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CAMPAIGNS AS GENDERED INSTITUTIONS:  
STEREOTYPES AND STRATEGY IN STATEWIDE RACES

by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Campaigns as Gendered Institutions: Stereotypes and Strategy in Statewide Races

By KELLY E. DITTMAR

Dissertation Directors:  
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This dissertation begins the process toward understanding the many ways in which campaigns are gendered institutions. Specifically, I ask how candidates and campaign professionals negotiate the gendered landscape on which campaigns are contested. Through analysis of 2008 and 2010 senate and gubernatorial races and a survey of campaign consultants, I investigate the role that gender stereotypes and dynamics play in drafting campaign images, messages, and tactics. Findings demonstrate to what extent female candidates adapt to the masculine norms of U.S. campaigns or, instead, challenge their prescriptions for strategy and behavior. In addition to exposing institutional constraints on women, probing internal campaign decision-making in mixed-gender races illuminates potential shifts in men's campaign strategy when gender becomes salient. Existing scholarship describes gender's function in political behavior, electoral outcomes, and even campaign output and communications. However, research to date has done little to investigate how gender functions in campaign strategy development and why campaigns cultivate the images and messages that they do. Engaging candidates and campaign professionals directly remedies this omission and provides direct insight to the interaction between institutional norms, identity, and individual actions. Moreover, recognizing campaign professionals as political actors who perceive and perform gender also highlights potential differences in campaign strategizing by gender.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Campaigning requires so many types of behavior believed to be difficult, if not impossible, for women. To campaign it is necessary to put oneself forward, to “blow one’s own horn,” to somehow demonstrate one’s superiority and dominance. What can conventionally well-behaved ladies do in such an arena? (Kirkpatrick 1974, 86)

The historical absence of female candidates and players in political campaigns well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century left scholars and practitioners alike questioning how women would enter and adapt to American electoral politics. While, at their root, political institutions have been “defined by the absence of women,” gender is ubiquitous in institutional structures and function (Acker 1992, 567). As feminist scholars have pointed out, even the act of excluding women only further ensured that gender would function in the “processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power” of politics (Acker 1992, 567). Like government, then, campaigns are gendered institutions, whereby gender is not only embedded in expectations for and behavior of candidates, but also influences the psyche and strategic considerations of all those involved.<sup>1</sup> Gender acts as a process, not a characteristic, to establish, maintain, or even challenge institutional rules, norms, and expectations. Kenny (2007) describes this conception of gender most succinctly: “Gender is not something people *have*, it is something they *do*” (93). For most of American history, “doing gender” in campaigns meant that candidates aligned with stereotypically masculine conceptions of leadership – like the superiority and dominance cited by Kirkpatrick – to be viewed as legitimate and appropriate contenders. As more women enter the gendered landscape of political campaigns, I ask how gender functions in shaping campaign strategy and behavior of male and female candidates. Building upon Kirkpatrick’s query about the behavior of “well-behaved ladies” in campaigns, I ask more broadly: how do candidates and campaign professionals negotiate the gendered landscape of political campaigns? And, secondly, in

what ways – if any - do their decisions and behaviors either maintain or disrupt prevailing gender dynamics and institutional norms?

An initial challenge to answering these questions is contesting the notion that political institutions, like campaigns, are gender neutral. Duerst-Lahti (2002) notes that because too many institutional scholars have treated governing institutions as gender neutral, political institutions remain under-theorized (372). Acker (1992) describes how easily the gendered reality is obscured when institutions are conceptualized in supposedly gender-neutral terms. For example, while campaign literature posits a number of rules and recommendations for “candidate” success, that “candidate” is most often attributed with the social characteristics of men. Dolan (2004) writes, “The modifier *woman* before the word *politician* indicates that women remain an atypical group of politicians” (7). More clearly, despite women’s increased presence in elected office, women enter the masculine territory of electoral politics as deviations from the gendered norm. Thus, in theorizing campaigns as gendered institutions, scholars must first recognize that campaigns are not gender-neutral and, moreover, have been developed, inhabited, and defined by men and masculinity. It is no coincidence that campaigns are often described in the most masculine terms, as “wars” or “battles” equipped with soldiers and generals who are dedicated to victory at all costs. As a result, the gender norms and expectations embedded in campaigns alter the political opportunity structures presented to male and female candidates. Grappling with differential limitations and expectations, men and women face different “rules of the game” that must be addressed in their earliest conceptions and considerations of campaign strategy. Determining how candidates negotiate those rules is important to understanding to what extent their behaviors maintain or challenge prevailing institutional gender norms. Not only do those norms prescribe how candidates should perform their gender, but they also set

forth expectations of candidates and officeholders that are based upon expectations of masculinity. For female candidates, the expectations of gender and those of the offices they seek conflict as long as institutional power is based in men and masculinity.

