been an increasing body of research into the specific role of the gender stereotypes in gubernatorial elections (Barth and Ferguson, 2002; Leeper, 1991; Fox and Oxley, 2003). These studies show that while the perception of feminine traits neither hurts nor helps women in elections overall (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993b; Leeper, 1991; Mueller, 1986), the lack of masculine traits tends to put women at a disadvantage in gubernatorial races because voters prefer candidates with masculine traits for executive office (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a,b). In a study to test which personality traits are most important for politicians holding national and executive office showed that since politicians at higher levels of office are considered more likely to deal with military and economic issues, traits considered to be masculine in nature were considered most important for these offices (Huddy and Terklidsen, 1993b), while compassion issues, an area considered to be a typical female strength, were least likely to confront politicians in higher levels and types of office and thereby least important (1993b). This presents a built in obstacle for women to overcome when seeking a governor's seat against a male candidate.

Fox and Oxley observed the presence of gender stereotypes in candidate selection for statewide executive elections as well as candidate success. Furthermore, their analysis takes into consideration how variations among states might affect candidates differently (Fox and Oxley, 2003). Though their study includes all statewide executive

offices within a state, the findings show factors such as party dominance within a state, the political culture of the state, and the state's history of electing women are likely to affect whether or not women run at all in statewide executive elections and that the combination of these factors can affect the outcome of elections in which women do choose to run, particularly in races for masculine offices such as governorships (2003). This demonstrates the fact that external structural conditions of an election can temper or incite the presence of gender stereotypes within a campaign.

The gender disadvantages women face in gubernatorial campaigns among the voting public have been well documented. Research has found that gender stereotyping to be more prevalent in executive elections where the campaigns are usually centered on policy issues that correspond with stereotypical competencies of male and female candidates (Fox and Oxley, 2003). Even though respondents to Gallup polls have been "increasingly likely to claim they would vote for a woman regardless of the level of office (national or local) or her role (executive or legislative)" (Leeper, 1991, 249), there still are respondents who are not inclined to be so equitable. Surveys conducted among voters still indicate an inverse relationship between likely support for a "qualified woman" and the prestige of the office (Gallup, 1984, NWPC, 1987). Experimental data used to test for gender differences in support for women candidates among ascending levels of office demonstrates that overall support for women candidates among voters decreases as the level of office increases (Dolan, 1997). In an experimental study done by Adams (1975), he found voters significantly less willing to support a woman candidate for president, governor, or mayor of a large city than for comparable legislative offices (Mueller, 1986). As there is varying support for women candidates among different levels of office, it is

likely that perceived qualifications based on gender stereotypes affect races in which woman are seeking leadership positions rather than representative positions in a more challenging way. Gender stereotypes may brand women as having strengths more appropriate for legislative office and lacking those deemed necessary for executive office (Mueller, 1986). In order to counter stereotypical beliefs about their personal characteristics, women gubernatorial candidates focus much more on their personal traits than candidates for any other type of office (Kahn, 1996).

How women gubernatorial candidates most successfully contend with gender stereotypes is debated in the literature. Some research indicates that women candidates are most successful when they focus on the issues of their perceived strength (Iyengar, Valentino, Ansolabehere, and Simon, 1997) while other research finds the opposite to be true. A study of media messages of candidates in California's 1992 Senatorial races and 1994's gubernatorial race demonstrated an increase in support for women candidates when they dealt with issues such as education or sexual harassment and a decline in support when the focus turned to issues such as crime or the death penalty, which are stereotypically thought of as strengths for men candidates (Iyengar, Valentino, Ansolabehere, and Simon, 1997). Yet Leeper demonstrates in an experimental study that when women run for top-level offices, they are most successful when they emphasize their masculine traits because their feminine strengths will be inferred by voters (1991). He found support for two hypothetical gubernatorial candidates, one man and one woman, to be equal in masculine policy areas covered by a given political speech, yet the woman candidate rated better among the voters in the policy areas of education, health care, and caring for the poor even though these issues were not addressed (1991). Thus,

according to Leeper, women do not have to emphasize their feminine attributes when running for office; they will be inferred by the voters regardless. Yet what does remain constant in both studies is the evidence of stereotypical strengths and weaknesses associated with women gubernatorial candidates.

The office of governor requires a combination of qualities from the candidate, such as leadership abilities as well strength on issues like education, often resulting in the candidates seeking to eradicate stereotypes by stressing their competency in issue areas where they are typically regarded as weak (Kahn, 1996; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993a). While some research supports the idea that the governorship itself has been classified a masculine office as its duties correspond with policy areas which the public perceive to be of the masculine gender (Fox and Oxley, 2003; Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993b; Weir, 1998), other research finds the emphasis on education and health care in gubernatorial campaigns to be beneficial to women (Kahn, 1996). In fact, Kahn states that gender stereotypes will generally play a pervasive role in gubernatorial campaigns but gender stereotypes “will always produce more positive impressions of the female candidate” (1996, 106). This perhaps suggests women candidates must achieve a balance of feminine traits and masculine strengths in order to be successful in gubernatorial elections.

While it is accepted that the antiquated notion of ruling out a woman as a viable candidate based on sex alone, or gender prejudice among voters has virtually diminished completely (Dolan, 1997; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Leeper, 1991), as long as voters differentiate personality traits and policy strengths as being either masculine or feminine, gender bias will continue to exist in electoral politics. In high stakes elections this bias

can be exploited by using gender stereotypes to divert attention from the actual qualifications and expertise of the individual candidate. According to Koch, the greater the chance a candidate has of assuming office, the greater the effect of candidate gender on perceptions on ideological orientation becomes (2000).

The use of gender stereotypes as a cognitive shortcut is well documented (see, for example, Kahn, 1996). Gender stereotypes are pervasive in politics as the electoral arena is one of the few settings in which a woman and a man can compete directly (Bledsoe and Herring, 1990) and voters generally make decisions based on a limited amount of information; especially in gubernatorial campaigns as the importance and visibility of the office may prompt voters to form more detailed impressions of the candidates (Koch, 2000). Campaign strategists are aware of these gender stereotypes and as candidates do not run blindly against an unknown opponent, the sex of the opposition is undoubtedly factored into the strategy of the campaign (Huddy and Terkildsen, 1993b). The decision of whether to downplay or accentuate gender stereotypes depends upon the costs or benefits imposed upon the candidates and vary greatly depending on the circumstances surrounding the campaign. Gender stereotypes exist either latently or actively in the public mind making the raising of these stereotypes in a competitive campaign a convenient remedy to boost one candidates standing over the other.

Women still compete in and win gubernatorial elections with gender stereotypes present in campaigns, the media, and the minds of the electorate. However it is important not to let the end results of elections overshadow the effect of gender stereotypes throughout the campaign. Many women candidates go out of their way to battle gender stereotypes, particularly when running for higher levels of office (Huddy and Terkildsen,

1993b). A closer examination of the campaign process is essential to bring about a better understanding of the role of gender in gubernatorial elections.

Much of the literature on gender stereotyping in campaigns is based on how a sample of voters, generally college students (for example; Dolan, 1997; Leeper, 1991; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b) perceive hypothetical candidates running for different levels of office. While this gives some insight as to processing of gender stereotyping in the minds of the public, it is important to examine how real women candidates contend with gender bias in the electorate in real campaigns against men. Understanding the specifics of the role of gender in actual campaigns will help to solve the puzzle of how women win and lose races for governors in the face of gender stereotypes. The question becomes “how do actual women candidates balance the stereotypes associated with men, women, and the executive office during their campaigns for these highly coveted governor’s seats and how does this vary from one political environment to another?”

The existing body of research on the effect of gender stereotyping on elections in which a man and a woman compete for the same office will provide a platform for examining the gubernatorial elections in 1993 in New Jersey and Virginia. An empirical analysis of the correlates of the presence of women candidates and how successful those candidates are in gubernatorial elections provides for a general framework from which to study the campaign dynamics of specific gubernatorial elections. Both the campaigns of Christine Todd Whitman and Mary Sue Terry present case studies that are illustrative of how actual campaigns experience and address issues and themes that are related to those factors identified in the empirical analysis. Such an approach provides for a “real world”



analysis of gubernatorial campaigns that feature women candidates, allowing for a greater study of exactly how gender stereotyping manifests itself in a general election campaign.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Introduction

The current literature on women as political candidates supports the idea that women gubernatorial candidates are affected by gender stereotypes in both positive and negative ways. Yet the particulars as to how and why women gubernatorial candidates are advantaged or disadvantaged as a result of gender stereotypes remain largely unexplained. This gap in the literature can only be filled by studying the role of gender stereotypes in specific elections through a case study approach. The analysis of factors that will more or less likely explain the contestation of gubernatorial elections by women and – more crucially - the factors that explain the electoral success of women candidates in these elections will provide for a general framework from which one can analyze the dynamics of gender stereotyping in actual campaigns in the following chapter.

This chapter uses a quantitative analysis similar to the one used by Richard L. Fox and Zoe M. Oxley in “Gender Stereotyping in State Executive Elections: Candidate Selection and Success” (2003) to uncover the conditions under which women candidates are most successful in gubernatorial elections. Fox and Oxley examined all executive offices and focused on contextual factors while the focus of this analysis is on gubernatorial elections only and it also considers candidate specific traits. This analysis also seeks to determine if certain experiences or qualifications render some women more successful than others.