### **Gendered and Gendering Campaign Institutions**

Chappel (2006) notes, “institutional norms prescribe (as well as proscribe) ‘acceptable’ masculine and feminine forms of behavior, rules, and values for men and women within institutions” (226). This tie between individual action and institutional expectation is not unique to gender. Scholars of institutionalism have recognized that the relationship between institutions and actors is constitutive. First, as Hall and Taylor (1996) write, “Not only do institutions provide strategically useful information, they also affect the very identities, self-images, and preferences of the actors” (939). While individuals calculate costs and benefits of their behavior within an institution, rationality is not alone sufficient in predicting individual behavior. As adherents to sociological institutionalism contend, culture and institutions shade each other so that institutions become “systems of meaning” derived from cultural norms and myths (Peters 1999).

Gender, then, influences the culturally-based calculations of institutional actors by upholding patterns of differentiation and dominance between men and women (Acker 1992). More specifically to campaigns, these two factors – rationale and culture – seem to overlap, as the likelihood of victory is at least partly tied to demonstrating culturally-valued traits of leaders without violating cultural norms of gender-defined behavior.

This challenge is particularly difficult for women, for whom those two sets of traits do not coincide. As Ruth Mandel described in 1981, “Almost nowhere does the shift in traditional values and patterns of female behavior stand out in sharper relief than in the picture of a woman stepping forward in the political arena to announce forthrightly, ‘I’m the



candidate” (6). Even today, rationality and reasoning for both men and women candidates is at least context-bound, where cultural norms, values, and expectations of gender function parallel to standard ideals of winning strategy or behavior for political candidates (MacKay et al. 2008; Nee and Brinton 1998).

In addition to institutions shaping behavior, individual behavior can influence institutions. Institutional theory has relied upon the “logic of appropriateness” to describe those norms and expectations that provide order, stability, and predictability to political institutions (March and Olsen 1989). In many cases, this sense of appropriateness is perpetuated by institutional actors who adhere to existing rules of behavior and uphold the unequal power distribution that values men and masculinity (Chappel 2006). For example, Witt, Paget, and Matthews (1994) describe “women’s survival strategy” in elections as often compromising their femaleness and sense of self to meet the gendered expectations of the office they seek. However, consistent with conceptions of institutional dynamism, they concede that what is considered appropriate within institutions can and does alter over time (Katzenstein 1998; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994). Although institutions may tend toward stability, they are not entities immutable to change (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Instead, institutional structure, function, and culture may adjust from both external pressures and internal disruption. Campaigns provide some opportunities for such disruption by candidates as they draft strategy within particular contexts of time, space, and contest characteristics.

In this project, I investigate campaigns in their earliest stages to see when and where gender functions and how it shapes campaign strategy and candidate behavior. In doing so, I decipher whether or not candidates and professionals challenge or maintain the gendered landscape of campaigns, in addition to contributing to the task of institutional scholars to

“expose *which specific elements* of a given institutional arrangement are (or are not) renegotiable and why some aspects are more amenable to change than others” (Thelen 2004, 36). I explore this constitutive relationship between institutions and individual actors, whereby practitioners’ perceptions and understanding of how gender operates in campaigns influences to what extent and in what ways gender functions in campaign strategy. Included in this exploration is a recognition that gender functions not only for candidates and voters, but also for campaign professionals, for whom self-identity cannot be wholly isolated from professional decision-making.

This framework ties together feminist political science, which provides foundational work on gendered institutions, and aspects of new institutionalism. In mainstreaming discussions and analyses of gender and power, the framework for studying campaigns as gendered institutions may best represent the *feminist institutionalism* for which scholars have recently argued (see Kenny 2007). In this approach, gender’s function in and impact on the institution and its actors is crucial, cultural norms shade expectations and behaviors, and analyzing power distribution and relations is paramount (Krook 2010). Moreover, in adopting the “transformative agenda” of feminist politics, this approach considers possibilities for change and ways in which institutional processes can be disrupted (Kenny and MacKay 2009). More specifically, by analyzing the perceptions and influence of campaign practitioners in determining campaign strategy and candidates’ performance of gender, I challenge readers, scholars, and practitioners to consider an alternative institutional reality wherein the expectations not only of gender, but of candidates, are disrupted and the attributions of power and appropriateness within the institution are recalibrated to alter both the face and persona of power in U.S. politics today.

### **A New Approach to Campaign Research**

Research on political campaigns has long debated whether or not campaigns “matter,” asking if the strategies developed and tactics deployed have any influential effect on electoral outcomes. While early behavioral scholars argued that vote choice was determined primarily by party identification (Berelson et al. 1954; Lazarsfeld et al. 1944), more recent scholarship has demonstrated that campaigns *do* matter in determining candidate success (Burton and Shea 2010; Holbrook 1995; 2006). Moreover, scholars look to campaign effects beyond vote choice to consider the influence of campaigns on voter perceptions, knowledge, and engagement (Fridkin and Kenney 2007; Hillygus and Shields 2009; Kahn and Kenney 1999). For example, campaign images and messages help to communicate cues to voters on candidate traits, expertise, and priorities. Moreover, campaign processes can engage voters in the electoral process (Hayes 2005; Salmore and Salmore 1989). These effects often have an indirect impact on the decisions voters make at the polls, and they are often greatest among undecided, independent, and crossover voters (Hillygus and Jackman 2003). Finally, they result from decisions internal to campaign operations, wherein political professionals have garnered greater presence and influence (Burton and Shea 2010; Dulio 2004; Grossman 2009a; 2009b; Herrnson 1992; Johnson 2001; Medvic 2001; Sabato 1981; Thurber and Nelson 1995). To truly understand a campaign’s strategizing and decision-making, more research is needed from insiders’ perspectives.

In this project, I study campaigns’ strategic development and planning via perspectives of these professionals as an indicator of when, where, and how gender dynamics are at play well before Election Day. Evaluating how and why campaigns act the way that they do reveals campaign effects beyond winning or losing, especially those that influence voter expectations and institutional norms. Moreover, studying campaigns at their earliest stages challenges scholarly assumptions made about internal decision-making based

on external measures. Finally, this project not only recognizes the increasing influence of political practitioners in determining both electoral and institutional campaign effects, but also relies upon practitioners as primary institutional actors and research subjects.

In his work on political advertising, Darrell West (1994) describes the need for scholars to focus on the “supply side” of campaigns – the parameters and structure of the campaigns as they are organized and presented by the candidates and campaign organizations. I argue that evaluating campaign strategy and candidate decision-making from the perspective of the campaign helps to fill this void in campaign research while illuminating the role that gender plays in campaign strategy and marketing. While scholars have dedicated great energy to studying gender on the “demand side” of campaigns – analyzing voter stereotypes, perceptions, and electoral decisions – and have begun to describe how candidates seem to react to these demands, we have yet – in political science - to investigate the steps in the campaign process that get candidates from voter “demands” and expectations to campaign “supply” or candidate self-presentation. More clearly, we have spent very little time asking those making campaign decisions if, how, and when gender considerations come into play in strategy formation and why certain decisions surrounding candidate image and message cultivation are made, and by whom. As Kathy Dolan (2008) concludes after reviewing existing scholarship, “we still know relatively little about how women candidates make decisions about the image they will cultivate” (118). In the remaining chapters, I probe campaign practitioners – strategists (managers, consultants, and party directors) and candidates - about their perceptions of gender dynamics and the determinants candidate presentation (image, message, and tactics) for male and female candidates, particularly those in statewide contests for the U.S. Senate and governor. These political actors form the “campaign mind” that negotiates gendered terrain in ways that can

either maintain or disrupt images and expectations of the ideal candidate, in addition to contending with broader expectations for men and women's gender roles and interactions.