Two types of variables are used to determine if women are likely to run for governorships: contextual and candidate specific. Contextual factors (factors outside of

the control of the candidate) included in this analysis are whether or not the seat is open, the state's tradition of electing women, the level of party competition within a state, and the state's political culture. Contextual factors surrounding an election are likely to affect whether or not women run for a particular seat. Arguably, certain conditions within a state will produce more women candidates than others, possibly demonstrating a systematic variation across states in the likelihood of women contesting gubernatorial elections. Candidate specific variables include prior campaign and office-holding experience. These variables will help to identify the most likely pool from which women candidates are drawn and if this prior experience has any significant effect on the success of women as gubernatorial candidates.

### **Data, Hypotheses, Methods, and Findings**

The political landscape of a state is likely to have an effect on whether or not a woman seeks her party's nomination to become a gubernatorial candidate. Given the effects of incumbency mentioned in Chapter One, one would expect to find women more likely to run in open seat elections rather than in those which they would face an incumbent governor. Second, women might more likely run in those states that have a high percentage of elected women in the state government than in states which do not as this demonstrates a willingness on the part of voters to support women candidates. Given the observation that women are perceived to be more liberal and more Democratic (regardless of party affiliation) than men, one might expect to find women more likely to run for governor in states that have a tendency toward electing Democratic candidates.

And, one might expect to find women less likely to run in gubernatorial campaigns in states that have a traditionalistic state culture regardless of the state's party dominance.

These propositions suggest four specific hypotheses that can be tested:

H1: Women are more likely to run in gubernatorial elections that are open seat contests than in elections that feature an incumbent governor.

To test this relationship, all gubernatorial elections between 1993 and 2005 (N=153) have been coded as either "open" or "not open". Gubernatorial elections without an incumbent governor running (open) are coded as 1 and those with an incumbent governor running (not open) are coded as 0. During the period under analysis, there were six races in which a woman ran as the incumbent governor.<sup>3</sup> In order to separate the effects of incumbency and women running in "not open" races, these six cases have been excluded from this analysis.

H2: Women are more likely to run in gubernatorial elections in states with a high percentage of female state legislators than in states with a low percentage of female state legislators.

To test this relationship, the variable "women in state legislature" is determined by computing the percentage of women in the given state's legislature in the year of the

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<sup>3</sup> The six cases in which women ran as incumbents are Texas Gov. Ann Richards in 1994, New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman in 1997, New Hampshire Gov. Jeanne Shaheen in 1998 and 2000, Arizona Gov. Jane Dee Hull in 1998, and Delaware Gov. Ruth Ann Minner in 2004.

election (percentages obtained from CAWP website). This measure is used to test the general willingness of voters in a state to support women candidates, and denotes the cumulative progress that each state has made in electing women to political offices over time. A high percentage of women in state legislatures demonstrates that voters have the opportunity to vote for women candidates with some frequency thereby perhaps diminishing the “novelty” effect of a woman in a high profile election. Said differently, voters who elect more women to one type of political office may feel more comfortable in casting their ballots for women for other political offices.

H3: Women are more likely to run in gubernatorial elections in states that have a higher percentage of Democratic members in state legislatures than in states that have a higher percentage of Republican members in state legislatures

To test this relationship, the variable “state party dominance” is determined by the percentage of Democrats elected in both chambers of the state legislature in the year of the given gubernatorial election. This variable is used in order to provide a measure of the underlying partisan tendencies of a particular state and to measure changes in those tendencies over time.

H4: Women are less likely to run in states that have a traditionalistic culture than in states that do not.

To test this relationship, a dummy variable was created with states coded as 0 for non-traditionalistic political culture and 1 for traditionalistic political culture. This classification is derived from Daniel Elazar’s *American Federalism: A View From the States* which groups states into three categories based on similarities in philosophies regarding the role of government in society: traditionalistic, moralistic, or individualistic. Traditionalistic states are perceived as protectors of an elite power structure; voters in these states tend to support candidates who are likely to maintain the status quo which likely influences whether or not a woman considers running for an executive office. Because the hypothesized relationship expects to find women less likely to run in traditionalistic states and there is no hypothesized difference between moralistic and individualistic states, the latter two are combined under the classification “non-traditionalistic.”

In order to test these hypotheses, a multivariate analysis is conducted. As the dependent variable is dichotomous, logistic regression was used to estimate the model. Results of the logistic regression are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1: Likelihood of a woman candidate in a gubernatorial contest 1993-2005**

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>
Open seat	.868**	.398
Tradition of electing women	.040	.031
Democratic Party Dominance	3.824***	1.386
State Political Culture	-1.195**	.578
Constant	-4.050***	1.135

*Note:* Dependent variable denotes whether a woman contested a gubernatorial election (1= woman candidate contested election, 0= no woman candidate).

\*\*\* p < .01; \*\* p < .05

Table 1 demonstrates a significant, positive relationship between open seat elections and the presence of a woman candidate. However this does not indicate a trend for women candidates; it merely suggests that women are more likely to run for an open

seat than as a challenger. Even though term limits for governors regularly create open seat opportunities for women candidates, these seats still fail to attract large numbers of women to enter gubernatorial races. Since 1993, there have been 72 gubernatorial elections with no incumbent candidate, creating 144 open seat opportunities for Republicans and Democrats, yet only 26 of these candidates were women (5 Republicans, 21 Democrats.). Women are more likely to enter gubernatorial contests which are open seat elections although open seat gubernatorial elections are not necessarily likely to have a woman candidate running; only 34.7% of open seat gubernatorial elections since 1993 have had a woman as a major party candidate. (See Table 2)

**Table 2: Women candidates in an open seat gubernatorial election 1993-2005**

	Not Open	Open	Total
No woman	64 80.0%	47 65.3%	111
One woman	16 20.0%	25 34.7%	41
Total	80 100.0%	72 100.00%	152

*Note:* Dependent variable denotes whether the seat was open.

Table includes Republican and Democratic candidates only.

The independent variable is intended to signify “at least one woman candidate”. However, since only one election saw two women compete against one another (Hawaii 2002), labeling the variable “one woman” better describes the majority of the cases.

The relationship between the tradition of electing a woman and the presence of a woman in a gubernatorial election did not achieve statistical significance. It was hypothesized that women were more likely to run in gubernatorial elections in states with a high percentage of female state legislators than in states with a low percentage of female state legislators. Women did not appear to be more likely to run for governor in states that have a high percentage of women in the state legislature. There are many

possible explanations for differences between the number of women in legislative seats and the likelihood of a woman in a governor's race; none of which can be deduced simply from this analysis. But what one can deduce from this data is that there is a noticeable and distinct difference between women as members of a representative body and women as candidates for executive office. This only stresses the need for further specific research regarding women as gubernatorial candidates. Assumptions based on the success of women candidates at the legislative level are misleading when attempting to explain why there are not more women running for governor's seats. It is easy to dismiss this as unwillingness on the part of women to enter these contests, however this explanation is premature given the limited amount of research on this subject. There are many other possible (and probable) factors that can only be tapped into by focusing exclusively on gubernatorial contests.

State party dominance is statistically significant and supports the hypothesis that women candidates are more likely to run in states that are more Democratic in their partisan tendencies. There are several possible explanations as to why women gubernatorial candidates are more likely to be found in these states. Since women in public office are more likely to be Democrats (CAWP, 2006a), a state with a strong presence by the Democratic party in state government might have a larger pool of women in positions considered "stepping stones" to higher office from where to recruit. Also, it is likely that, as women are perceived as more liberal than men, regardless of party membership, Republican women might expect to find greater support from voters in Democratic leaning states. Additionally, as Democrats are more closely associated with "women's issues," women, who are presumed to represent "women's issues," might



believe they will benefit from the prominence that gender-based issues have gained in recent elections and therefore may be more likely to seek opportunities in states that are more Democratic-inclined in their voting patterns.

State political culture was negative and statistically significant demonstrating a diminished presence of women in gubernatorial elections in states with a traditionalistic state culture. This relationship comes as no surprise. As traditionalistic states arguably hold the most conservative views on the roles of government and women, this environment will not likely to produce women candidates for an executive office where a woman would govern exclusively as head of state and not as part of a legislative body. Gender stereotypes held by voters in these states are likely to produce overwhelmingly negative effects for women candidates at any level but especially for those contesting governor seats. This relationship may tap into the primary obstacle faced by women gubernatorial candidates as a whole: almost one third of states have been classified as having a traditionalist state culture. As these states lack a strong presence of women in gubernatorial contests, men continue to dominate as the natural candidates in the political arena. The descriptive benefits women candidates stand to gain from high participation of women candidates across the board continue to be stifled due to the virtual exclusion of women candidates in these states. Until women candidates begin to enter gubernatorial contests with the same regularity in all states – regardless of political culture – women candidates will remain a minority group, contesting only those elections deemed winnable based on by gender rather than experience and qualifications.