In 1994, Witt, Paget, and Matthews argued, "gender difference for women [candidates] reduces their strategic options, drains extra resources, adds visibility to their mistakes, and filters their messages [and] may ultimately be the marginal difference between winning and losing" (226). What role do gender differences play in today's elections, particularly on the supply side of campaigns? In the research that follows, I argue that the differential campaign experiences or approaches of men and women should not only be evaluated via their impact on electoral outcomes, but also by their influence on institutional climates and change. While efforts toward electoral success and those promoting institutional disruption may conflict each other in short term campaign calculations, a long-term investment in institutional change can actually alter the indicators of electoral success to better accommodate candidates' gender diversity. That capacity for change necessitates challenging binary options offered to women candidates to either uphold or challenge prevailing stereotypes that mark the identities of female and candidate as incompatible. Instead, scholars and practitioners alike should consider how these stereotypes might be altered to offer alternative images of candidates and officeholders that shift the existing gender power dynamics in political institutions, which give predominant value to masculinity and men. The navigation of gendered terrain must also be evaluated in recognition of contextual factors, of which partisan differences are of primary interest. And, finally, understanding gender differences and dynamics means more substantive analysis of how gender operates for male candidates. As Fox (1997) notes, "If women change the ways in which campaigns are run, then the effect of this change must be examined to understand more fully the dynamics of electoral politics" (3). This includes recognition that women may

alter the institution of campaigns in ways that require men to adapt (Lucas 2010; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994). Thus, the link between institutional gender dynamics and practical politics exists for both male and female candidates, is made in the earliest phases of campaigns' strategic development, and matters for outcomes beyond winning or losing.

In the remaining chapters, I establish campaigns as gendered institutions and investigate how the gender dynamics of campaigns influence both elite behavior and institutional change. I challenge claims that campaigns are (or can be) gender neutral and provide evidence from those individuals most involved in campaigns' day-to-day operations. While success may be the overriding goal in electoral politics, I argue that the decisions made to get there are influenced – either knowingly or not – by the embedded masculinity of the campaign process and political structure, and stereotypical expectations and images of appropriateness in these realms.

## **Methodology**

Infiltrating the cocoon of electoral campaigns is no easy task. In this project, I confront this challenge by employing multiple methods to provide insight about campaigns' decision-making and gender considerations therein. First, I developed and completed a nationwide survey of political consultants to measure baseline perceptions of campaign professionals on voters' gender stereotypes, campaign strategy, and gender dynamics within the campaign profession. Then, recognizing the difficulty for strategists to speak in generalizations about decision-making in campaigns at-large, I evaluated practitioner perceptions within the context of particular campaigns in 2008 and 2010. In both years, I interviewed campaign insiders about campaign strategy, decision-making, and gender dynamics in statewide contests where at least one candidate was a woman. Despite the dynamism of campaigns, my findings demonstrate that some themes emerge across

campaign settings and in the majority of practitioner responses. At the same time, asking similar questions in multiple formats and settings permits me to better analyze the importance of context in determining the ways and degree to which gender shapes campaign terrain and the strategies by which candidates and their teams navigate that terrain. I elaborate on my mixed-method approach below and will detail my hypotheses and findings in Chapters 3 through 6.

#### Baseline Perceptions: Nationwide Survey of Political Consultants

I capture the perspectives, behaviors, and influence of campaign consultants through one of only a small number of surveys taken of campaign professionals (see Dulio 2004; Grossman 2009c; Medvic 2001; Thurber et al. 2000) and the only one that asks about gender. I also conducted post-survey phone interviews with seventeen respondents that contribute to the mixed-method research design and findings presented in this chapter. Together, my survey and interview findings provide foundational knowledge on consultants' perceptions of the political landscape, especially as they relate to gender.

To identify national consulting firms that should be included in my national survey of campaign consultants, I used *Campaigns and Elections*' annual "won-lost" report of consulting firms active in the 2008 and 2009 election cycles and *National Journal*'s consultant database (Dulio 2004; Medvic 2001; Thurber et al. 2000). After establishing a list of firms, I used data available in the *Political Resources Directory* and individual firms' websites to determine and collect contact information for individual consultants at each firm.<sup>2</sup> I limited my population to firms active in congressional and/or gubernatorial races in 2008 and 2009 and verified clients for each firm using Congressional Quarterly's *Campaign Insider* reports when necessary (Johnson 2001). I also limited the population to those consultants most engaged in campaigns' strategic development, including image cultivation, message creation,

and tactical plans. This includes general consultants, media consultants, and pollsters. The final population contacted includes 878 active political consultants. My methodology replicates that of previous surveys of political consultants (Grossman 2009c; Dulio 2004; Medvic 2001; Thurber et al. 2000).