The previous analysis focused on women contesting gubernatorial elections. Perhaps a more crucial question is the extent to which women are successful in getting

elected. To examine this question, the same set of independent variables was used to predict the dependent variable, which measured whether a woman candidate won the election. This variable was coded as 1 for women candidates winning the election and 0 if women candidates were defeated. Again, logistic regression was used to estimate the model. Results are presented in Table 3

**Table 3: Success of women candidates in gubernatorial contests 1993-2005**

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>SE</b>
Open seat	1.893	1.205
Tradition of electing women	.014	.063
Democratic Party Dominance	-5.780**	2.911
State Political Culture	1.018	1.257
Constant	-.039	2.305

*Note:* Dependent variable denotes whether a woman won a gubernatorial election (1= woman candidate won election, 0= no woman candidate did not win election).

\*\*\* p < .01; \*\* p < .05

In spite of the evidence suggesting that women are more likely to run under certain conditions, in general these same variables did not predict whether women were successful or not in being elected governor. In fact the only variable that achieved significance, the party dominance variable, shows a relationship in the opposite direction to the one found when determining whether or not a woman runs in a gubernatorial election. Thus, while the more Democratic a state is in its partisan tendencies appears to create a more hospitable environment for women contesting gubernatorial races, the less Democratic (or more Republican) states seem to favor women candidates running in and winning elections.

There are several factors that might explain the strong relationship between the success of women gubernatorial candidates and the percentage of Republicans in the state legislature. For one, the incumbency advantage in state legislative elections is so strong

that the partisan composition of legislature changes only incrementally over time. Therefore, if a state's legislature is dominated by one party – in this case the Republican Party - it is possible that voters in that state may be more likely to support the candidate of the opposition party in order to achieve a divided government and limit the power of either party (Fiorina, 1992). Examining how these Republican dominated states voted in presidential elections might shed light on this finding as well. The presidential vote of a state could be a leading indicator of partisan trends and might also detect differences between voting for legislative and executive offices. Of the ten states that elected women governors since 1992, six of them supported the Democratic presidential candidate in at least two of the three Presidential elections in spite of a strong presence of Republicans in the state legislature. Still, given that the number of women entering gubernatorial contests is small to begin with, it is difficult to make generalizations based on these data. The fact that the bulk of women gubernatorial candidates entered contests in states that had a predominately Democratic state legislature and lost the general election does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that women candidates will experience any greater chance for success in states that have a predominately Republican state legislature. This finding simply stresses the utility of studying the context of individual elections using a case study approach to identify those factors which contribute to the success or failure of women gubernatorial candidates.

Now that it has been determined that these contextual variables have minimal effect – if any at all – on the outcome of gubernatorial elections for women, the next logical step is to examine the variables which are unique to the candidate and the election. The first of these factors is the experience of the woman candidate. As stated in

Chapter Two, voters typically perceive women candidates as lacking in experience or to be less qualified than their male opponent, regardless of the woman's record as a candidate or elected official. Consequently, this makes it incumbent upon the woman candidate to "prove" her abilities, competence and qualifications to voters. As questions concerning qualifications for political office are a common stereotype that women candidates face, it would be interesting to see if any patterns emerge when examining the actual experience of women candidates: Do women candidates lack experience overall and are those with more experience and qualifications more successful at winning gubernatorial elections?

To address these questions, the subsequent analysis examines variation in political experience from three perspectives: campaign, office holding, and prior experience in a "masculine" office. Masculine offices are defined by Fox and Oxley as those that have duties corresponding with stereotypically male policy areas such as finance and crime (2003). The masculine offices held by women candidates in this study include Attorney General, Treasurer, Auditor, and Insurance Commissioner. This particular experience warrants separate consideration because one of the obstacles to the governorship is the perception by voters that this office corresponds with policy areas typically associated with masculine strengths. Therefore, one might expect to find that women who had previously held other masculine offices to have proven themselves as more qualified candidates for governor. A close look at the experience of women candidates will help determine which type of experience, if any, best result in success for women gubernatorial candidates. Table 4 shows the relationship between these experience variables and whether women candidates were elected or not.

**Table 4: Success as gubernatorial candidate based on prior campaign experience**

	<b>No statewide experience</b>	<b>Statewide campaign experience - lost</b>	<b>Statewide campaign experience - won</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Win</b>	2 13.3%	2 28.6%	6 30.0%	10 23.8%
<b>Lose</b>	13 86.7%	5 71.4%	14 70.0%	32 76.2%
<b>Total</b>	15 100%	7 100%	20 100%	42 100%

*Note:* Dependent variable denotes whether candidate won her election or not  
Table includes Republican and Democratic candidates only.  
Statewide includes any election in which all voters within the state had an opportunity to vote for the candidate.

+Includes women candidates for Lt. Governor who ran as part of a joint ticket

Most women enter gubernatorial races with at least some prior statewide campaign experience (whether successful or not) yet over a third of all female gubernatorial candidates in the study had no statewide campaign experience. The clear majority (60%) of successful women candidates had statewide campaign experience. However, it should still be noted that of the 20 women with statewide campaign experience, the majority (14 out of 20, or 70%) were defeated. Based on the data in Table 4 it is apparent that prior campaign experience does not necessarily enhance a candidate's chance of winning, only of running or perhaps being nominated by her party.

Women, like men, enter gubernatorial races with varying degrees of prior office holding experience and, like men, have varying degrees of success. Table 5 shows the relationship between whether or not women candidates held prior elected office and electoral success. Results show that women can and do win gubernatorial elections with little or no office holding experience but it is from the highest levels of statewide office

that most gubernatorial candidates emerge – almost half (47.6%) of all women candidates between 1993 and 2005 previously held a statewide office.

**Table 5: Prior office holding experience of women gubernatorial candidates**

	<b>No statewide experience</b>	<b>State legislative (State House or Senate)</b>	<b>Mayor, US House, Statewide appointed<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Elected to statewide office</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Win</b>	1 33.3%	1 7.7%	2 33.3%	6 30%	10 23.8%
<b>Lose</b>	2 66.6%	12 92.3%	4 66.6%	14 70%	32 76.2%
<b>Total</b>	3 100%	13 100%	6 100%	20 100%	42 100%

*Note:* Dependent variable denotes whether the candidate won her election or not.

Independent variable denotes highest level of office held by candidate.

<sup>a</sup> Women with experience in offices such as city councils or county boards are coded 0 - “no experience.”

<sup>b</sup> Includes candidates who served as Lt. Governor elected on a ticket with Governor.

Whether or not a candidate held a “masculine” office did not seem to have an effect on success as the ten winners were evenly split between those who did and those who did not have experience in a masculine office. Of those candidates who had held a least one “masculine” office 27.8% were winners, compared to 20.8% who had not held a masculine office. Here the experience variable has at best shown that the majority of female candidates enter gubernatorial contests with high level, executive office holding experience. However, a sentiment appears to exist among voters who deem women – regardless of political experience – as less qualified than their male opponents.

**Table 6: Prior experience in a "masculine" office**

	<b>No experience in "masculine" office</b>	<b>Held at least one "masculine" office</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Win</b>	5 20.8%	5 27.8%	10 23.8%
<b>Lose</b>	19 79.2%	13 72.2%	32 76.2%
<b>Total</b>	24 100%	18 100%	42 100%

*Note:* Dependent variable denotes whether candidate won her election.

The fact that no patterns readily emerge in the analysis regarding state culture, partisan trends, tradition of electing women, and a woman's prior office holding experience, elected or otherwise, to explain success or failure of women gubernatorial candidates suggests that it is, in fact, the context of a campaign that has the greatest effect on election outcomes. This leads the discussion back to the question of how gender stereotypes affected the gubernatorial campaigns of 1993 in Virginia and New Jersey. While there are similarities between these two states in terms of a small number of women serving in the state legislature and both states being relatively Democratic at the time, there are more differences between the elections. The year 1993 gives us an opportunity to examine an open seat and incumbent governor election, a woman Democrat and a woman Republican, a traditionalistic and a non-traditionalistic state culture, and a woman who won the nomination by virtue of climbing the political ladder and a relative political neophyte. These differences will provide an interesting comparison between what the data above indicates and how it applies to the specifics of real world campaigns. Hopefully it will also shed light on those factors that affect the

electoral prospects of women in gubernatorial elections that a quantitative analysis – by itself – cannot illuminate.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Introduction**

The conditions surrounding gubernatorial elections vary from one state to the next, rendering it difficult to make broad generalizations regarding the overall success of women candidates. Still, patterns do begin to emerge when particular elements of the context surrounding elections are looked at through a systematic analysis. The previous chapter provided the empirical analysis that will serve as a framework from which to identify those factors which account for variation in success of women candidates since 1993; a period during which being a woman was less of a liability in running for public office than it had been in the past. However, this analysis presumes women candidates behave similarly in gubernatorial contests and that the campaign renders little difference on the outcome. Even if one accepts that female gubernatorial candidates share what is still considered to be a unique attribute (their gender) which outwardly separates them from the overall pool of gubernatorial candidates, one must also acknowledge that female candidates, like male candidates, must run effective campaigns to convince voters that they are more qualified than their opponents for the job. But women regularly enter campaigns with a qualification deficit because voters are likely to have initially evaluated them as less qualified than male candidates based on widely held gender stereotypes well before campaigns get underway. Therefore, women must prove to be more qualified than their male opponents to serve in what is considered a masculine office. Still, women do run in and win gubernatorial elections. Clearly it is not gender in and of itself that costs

women elections, but how they contend with gender stereotypes throughout their campaigns that contributes to their success or failure as candidates.