I invited campaign consultants to participate in a web-based survey through Survey Monkey Professional. I chose this format over a more traditional paper instrument to account for the high mobility of the population and to take advantage of their technological aptitude and experience. The survey asked about campaign strategy, tactics, perceptions of gender stereotypes among voters, and the consulting profession. The survey instrument is available in Appendix A. The survey remained in the field from March 29 – May 29, 2010. I contacted consultants who had not responded a maximum of three to seven times, depending on the availability of email and physical addresses, over a seven-week period. Three mailings were sent to all consultants for whom physical addresses were available; the first two mailings were formal letters, and the third was a postcard reminder. In addition to these mailings, I sent the same three recruitment letters and reminders to all consultants for whom email addresses were available, with a final additional email reminder sent at the conclusion of the seven-week period. All recruitment contacts included a brief note on the survey purpose, request for participation, and unique URL address for the online questionnaire (see Appendix B); no paper questionnaires were sent to consultants.<sup>3</sup> In recruitment materials, the survey was described as an online survey about campaign strategy and candidate presentation. I noted that my study would investigate consultant perceptions and decision-making, and I assured respondents that their responses would be confidential.

Two hundred and twenty-three active campaign consultants responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 24.8%.<sup>4</sup> Upon completion of the survey, participants were asked if



they were willing to participate in a brief post-survey telephone interview, ranging from 20-40 minutes. Eighty-four respondents volunteered to participate in post-survey interviews, 32 were contacted, and 17 were interviewed between July 21, 2010 and September 17, 2010.<sup>5</sup> These interviews supplement the survey data, providing context and explanation for the empirical findings.

Findings from the survey, reported in Chapter 3, indicate both how campaign practitioners view and negotiate the gendered landscape of political campaigns. Consultant perceptions provide an important baseline for additional research on practitioners' strategic development and behavior. Additionally, survey responses, especially open-ended answers, emphasize the importance of evaluating strategic decision-making within particular campaign contexts. As many respondents noted, the dynamic nature of campaigns makes it difficult to offer universal statements on strategic considerations and behavior. Therefore, to better build upon and clarify these baseline perceptions, I investigate this phase of the campaign process within the context of 2008 and 2010 statewide races.

#### Campaign Strategists in Context: Investigating Statewide Campaigns in 2008 and 2010

To investigate practitioner perceptions and behaviors within specific campaign contexts, I utilized a qualitative methodological approach. I evaluated perceptions and influence of gender dynamics in campaigns by interviewing campaigns' most important actors: candidates and campaign professionals. In addition to these interviews, I completed in-depth background research on all individual campaigns included in the study by analyzing candidates' advertisements, websites, and social media, in addition to collecting news coverage from start to finish of their campaign.<sup>6</sup> At the start of Chapter 4, I outline the salient issues in 2008 and 2010, in addition to describing the terrain upon which campaigns

in these years were waged. The campaigns included in my analysis are statewide contests for the U.S. Senate or governor in 2008 and 2010 that had at least one female contender.<sup>7</sup>

In late 2009, I analyzed four competitive statewide general election campaigns from 2008 as exploratory research for the 2010 election analysis. In 2008, three of ten competitive Senate races had at least one major party female candidate.<sup>8</sup> I chose two of these races, in North Carolina (Kay Hagan, D vs. Elizabeth Dole, R) and New Hampshire (Jeanne Shaheen, D vs. John Sununu, R) to compare two female challengers and to present a unique case where both major party candidates were women. Female candidates were similarly few in 2008 gubernatorial races, with only four major party female candidates across the country. Of those races, only two concluded within margins of 10 points or less; I included those races – in North Carolina (Beverly Perdue, D vs. Pat McCrory, R) and Washington (Christine Gregoire, D vs. Dino Rossi, R) in my analysis.<sup>9</sup> For each 2008 race, I completed background analysis of the political climate, timeline, and journalistic coverage. Moreover, I completed ten semi-structured phone interviews with campaign insiders from these races, including one candidate (Pat McCrory, R-NC). Interview subjects include primary campaign staff (campaign manager or party committee director) and strategic campaign consultants (see Appendix C). Analysis and findings from these select 2008 contests provided important information and guidance as I developed a more extensive plan to analyze gender dynamics in the 2010 elections.