### **The Study**

The 1993 campaigns of Mary Sue Terry and Christine Todd Whitman are interesting cases studies because they mark the genesis of this new pattern of women contesting gubernatorial elections. These cases present an opportunity to examine two gubernatorial contests in which a woman opposed a man without voters in individual states focusing on a high profile national election. Both campaigns took place during the year following the “Year of the Woman”; a year in which a record number of women were elected to political office. Whether or not the benefits of the “Year of the Woman” experienced by women seeking congressional seats in 1992 extend to executive, statewide seats in subsequent years will be explored through these two elections.

By examining those gubernatorial campaigns in which a woman ran against a man, the conditions under which gender stereotypes are likely to surface can be more easily identified when compared with conducting a quantitative analysis. This chapter will examine two campaigns – those of Terry and Whitman – in an effort to further understand how each campaign specifically coped with questions raised concerning the abilities or fitness for office. Arguably, these are the questions or concerns that made it more difficult for women candidates in the past to succeed in gubernatorial elections. How Terry and Whitman attempt to prove their fitness for office to voters will vary accordingly with the context of each election. A comparison of two quite different states – in terms of political history, state culture, ideology – will further build on the findings

of Chapter Three with respect to the conditions and context that contribute toward the electoral success of women candidates for governor.

### **Data and Methods**

The specific contextual factors examined in this chapter are the political culture of Virginia and New Jersey, the partisan leanings of each state, and each state's record on electing women to political office. The specific campaign/candidate factors include Whitman's and Terry's partisanship, prior electoral success, and experience in public office. Of course these factors are not addressed directly in the campaign, nor does a variable like "state culture" exert influence on the campaign in and of itself. Rather, the prevailing state culture will manifest itself in a campaign through the types of issues that are raised and questions regarding the candidate's ability or qualifications to handle those issues. How a woman candidate presents her position on the salient issues of the campaign in light of contextual factors is likely to significantly influence the outcome of the election.

Of greatest importance to the context of statewide campaigns is the state's political culture. The state political culture typology is used as an indicator of public attitudes and beliefs regarding the role of government in society. While it is likely that women will be subject to varying degrees of prejudice among voters based on gender stereotypes within any state's political culture, the negative effects are likely to be the strongest in states that are determined to have a traditionalistic state culture. Traditionalistic states have a tendency to embrace the status quo and demonstrate a desire to protect the elite power structure which has always been dominated by men. Stereotypes held by voters as a whole such as perceptions of women as being outsiders

and being more liberal than men in the political realm are likely to be stronger in traditionalistic states than in non traditionalistic states. The empirical analysis did not find traditional state culture to be a statistically significant determinant of success for a woman gubernatorial candidate, but the overall lack of women governors in traditionalistic states speaks to the contrary: since 1993, there have been only seven elections in the fifteen “traditionalist” states in which a woman has run as a major party gubernatorial candidate and women were elected in just two<sup>4</sup>. In the cases under consideration, Virginia is classified as a traditionalist state and New Jersey as a non traditionalist state<sup>5</sup>. Given the culturally conservative nature of traditionalistic states, gender stereotypes are likely to be a greater obstacle to women being elected statewide in Virginia than in New Jersey.

The next contextual factor considered in this chapter is the political party dominance within each state. In the empirical analysis in the preceding chapter, party dominance was determined by computing the percentage of Democratic state representatives in both chambers of the state legislature. In the case studies that follow, a broader definition of party dominance is used in order to get a better indication of where the Democrats within a state fall on a liberal/conservative continuum that cannot be inferred from simply knowing which party controls the state house. In other words, in 1993, Virginia may have had a higher percentage of Democrats in the state legislature than New Jersey, but because state politics vary from one state to the next, this fact in and of itself gives no indication of how conservative or liberal those Democrats in office are.

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<sup>4</sup> Janet Napolitano (D) was elected Governor of Arizona in 2002 and Kathleen Blanco (D) was elected governor of Louisiana in 2003.

<sup>5</sup> According to Elazar’s state political typology, New Jersey is classified as a Moralistic state, however for the purpose of this thesis, states are evaluated as either “traditionalistic” or “non-traditionalistic”.

Therefore, comparing one statewide election to another along similarities in party affiliation may be misleading. A better comparison between states might be how each state voted in the most recent presidential election. Because women candidates are perceived to be more liberal than male candidates, a Democratic woman in a Democratic dominated state is likely to face more obstacles as a candidate than a Republican if those Democrats in that state are conservative, especially on cultural issues. This may help to explain the finding in the previous chapter that indicated that women in more Democratic states are not as successful as women in less Democratic states.

Finally, a state's record of electing women to political office indicates whether or not there is a willingness on behalf of voters in that state to support women candidates. The empirical analysis in the previous chapter used the percentage of women in the state legislature as an indicator of a state's willingness to support women candidates for statewide office. However, no significant relationship was found between the presence of women in the state legislature and the presence or success of women gubernatorial candidates in that state - further stressing the fact that findings regarding the success of women candidates in legislative elections should not be generalized to women in executive elections. To get a fuller picture of the overall success of women in Virginia and New Jersey, each case study below includes an overview of the women who have served in each state in either an executive or federal capacity. The level of inclusion women have experienced overall in political office in the past is likely to affect voter perceptions regarding a woman candidate's fitness for office in the future. An obstacle women often face in contesting high profile elections is the simple fact that no other woman has held that office before them (Clift and Brazaitis, 2000). Even though most

states have not yet had a woman Governor, perhaps if women have been elected to other executive or high profile offices (such as Attorney General, Treasurer, or to the U.S. House or Senate) in a given state, the glass ceiling that women experience in politics would at least be cracked, possibly enhancing the prospects of a woman winning a governor's seat in the future. In other words, descriptive benefits from women in any high level political office in a state might increase the chance of success for women in gubernatorial elections down the road.

The contextual factors surrounding an election are for the most part beyond the control of the candidates and changes in these factors occur slowly, if at all, over time. However, the experience women candidates bring to a gubernatorial election varies depending upon the individual. Candidate experience is just as likely as contextual factors to affect how gender stereotyping occurs in the campaign. Gender stereotypes are more likely to be used by voters when there is little known about the candidate. As gubernatorial elections are generally well covered by the news media, the name recognition or political celebrity of the candidate is likely to be more relevant. The type of offices previously held by a woman candidate or even the visibility of her previous elections will likely affect how gender stereotypes would factor into the campaign. Similarly, the strength or effectiveness of gender stereotypes should vary accordingly with previous experience as well. This is a crucial point in determining how pervasive stereotypes regarding women candidates are: Do women candidates with a proven record experience less gender stereotyping in their campaigns than women who do not have prior political experience? If prior experience lessens the effects of gender stereotyping, Mary Sue Terry should have experienced low levels of gender stereotyping in her

campaign and Christine Todd Whitman should have experienced high levels of gender stereotyping in hers.

Experience alone is not likely to convince voters that a candidate is qualified to be elected governor. How the candidate stands on political issues will matter as well.

Gubernatorial elections are often high profile events in which issues are raised by voters and candidates and debated frequently in the months leading up to the election. If candidates do not have well defined positions on issues such as crime, the economy, or education, and makes those positions known to the voters, they run the risk of allowing their opponents to define their issue positions for them. For a woman candidate running against a male opponent, this is particularly important. If a woman's issue positions are not well known, her opponent has the opportunity to benefit from gender stereotyping by priming voters on issue areas in which women are typically regarded as weak. For example, if a woman candidate does not have a specific policy position on how she would deal with crime, her opponent might claim that she does not have a policy at all and will therefore be weak on crime – an assumption voters may have already made about the woman candidate, but that has now been reinforced by her opponent.

Experienced candidates are likely to have more clearly defined issue positions either through prior elections or the visibility of previous offices held than inexperienced candidates. Therefore, experienced women candidates might encounter less gender stereotyping assuming their prior experience helped make their issue positions well known among voters.

An analysis of the contextual factors mentioned in the above paragraphs in both the Virginia and New Jersey election and how those factors interacted with Terry's and

Whitman's experience will highlight ways in which gender stereotypes affect gubernatorial elections regardless of whether or not gender issues are implicitly raised by the candidates themselves. Based on the findings in Chapter Three regarding the contextual factors of each state, it is expected that gender stereotypes would have been a greater obstacle in Terry's campaign in Virginia than in Whitman's campaign in New Jersey - in spite of Terry's office holding experience. In the rest of this chapter, a broader discussion of each state's political culture, as well as the factors leading up to the 1993 gubernatorial election, are discussed. It is likely that both women dealt with gender stereotypes, albeit different from one another.

### **Analysis and Findings**

#### **Mary Sue Terry – Virginia**

In Virginia, the Democrats dominated both the executive and legislative branches for the twelve years preceding Mary Sue Terry's bid for the governorship. In 1989, Virginia voters elected the nation's first black governor, Democrat Douglas Wilder. In 1993, 53 percent of the members of the Virginia House of Delegates were Democrats. Yet on the national level Democrats were falling out of favor – an enduring trend evident in most of the southern states (Black and Black, 2002; Edds and Morris, 1999). In 1992, Virginia's Electoral College votes went to Republican George H.W. Bush. Bill Clinton's election and subsequent governing indicated to voters in the south that there was no longer a difference between traditional "Southern Democrats" and the national Democratic Party. In spite of campaigning as a moderate to conservative Democrat – particularly on social issues, Clinton was perceived to govern as a liberal once in office.



Many culturally conservative voters were opposed to Clinton's position regarding homosexuals serving in the military. Even those voters in the northern Virginia suburbs who were socially liberal were dismayed by the Democrats as a result of Clinton's middle class tax increases. Furthermore, Virginia's voters were growing weary of the highly visible bickering between the states two top Democrats, Governor Wilder and U.S. Senator Charles Robb (Edds and Morris, 1999). In spite of the strong Democratic presence in elected offices throughout the state, voters seemed to be disenchanted with the party, making it increasingly difficult for Democrats to win in Virginia, perhaps even more so for female Democrats such as Terry.

Very few women had represented Virginia in either state or national office at the time of Terry's campaign. In 1993, women comprised only 12.1 percent of the state legislature, representing 42<sup>nd</sup> place nationally in terms of female representation in the legislature (CAWP 2005). It was not until 1992 when Virginia elected its first woman to the United States House of Representatives. Mary Sue Terry became the first, and to date, only woman elected to a statewide office in Virginia when she won her election for Attorney General in 1985.<sup>6</sup>

Mary Sue Terry came from a politically active family yet she ascended through the political ranks of the Democratic Party by contesting elections early in her political career. She won her first election in 1977 when she ran for a seat in Virginia's House of Delegates. She served as a state delegate until she entered the Attorney General's race and became Virginia's first female Attorney General -- only the second woman in the nation to be elected to Attorney General and the first Democratic woman<sup>7</sup>. She was

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<sup>6</sup>Judy Jagdmann was appointed to Attorney General in 02/05 to fill a vacancy.

<sup>7</sup> The first woman elected as Attorney General was Arlene Violet, a Republican in Rhode Island in 1984.

subsequently reelected to a second term in 1989. In 1993, Terry resigned her position as Attorney General so that she could contest the governor's election and devote her energies to campaigning full time<sup>8</sup>. At that point in her political career, Terry had never lost an election. She had full support of the state Democratic party and polls indicated that she had a 29 point lead over any prospective Republican candidates (Edds and Morris, 1999).

Following the Republican convention, George Allen emerged as the Republican candidate. Allen had served in the Virginia House of Delegates from 1983 to 1991. He won a special election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1991 where he served until 1993. Allen had much less experience than Terry with regard to both statewide campaigning and office holding experience; still, he was well known simply for being the son of a famous football coach. Terry had much more statewide campaigning and office holding experience than Allen, making this case all the more interesting to determine whether or not her experience and record as a candidate minimized the role gender played in her campaign.

In spite of having previous statewide success in Virginia, Terry's issue positions remained virtually unknown to Virginia's voters when she entered the governor's race in 1993. This is not surprising - Attorney General electoral campaigns are typically low information events, likely resulting in increased candidate name recognition and demonstrable statewide electability for the winner. Terry's election to Attorney General helped her become a contender for the Governor's office, but she still faced the challenge of defining herself on the issues before Allen had a chance to do it for her. Terry was

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<sup>8</sup> Virginia holds an open seat governors election every four years as a result of term limits which allow a governor to serve only one consecutive term.

vulnerable to gender stereotyping because she did not present voters with clearly defined issue positions.

Gender stereotyping factored into Terry's campaign in both direct and indirect ways. The top political issue in the state in 1993 was crime<sup>9</sup>. As mentioned in Chapter two, research suggests that crime is considered a masculine issue and is best handled by male candidates. Women are often perceived to be weaker than men on this issue even if their opponents lack a specific plan or policy for dealing with crime. Terry's campaign cornerstone issue was a proposed five day waiting period to purchase a handgun as a means by which to combat crime in Virginia. By demonstrating that she was as a candidate - and would be as governor - tough on crime, she attempted to deflect any criticism that she might encounter regarding her strength on this issue. Even though a waiting period was popular among most Virginians, Allen appeared even tougher with his proposed "no parole" policy to curb crime in Virginia. He discredited Terry on crime by pointing to increased crime rates during her tenure as Attorney General. He told voters that crime had gone up in Virginia under Terry's watch even though the increase in crime rates had been a nationwide trend. He referred to her as the "state's top law officer"<sup>10</sup>, attempting to link her to the crime problem when in fact, as Attorney General, she had virtually nothing to do with crime rates.

The crime issue was difficult for Terry. She had to overcome both gender stereotypes and assumptions about Democrats as less effective than Republicans on crime. Furthermore, as a Democrat, she could not have taken a position such as "no

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<sup>9</sup> "The 1993 Virginia Governors Race Results From An Exclusive C&E Post-Election Poll; Yes Virginia, Issues and Images Both Count in Politics." Joe E. Walker, in *Campaigns and Elections*, December 1993/January 1994.

<sup>10</sup> "VA Candidates Compete for Tough-on-Crime Role; Allen, Terry Promise Tighter Parole Policies." John F. Harris, *Washington Post*, July 21, 1993.

parole” as it would likely be unpopular with African American voters, a demographic she depended on for a high voter turnout. In this case it is easy to see how being a Democrat made it more difficult for Terry as a candidate to contend with the most salient issue in the election.

Still, Terry’s experience is likely to have helped her remain competitive with Allen on most other issues where women candidates without a political record might have found it more difficult. Neither candidate presented any specific proposals for dealing with the economy. The main differences between Allen and Terry was that Allen made a “no new taxes” pledge and Terry would not take the same pledge regarding existing programs but believed she could trim expenses by streamlining government. When Terry challenged Allen during a debate by asking him how he would be able to support existing programs and issue tax refunds without raising taxes he responded by saying “Watch me”<sup>11</sup>. Interestingly enough, -- percent of the voters still thought Allen was the best candidate on the economy despite any specific proposals or fiscal experience<sup>12</sup>. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that he was able to take this position because his opponent was a woman and finance is thought to be a masculine strength. It is doubtful that a woman challenging a man from the current administration would have been able to garner support among voters without any substantive policy positions regarding how she would handle the state’s finances.

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<sup>11</sup> “Allen, Terry Woo Support From Business; Debating Candidates Take Similar Stands.” John F. Harris, Washington Post, October, 1, 1993.

<sup>12</sup> “The 1993 Virginia Governors Race Results From An Exclusive C&E Post-Election Poll; Yes Virginia, Issues and Images Both Count in Politics.” Joe E. Walker, in *Campaigns and Elections*, December 1993/January 1994.

In the 1989 gubernatorial election in Virginia, abortion was the most salient issue among voters but, in 1993, it did not even make the top five<sup>13</sup>. Still, Terry was a pro choice candidate and Allen remained somewhat non-committal on the issue, most likely in an effort not to appear “anti woman” next to his opponent. He said that while he generally chooses in favor of life, he takes a “reasonably moderate” position on the issue<sup>14</sup>. This likely diminished any potential benefit Terry might have experienced among pro-choice voters on a typically feminine strength. Abortion is a wedge issue among voters - had Allen taken a strong anti-abortion position in the campaign, the issue might have been of more importance to voters. He might have appeared threatening to the socially liberal voters who were otherwise discouraged with the Democrats over economic issues, but they would be inclined to vote for Terry over issues of choice. Terry’s presence – symbolically as a woman – likely tempered Allen’s issue position in this campaign.

Allen remained moderate and “woman friendly” on issues pertaining to abortion, but he did not hesitate to draw attention to the fact that Terry did not embody the qualities associated with women in general in culturally conservative states like Virginia. Even though she had a proven record as a candidate and office holder, it was easy to chip away at her credibility by focusing on issues peripheral to the election. Given the traditionalistic culture of the state, it is expected that any woman would find it difficult to win a gubernatorial election; however, this was likely exaggerated with Terry because she was not married and had no children. Not only had she defied traditional roles for

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<sup>13</sup>“The 1993 Virginia Governors Race Results From An Exclusive C&E Post-Election Poll; Yes Virginia, Issues and Images Both Count in Politics.” Joe E. Walker, in *Campaigns and Elections*, December 1993/January 1994.

<sup>14</sup>“Virginia Politics; Allen Says Some Abortions Should Be Allowed.” Donald P. Baker, *Washington Post*, July 20, 1993.

women by running for political office in the first place, but she further estranged herself from voters in a culturally conservative state by not participating in the accepted role for a woman as a wife and mother. Allen was quick to introduce “family values” into the campaign, and was often photographed with his wife and two children at campaign events. He claimed that being married and having children made him more sympathetic to the concerns of Virginia’s families<sup>15</sup>, implying Terry might not be concerned with Virginia’s families simply because she did not have a traditional family herself<sup>16</sup>.