Unlike my selective approach in 2008, I included all 2010 U.S. Senate and gubernatorial contests – primary and/or general election – where at least one candidate was a woman in my analysis to yield maximum findings across different political climates and contexts.<sup>10</sup> In the 2010 cycle, 17 gubernatorial primaries, 7 gubernatorial general election races, 22 U.S. Senate primaries, and 12 U.S. Senate general election races included at least

one female candidate. Of those races, 6 gubernatorial primaries, 3 gubernatorial general election races, 7 U.S. Senate primaries, and 4 U.S. Senate general election races were competitive by my standards, and thus the focus of more targeted study and analysis. Between June 2010 and February 2011, I interviewed 72 candidates and campaign operatives from mixed-gender primary and general election contests for governor and the U.S. Senate. These include 33 interviews with candidates, campaign consultants and campaign managers in gubernatorial contests in 10 states; 30 interviews with candidates, campaign consultants, and campaign managers in U.S. Senate contests in 12 states; four party committee operatives (DGA, NRSC, DSCC); and five prominent political consultants who worked on both mixed-gender Senate and gubernatorial contests this cycle (see Appendix C and Appendix D).

Each semi-structured telephone interview, from both 2008 and 2010 contests, lasted between 25 and 75 minutes and subjects were asked about early campaign calculations and considerations, perceptions of gender influence and gender dynamics, major factors in the political landscape and electoral outcomes, and reflections of the state of women in the campaign profession. All but nine interviews were recorded with the permission of my interview subjects; three interviews were not recorded due to interview subject preference and six were not recorded due to technical difficulties. Three interviews from the 2010 elections were completed in person. My response rate for interview requests for the 2008 and 2010 election cycles is approximately 44%.<sup>11</sup> All interview subjects were asked at the start of each interview about their preference for confidentiality. They were given the option to complete the interview on or off the record, depending on their comfort level, and could move between degrees of confidentiality at any point in the interview.<sup>12</sup> I identify all interview subjects by name for all interviews that were conducted on the record. Quotations that are not attributed are from interviews that were conducted confidentially. In some cases,

interview subjects asked to complete the entire interview “on background” only and did not wish to be listed as an interview subject. In those cases, they are not identified by name at all in this project, including on the final list of interview subjects in Appendix C.

Supplemental interviews from the consultant survey, interviews from select 2008 contests, and the interviews completed from 2010 races combine to yield 99 total interviews of candidates and campaign practitioners from diverse viewpoints and contexts. These interviews were transcribed by both the author and a professional. Questions that were asked in every interview were systematically analyzed to determine dominant themes in responses, while responses to questions unique to particular campaigns are used to provide evidence of these thematic findings. To best analyze the interview transcriptions, I used the qualitative software *Dedoose*.<sup>13</sup>

### **Gendered Terrain in 2008 and 2010**

In both 2008 and 2010, voter demands presented slightly different political opportunity structures to male and female candidates. For example, in both years, predominance of economic issues could have challenged women candidates, to whom voters do not typically attribute the same degree of economic expertise as their male counterparts. Similarly, in an electoral arena where deficits, jobs, and financial regulation reign supreme, the social issues on which women are perceived as most effective had very little salience. Despite voters’ tendency to trust women more than men on health care, moreover, the fractured political climate around the issue caused more complications than advantages for all candidates, especially Democrats, in 2010. Beyond issue saliency, voters’ sentiments in 2008 and 2010 differed in ways that could have shaped their perceptions of candidates across gendered lines. In a context where voters were ripe for change like 2008, women could harness expectations that they bring something new to the political scene. However, in

2010, when a demand for change shifted to frustration with the party in power, Democrats took a major hit. Based on the tendency for female officeholders to be Democrats, that meant women took a hit as well. At the same time, 2010 evidenced the need to evaluate gender dynamics in relation to partisanship for candidates, professionals, and voters alike. From the national attention to Sarah Palin's 2008 candidacy to the victories of a handful of new-breed Republican women candidates for governor and U.S. Senate, investigating gender in today's political institutions means understanding how gender dynamics differ for men and women of different ideological outlooks.