Rhetoric regarding Terry’s personal life began to surface from Allen’s supporters as well. Oliver North boasted to voters that it was appropriate for a married man and his family to occupy the governor’s mansion as that the “pitter patter of little feet” was a welcome sound in that house<sup>17</sup>. Terry was not only single and childless but rumors regarding her sexual orientation began to surface toward the end of the campaign. With less than a month left to go before the election, a psychiatrist (whose license had been revoked based on criminal evidence brought forward by Terry’s office as Attorney General) publicly claimed to have treated a woman for eight years who claimed to be Terry’s lover and he alleged that this patient had committed suicide (Clift and Brazaitis; 2000, p.192). Even though the Washington Post could not verify the validity of this story and therefore did not print it, some of the smaller papers in the Southern parts of the state did. Even some of TV stations broadcast the story as a “bombshell” (Clift and Brazaitis, 2000, p.192). One station went so far as to interview people on the street and ask them if they would vote for a lesbian for governor (Clift and Brazaitis, 2000, p.192). None of

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<sup>15</sup>“Allen Makes Family Ties Issue in VA.; Married Hopeful Says He’s More Qualified.” John F. Harris, Washington Post, August 24, 1993.

<sup>16</sup>“Va. Candidates Neck-and-Neck in Voter Poll; Crime, Schools, Jobs Top Issues in 3 races.” Donald P. Baker and Richard Morin, Washington Post, October 3, 1993.

<sup>17</sup> “Not the Year of the Woman.” Eleanor Clift, Newsweek. October 25, 1993, United States Edition.

these issues had anything to do with her qualifications for office but they became prominent issues in the campaign nonetheless, forcing Terry to focus on them as well. Terry was often reported as disputing accusations and defending herself to voters that she too would be concerned with the problems facing Virginia's families in spite of the fact that she did not represent the embodiment of traditional family values. While it is possible that an unmarried, male candidate would come under just as much scrutiny as Terry did, it is likely that she experienced greater discrimination as a woman given the culturally conservative nature of the voters.

As an unmarried, woman Democrat in a culturally conservative state, Terry experienced a high level of negative gender stereotyping throughout her campaign that likely cost her the election. She received only 41 percent of the vote, a significant change from her initial 27 point lead in the polls. Her campaign suffered initially from her weak position on crime and never recovered once Allen began to gain momentum. She was unable to capitalize on issues typically associated with women, such as abortion or education, as neither was among the top issues of concern to voters that year. Terry was a credible, well experienced woman candidate, but still she was not able to overcome questions concerning her qualifications to govern in the best interests of Virginia's families.

### **Christine Todd Whitman – New Jersey**

In New Jersey, Democratic Governor Jim Florio had been in office since 1989, while Republican Thomas Kean held the office for the eight years prior to Florio's election. In 1992, Bill Clinton was awarded New Jersey's Electoral College votes. Still,

only 36 percent of the New Jersey state legislature was Democratic in 1993. Even though New Jersey is a regionally diverse state with its industrial, urban centers leaning Democratic and the upscale, wealthy suburbs leaning Republican, the split between these groups of voters in this state tends to be on economic issues rather than cultural issues: successful Republicans in New Jersey typically run as moderates, campaigning conservatively while governing liberally. In the 1993 Republican gubernatorial primary, all three of the top Republican candidates were pro-choice (to varying degrees) on issues pertaining to abortion. The competitiveness between the two parties in New Jersey as well as its overall more progressive views on cultural issues created a favorable environment for a Republican woman candidate like Whitman. She would likely be perceived by voters as more moderate than perhaps a man would be, lessening the divide between her and the Democratic opponent.

New Jersey's record for electing women to political office was weak. Similar to the situation in Virginia, only 12.5 percent of the state legislature in 1993 was female; the state ranked 41<sup>st</sup> in terms of electing women to the state legislature (CAWP, 2005). However, as of 1992, five women had represented New Jersey in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1993, Christine Todd Whitman became the first, and only, woman to be elected to a statewide office in New Jersey.<sup>18</sup>

Christine Todd Whitman entered the New Jersey Republican primary with little elected political experience. Like Terry, Whitman was raised in a politically active family, but unlike Terry, most of her political experience was in party support and not office holding experience. The only elected office Whitman ever held prior to 1993 was

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<sup>18</sup> The only statewide official New Jersey voters elect is the Governor. Still, this statement holds true when considering statewide elections for the two Senate seats as well.



as a Somerset county Freeholder where she served from 1983-1988. She left that office to accept an appointment by Governor Kean to chair the Board of Public Utilities; a capacity in which she served for two years. When she entered the gubernatorial contest in 1993, she was best known for her near defeat of incumbent Senator Bill Bradley in the Senate race in 1990. Whitman emerged from the Senate race as a competitive candidate with high name recognition in statewide politics. Her Senate campaign focused largely on issues pertaining to the economy. She criticized New Jersey's Democratic office holders for raising taxes and rallied against her future opponent, Jim Florio. These established her as a viable candidate for the 1993 gubernatorial election as she was able to build on the momentum of her Senate campaign when she challenged Florio himself for the governor's seat.

Whitman's issue positions were very well known among New Jersey voters. Her gubernatorial campaign began where her Senate campaign left off. The economy remained the cornerstone of her campaign and the current Democratic administration was the target. Whitman benefited from the fact that her most recent campaign took place less than three years prior to her entering the gubernatorial election and that momentum over issues pertaining to the economy lingered. Furthermore, by making the economy the central issue of her campaign, Whitman was able to prove her ability to "own" an issue typically considered to be a masculine policy area.

Taxes and the economy were the top concerns of New Jersey voters in 1993 and as stated above, Whitman's campaign had control of those issues. As a challenger, she was able to go on the offensive and assign blame to her opponent. Florio's only defense was to chip away at her credibility, which he attempted to do. Whitman based her

campaign almost solely on criticism of Jim Florio’s \$2.8 billion tax increase. She promised to reduce taxes by 30 percent once she was elected but was criticized by both her opponent and the media for not having a specific plan for implementing the tax cuts<sup>19</sup>. Still, she managed to stay focused on the economy throughout her campaign and even when she eventually introduced a specific plan to reverse the tax increases, her performance in the polls was not greatly affected; her position remained about the same after the plan was released and her credibility continued to be questioned in spite of policy specifics. Whitman did not have a record to defend and promised change while Florio had to defend a poor record – especially on the economy. It is likely that his past performance in office diminished any gender disadvantage Whitman might have experienced as a woman trying to appear more credible than her male opponent on an issue considered to be a masculine strength like the economy.

Crime was a salient issue among voters in New Jersey. Whitman’s policy positions in this typically masculine policy area were specific as well. Her policy positions even had somewhat of a “family” orientation to them. She opposed mandatory sentencing laws supported by Florio but was in favor of a “three strikes – you’re out” policy<sup>20</sup>. She advocated amending state laws that would permit a jury to learn about the effects of a murder on the victim’s family and said she would amend laws to allow for a jury to consider a defendant’s criminal record in a murder case. She supported increasing penalties for child abuse and creating an authority to aid in automobile theft prevention<sup>21</sup>. In spite of these policy specifics, Whitman was criticized by her opponent and voters for

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<sup>19</sup> The only statewide official New Jersey voters elect is the Governor. Still, this statement holds true when considering statewide elections for the two Senate seats as well.

<sup>20</sup>“Race for Governor; The Candidates on the Issues.” The New York Times, May 16, 1993.

<sup>21</sup>“Not the Year of the Woman.” Eleanor Clift, Newsweek. October 25, 1993, United States Edition.

her lack of support for a full ban on semi automatic weapons. This, coupled with an attack ad on Florio sponsored by the National Rifle Association (NRA), made many voters assume she had ties to the NRA<sup>22</sup>. Still, it is likely that being a woman helped Whitman as a Republican in New Jersey. Being a woman allowed her to have somewhat conservative views on gun control, but still come across as a moderate candidate. Given the support voters gave Florio for his tough positions on crime and gun control, a male Republican candidate with the same positions as Whitman might have been perceived as being too far to the right for New Jersey voters. It is likely that Whitman was able to satisfy conservative voters by her opposition to banning semi automatic weapons, but not appear too threatening to the moderate and liberal voters of the state.

On abortion, Whitman was a pro choice candidate. She opposed a law that would require minors to have parental notification before having the procedure. She opposed third trimester abortions, but she also opposed any legislation to ban them unless it provided for the health and safety of the mother. She supported increased sexual education in public schools to aid in prevention of unwanted pregnancies. She wanted to provide better support for women who got pregnant and wanted to bring the pregnancy to full term<sup>23</sup>. Whitman positioned herself to the left of Florio on the abortion issue – a position unusual for Republican candidates in general but not necessarily unusual for a Republican woman. Even though the Republican Party had generally been associated with a “pro-life” position, Whitman was able to gain credibility among pro-choice voters as an advocate for women’s reproductive rights in spite on her party affiliation. Florio

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<sup>22</sup>“Not the Year of the Woman.” Eleanor Clift, Newsweek. October 25, 1993, United States Edition.

<sup>23</sup>“A Day With Christine Todd Whitman.” Jay Ramano, The New York Times, April 4, 1993.

was pro-choice as well, but Whitman may have been advantaged symbolically from being a woman on issues pertaining to abortion.

It appeared that Whitman did experience gender stereotyping in her campaign but it had primarily a positive effect on the outcome. As a Republican candidate in a non-traditionalistic state, she was able to appeal to progressive voters who were ready for change. Whitman faced minimal attacks on a personal level. She was regularly criticized for being rich and out of touch with voters and she faced some criticism for sending her children to a private school, but these issues did not resonate with voters nor did they cause her to have to defend lifestyle choices. She benefited from the fact that the campaign remained largely focused on issues pertaining to the economy. Her greatest challenge was to convince voters that she was a credible candidate and qualified to handle New Jersey's finances. On Election Day, voters elected her as Governor of New Jersey. She received 49 percent of the vote to Florio's -, becoming the second woman ever to defeat an incumbent governor<sup>24</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear from comparing these two cases that women candidates are affected by the lack of women office holders in the past. Women remain a distinct class of candidates in gubernatorial elections. Neither New Jersey nor Virginia had a strong tradition or pattern of electing women to political office. Furthermore, since both Terry and Whitman had been the first and only women prior to 1993 in either state to become a major party candidate for a statewide office – Terry for Attorney General in 1985 and

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<sup>24</sup> In 1990 Joan Finney, a Kansas Democrat, became the first woman to defeat an incumbent governor.

Whitman for Senate in 1990 - any inroads created for women candidates prior to 1993 were made through their own past efforts.

Given the ideological and partisan tendencies of the voters in each state, Whitman most likely experienced positive effects from gender stereotyping in her campaign. As a moderate Republican candidate in a non-traditionalistic state, stereotypes likely served to lessen the perception among voters that she would govern as a conservative. Therefore, it would not have been advantageous for her opponent to draw attention to her gender. Any emphasis on Whitman's gender by Florio would likely have served to lessen the ideological distance between her and the voters. Conversely, in Virginia, because of the traditionalistic state culture, Allen stood only to benefit from drawing attention to Terry's gender and pushing his Democratic opponent farther to the left, and consequently, away from the ideological center of the voters. Allen was also able to incorporate Terry's personal life into the campaign without backlash from the conservative voters of that state. It is not likely that the same tactics would have been effective in a less conservative state.

Voters' lack of familiarity with Terry's issue positions made conditions favoring negative gender stereotypes to emerge. Rather than defining herself early on in the campaign, she focused most of her energy on fundraising, allowing her opponent to define her and to prime the voters as to which issues would be most significant throughout the campaign. Early in the campaign, in lieu of any substantive debate on the issues, Allen turned the focus of his campaign to his family status, pointing out to voters that he, as a father and husband, was more understanding of the problems facing Virginia's families than was Terry, who was single and childless. Because Terry did not

have a traditional family of her own, she did not benefit from positive gender stereotypes as women usually do in “family related” policy areas. Furthermore, Allen successfully linked Terry to the problems of the outgoing administration and the bickering between Robb and Wilder. She ran virtually as an incumbent defending herself throughout the campaign rather than as a candidate for an open seat. Terry had previous statewide political experience, but the lack of visibility of the office left her vulnerable to the same type of obstacles regarding defining her candidacy as a woman with much less political experience.

Conversely, Whitman, did not have previous statewide experience in elected office but was better defined on the issues as a result of her participation in a high profile campaign just three years prior to the gubernatorial election. When Whitman campaigned for the Senate in 1990, she focused on opposition to the tax increases implemented primarily by Democratic officeholders, specifically New Jersey governor Jim Florio, which positioned her nicely to challenge him for the Governor’s seat in 1993. Because Whitman entered the race with high name recognition as well as clearly defined issue positions, the likelihood that she would be defined by her opponent was not as high as a woman candidate with no experience in a relatively successful statewide campaign or one who held a low profile office such as Terry. In comparing these two cases, it appears that having exposure through a high profile, statewide campaign, such as a Senate race, is more advantageous than simply having statewide success in a low profile office such as that of Attorney General.

In each case, the political and electoral experience of the woman candidate had an effect on the ability or likelihood of her opponent to define her by activating gender

stereotypes, but this was largely conditioned by the political culture in each state. Voters in Virginia supported Allen in spite of attacks aimed at Terry in regards to her marital status, lack of children, and abilities to be governor. Terry was subject to evaluation by voters who were likely to hold stronger views regarding the proper role of women in society and politics which allowed them to be influenced by Allen's attacks. Being a Democrat in Virginia was not an obstacle in and of itself; stereotypes of women as more liberal than men and the presence of cultural issues in political campaigns is what likely alienated those voters who would have otherwise voted for the Democratic candidate. In New Jersey, gender stereotypes appeared to only help Whitman. Being a woman is likely to have helped soften her on gun control position in spite of her very loose association with the NRA as well as served to make her appear credible on education issues in lieu of any well developed issue positions.

Gender stereotypes about the candidate were present in both elections demonstrating that, while women do run for and win governor's seats, they do so by contending with assumptions of fitness for office based on gender. These case studies provide evidence that women do introduce different elements into a campaign that make elections in which a woman runs against a man unique. How this affects the outcome of the election varies from one contest to the next and is dependent upon contextual variables which are often beyond the control of the candidate. Women candidates are likely to have their qualifications questioned in spite of prior office holding experience and can best respond by having a strong command of the issues. Still, while male candidates are expected to have both a family and a career, women candidates are often criticized for lacking one or the other, or, their abilities to do both well are questioned.

Gender stereotypes are likely to persist in spite of the changing composition of political offices, but the effects will be lessened once women begin to enter gubernatorial elections at the same rate as men.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

The year 1992 continues to be celebrated as the “Year of the Woman” based on the gains made by women candidates for elected office. Record numbers of women ran for political office “as women” and were able to benefit from the prominence of gender issues that particular year. Still, despite the substantial increase in the number of women elected to legislative posts in 1992, this did not produce a trend for women candidates in gubernatorial elections in subsequent years. The preceding chapters have shown that descriptive benefits of women in legislative offices have yet to produce a “Year of the Woman” in elections for governor. Only ten women have been elected governor since 1992. This suggests distinct differences between legislative and executive branches of government and supports the notion that generalizations based on women candidates for legislative offices cannot be extrapolated to women candidates for governorships.

The case studies of Terry and Whitman provide some insight as to how various conditions affected gender stereotyping with specific regard to their respective campaigns. While two case studies make broad generalizations problematic, a number of interesting observations may, however, be noted.

Gender stereotypes were largely conditioned by the state culture in Virginia. Terry faced a constant battle in her campaign to stress her ability to govern in the best interest of “Virginia’s families” even though she did not have a traditional family herself (i.e. a husband and children). While it is likely that she would have faced similar scrutiny in non-traditionalistic states as well, the attacks might not have been as blatant or as effective as they were in Virginia. Terry herself acknowledged the effect that her personal life had on her candidacy. In an interview in 1998, Terry was asked in

hindsight, what would she have done differently in her campaign. She stated that she “would have dealt with the issue of being single at the outset.” According to Terry, she would have said, “Let’s make sure this issue of being single doesn’t cause anybody any confusion. I’m a single woman and I’m heterosexual. If anybody has anything to say about that, speak up. If not, let’s get on with this campaign” (Clift and Brazaitis, 2000, p.194).

The pervasiveness of a traditionalistic state culture clearly made it difficult for Terry to win in Virginia, but this does not suggest that Whitman was advantaged by a non-traditionalistic state culture in New Jersey – it simply means that Whitman did not have this additional barrier between her and the Governor’s mansion. What is notable in Whitman’s campaign is that as a candidate, she behaved almost “like a man”. Whereas many women – such as Terry – advance through the rank and file of the party structure, Whitman was much less cautious as a politician. She held just one minor elected office and an appointment to the Board of Utilities before challenging an incumbent considered to be unbeatable in a Senate election and nearly won. Her next contest was the gubernatorial election – once again, challenging an incumbent rather than waiting for the seat to open. Whitman ran as an issues candidate, rarely drawing attention to her gender – an approach that proved to be successful in the New Jersey election.

These two cases demonstrate that the effects of gender stereotyping on women gubernatorial candidates are likely to vary depending upon the context of the election. Still, it is possible that the largest contributing factor leading to gender stereotyping in any gubernatorial contest is the fact that so few women have campaigned for or been elected as Governor in the past. Women gubernatorial candidates today face the

challenge of demonstrating that the “masculine traits” one associates with male candidates are not necessarily unique to men per se, but to the office of Governor. Because governorships (not unlike other elected political offices) have been dominated by men since their inception, men are more closely associated with the desirable traits for that office. Therefore, it is not that women have to adopt more masculine traits to be a viable contender for governorships, it is that women have to demonstrate in their campaigns their ability to handle issues typically associated with men, such as crime or the economy, because these strengths will not be otherwise inferred by voters. At the same time, it is one these specific types of issues that a male opponent may seek to attack any woman running for governor. It will not be until more women serve as Governor that the qualities associated with that office will be qualities associated with both men and women equally.

### **Implications**

As stated in Chapter One, the under-representation of women in elected office poses several concerns regarding the inclusiveness of government and, moreover, concerns for a representative democracy overall. Women have yet to enter political contests at the same rate as men but it would be premature to interpret this as a lack of desire on behalf of women to achieve proportional representation. Instead, this begs the question of why the maleness of political office, and more specifically of governorships, persists in light of advancements women have made in other institutions.

From a research standpoint, it is important to attempt to understand and explain what accounts for the lack of women gubernatorial candidates and to identify any variations in success between male and female candidates. At the same time, this type of

research might perpetuate the disparity between male and female candidates and possibly contribute to the same gender stereotyping discussed in this thesis. Men win and lose gubernatorial elections regularly and it is usually attributed to the quality of their campaigns or partisan trends within a state. When a woman wins, we often look to see what the male candidate did wrong in his campaign that cost him the election, or if gender issues were important that year, or what was unique about that particular election in general that created circumstances favorable for the woman to defeat the man. In other words, political science research on the electoral success of women does little to remove gender stereotyping, when most explanations of the success or failure of women center upon gender as a the key variable.

In politics, gender equates to a sort of group membership for female candidates, similar to the way race or ethnicity implies a group membership. The same is not true for male candidates. Therefore, for women candidates, gender group identity becomes an additional factor in the campaign and is likely to supercede all other attributes of the candidate simply because of the visibility of the trait. Until women no longer represent a subset of political candidates, gender stereotypes will persist and limit the success of women in gubernatorial elections.

The potential descriptive benefits derived from women contesting and winning gubernatorial elections should not be understated. A brief overview of the gains made by female gubernatorial candidates in the U.S. shows that once a woman enters a gubernatorial contest as a major party candidate, it increases the potential for a woman to contest the same post in the future and at the same time makes gender less of a liability for a woman candidate in the campaign. Thirty-five states have held an election in which

at least one woman ran as a major party candidate. Of those 35 states, 19 of them held more than one election with a woman as a major party candidate. Eight women currently serve their state as Governor<sup>25</sup>. Three of those women were elected in states which had already elected a female Governor in the past (WA, AZ, KS)<sup>26</sup> and two of the remaining five (DE, HI) had women as major party gubernatorial candidates in the past. It is interesting to see that once barriers were broken in these states, women continued to contest gubernatorial elections. While this could simply demonstrate the fact that more women are contesting elections overall, repetitive contestation and/or success for women gubernatorial candidates in some states suggests that descriptive benefits for women are experienced once gender barriers are broken.

In gubernatorial elections, when a woman competes against a man, it is safe to conclude that campaigns do matter in terms of contending with gender stereotyping. Because the office of governor is still considered to be a “masculine” office, gender is best dealt with by women candidates who successfully neutralize its role in campaigns as was the case with Whitman in New Jersey but not with Terry in Virginia. The exception to this, of course, is if the salient issues of the campaign are those from which a woman would likely benefit from gender stereotypes; issues such as education, health care, or a woman’s right to choose. However, while this may help a female gubernatorial candidate in a particular state in a given election cycle, it perpetuates stereotypes which are more often harmful to women’s campaigns than they are helpful because they result primarily

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<sup>25</sup> Governor Jody Reil of CT became governor when her predecessor resigned. She was, however, elected Lt. Governor in 1994, 1998, and 2002. The first woman elected governor in her own right, Ella Grasso, was also elected in CT.

<sup>26</sup> Each of these states hold claims to other mileposts for women gubernatorial candidates as well. WA is the first state to have a woman governor and two women U.S. Senators; AZ is the first state to elect a woman to replace an outgoing woman governor; and KS was the first state to witness a woman defeat an incumbent in a gubernatorial election).

in short term effects. It has been 14 years since the “Year of the Woman”; if women wait until gender issues are prevalent to contest gubernatorial elections, women will continue to be a substantial minority in government and the gender group identity of women candidates in general will persist. While women congressional candidates found this type of group membership to be an advantage in their 1992 campaigns, gubernatorial contests are different. A governor is elected as chief executive of the state– not as an advocate for women’s issues. It will be more beneficial to women candidates overall if women regularly contest gubernatorial elections without regard for conditions deemed to be more favorable to them.

It should be stressed that the preceding chapters focused only on those factors that affected women gubernatorial candidates in the general election. Any gubernatorial candidate faces similar factors in a state primary or convention and it is likely that the interaction of contextual factors would be different. For example, while winning election to Attorney General may not have resulted in defining Mary Sue Terry among voters, it is likely that winning a statewide election in Virginia increased her credibility within the party structure, aided in fundraising efforts, and demonstrated statewide electability without which, the Democratic Party might have been reluctant to support her or any other woman as a gubernatorial candidate in that particular year. In Whitman’s case, Republican identification in a moderate state that was trending toward the Democrats was advantageous in the general election but her perceived moderate-to-liberal positions on social and cultural issues in a more traditionalistic state could have resulted in a different outcome in a Republican primary. In her bid for re-election in 1997, Whitman did face substantial opposition from the culturally conservative wing of the Republican party.

Much of the Republican primary electorate was dissatisfied by her refusal to support a ban on third trimester abortions (a bill which she supported for the most part but refused to sign because it did not allow for situations regarding the health of the mother) and gave their support to a third party candidate with more conservative views on abortion, which nearly cost her the election.

These are but two cases among many women running for political office, but the issues these women faced are not uncommon among women candidates as a whole. Many women who choose to run for political office are unmarried, like Terry, and it is likely they find themselves in similar situations defending lifestyle choices. Further, many women candidates are pro-choice or at least hold moderate views on abortion regardless of party affiliation. For Republican women like Whitman, this position is likely to be a hindrance in future primary elections given the strength of the so-called “Religious Right” in the Republican Party. In a post 9/11 environment, where family values and national security are the top concerns cited by voters, and considering the gender stereotypes held about women in general, the outlook for women candidates is bleak in terms of witnessing major gains in upcoming elections if they continue to run “as women” as they did in 1992.

### **Future Research**

Research on women as gubernatorial candidates is admittedly limited simply because of the small number of women who have contested gubernatorial elections and the even smaller number of women who have been elected to governorships. But this fact alone leads one to question why women have been left behind in the political arena –

much more so than in other professions. Further research on the effect of traditionalistic state culture on ambition and/or the eligibility pool of women candidates as a whole and the role of state and local party structures in recruitment and support of women candidates would add to the literature that helps to explain the lack of women in political office overall.

There has been some research that attempted to tap into the ambition levels of female politicians as compared to male politicians but perhaps this needs to be updated – assuming ambition is, in fact, something that can be measured. What is more likely is that women perceive their chance of winning to be so bleak given the small number of women in elected political office that they are more reluctant to give up professional positions in the private sector to contest elections. Any rational woman who witnessed how Terry was treated in her campaign might have concluded that it was not worth the personal sacrifice to have her own character assailed while fighting a losing battle. Moreover, do attitudes towards women in traditionalistic states depress the political ambitions of women in local political office or in the private sector simply by contributing to the outward maleness of political institutions? And, is the percentage of traditionalistic states in the U.S. large enough to have an effect on the ambitions of women candidates overall? Whitman was elected and reelected Governor of New Jersey – which is the most powerful governorship in the country<sup>27</sup> – served in the President's cabinet, and is certainly young enough to seek the presidency, but would she be a contender for the Republican presidential nomination in the Iowa caucus, or early primary states such as New Hampshire or South Carolina?

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<sup>27</sup> The New Jersey governorship is considered to be the most powerful governorship in the country based on the number of elected officials in the state, tenure, appointment power, veto power, party control and budget authority.



Research on recruitment and state and local party structures is equally difficult to measure but still essential to completing the picture of the prospects for women candidates. Jo Freeman addressed this question in her work. Additional research would lead to a better understanding of the role of women in either party's apparatus. This would enhance our knowledge of how women advance through the hierarchies of party politics and whether or not this equates to advancement to the highest levels of political office. Perhaps it is the influence of special interest factions at the grassroots of political parties or lack of support on the state or national level for women candidates that will have the greatest effect on women's decisions about whether or not to run for political office. In any event, greater support from either party in support of women's candidacies would likely increase the pool of candidates from which future women Governors will be drawn.

The 2006 elections present several opportunities for political scientists to observe the role of gender stereotypes in statewide elections. Many women will be running as incumbents in statewide elections across the country. It would be interesting to see if incumbency diminishes the role of gender stereotypes in campaigns and if this has any residual effect on female candidates who are not incumbents that same year. Additionally, there may be an opportunity for women to capitalize – at least in this particular election cycle – on gender stereotyping. A new law passed in South Dakota that virtually bans all abortion – excepting *not even* for cases of rape or incest but only for the life (not health) of the woman. This law most definitely will be challenged in the Supreme Court and will put *Roe v. Wade* back on the table. It is not yet evident whether or not a woman's constitutional right to an abortion – or women's rights in general – have

the potential to become a focal point of the 2006 election cycle. For this to be the case, the debate over a woman's right to choose would have to become as salient among voters as the wars on terror and in Iraq. Still, it will be interesting to see how this affects women candidates overall – can women candidates for any office, including Congress, appear strong on defense and national security issues and “run as women” on domestic issues at the same time? More importantly though, will this opportunity for women to flex their muscles in policy areas where they are typically thought to be weak produce long term effects that change the perception of women candidates in general? In other words, 2006 has the potential to create a unique opportunity for women to get elected on the basis of gender issues and be labeled the next “Year of the Woman”. Once in office, the role women play in shaping policy decisions regarding “masculine” issues would increase and possibly alter the perception of voters with respect to the strengths and weaknesses of women candidates in future elections.

As more women run for political office, existing hypotheses may be re-tested and new hypotheses formulated. It is my hope that this thesis provides an analytical framework for future research on women candidates, and hence be viewed as a point of departure for future research –whether quantitative or qualitative in nature – rather than a resting place.

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