Campaigns operate across unique political landscapes, in which institutional norms and expectations matter differently – or to different degrees – depending on the climate candidates face. As I describe briefly in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, voters' perceptions about gender differences in issue expertise and candidate traits are important to understanding how candidates and their teams navigated a political climate where economic concerns were paramount, representing change was an asset, and making history maintained an electoral appeal. While the underlying processes of campaign institutions operate across political time, I recognize the importance of political landscape in this project to more accurately analyze the role of gender within the institution and in light of contextual factors and dynamics.

### **Outline of Chapters**

After providing the theoretical background and literature that roots my research questions and claims in Chapter 2, I move on to substantive analysis of my data in Chapters 3 through 6. In Chapter 3, I present findings from my national survey of campaign consultants. I provide evidence of consultants' perceptions of voters' gendered beliefs and track how those perceptions translate into strategic recommendations and behavior. While I show the persistent influence of gender stereotypes for many insiders, Chapter 3 outlines

differences in perceptions among campaign practitioners across party and gender lines. These differences have implications for strategic recommendations, behaviors, and institutional maintenance or change. As I argue in Chapter 3 and throughout the remainder of this text, campaign insiders' views are vital to the practice of campaigns, and these perceptions play an important role in determining the extent to which campaigns effectively address gender to yield successful electoral outcomes and/or institutional outcomes that challenge the prevailing gender order.

While the survey findings presented in Chapter 3 provide rich and unique data on political practitioners' gender beliefs and behaviors, they are limited to generic campaign contexts that do not account for the dynamism of political campaigns. Therefore, in Chapters 4 through 6, I draw upon interviews completed with candidates and campaign practitioners active in specific 2008 and 2010 mixed-gender statewide races to illuminate the how, when, and to what degree gender influences campaign strategizing alongside the many factors shaping campaign processes and outcomes.

In Chapter 4, I begin this analysis by analyzing campaign insiders' perceptions of the factors most influential in shaping electoral outcomes. Based on existing research and my survey of campaign consultants, I expected that gender would not be identified among the most influential factors in campaign strategy or outcomes. However, in reporting the factors that were cited as most determinative in campaigns' electoral outcomes – political climate, campaign strategy, media, money, and parties, I also discuss the ways in which gender interacts with each of these, whether insiders describe that interaction or not. In the remainder of the chapter, I analyze interview subjects' responses when asked directly about if, when, how, and in what ways gender matters in political campaigns. Consistent with my expectations, I find that campaign insiders are more likely to identify gender dynamics in

campaigns when asked directly about specific strategies and sites of gender difference.

However, insiders' evaluations of gender effects are often focused on electoral outcomes and, as a result, discount the overall magnitude of gender's impact in campaigns.

The findings in Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate the value of questioning candidates and campaign practitioners about specific gendered dimensions of campaign images, messages and tactics. In Chapter 5, I focus on the ways in which gender informs campaigns' decisions over candidate presentation – the images and messages they develop to meet voter demands. I analyze how perceptions of gender shape practitioners' decisions on what candidate traits to emphasize and how to best communicate candidates' issue expertise, testing several expectations derived from past research. In doing so, I investigate the ways in which both male and female candidates and their teams negotiate voter expectations of masculinity and femininity of candidates and officeholders. My findings reveal nuances of gender that are otherwise masked or overlooked in analyses of campaign output. Moreover, they are based within particular campaign contexts, allowing me to better analyze factors or settings that temper or amplify gender influence on strategic decisions. Together, these findings provide more cumulative explanations for when, why, and how candidates and practitioners negotiate gender in campaign decision-making and candidate presentation.

In Chapter 6, I move from the development of candidate images and campaign messages to analyze how campaigns communicate those images and messages to voters. I focus on two tactics that interview subjects described as most influenced by gender: direct appeals to women voters and negative campaigning. Throughout the chapter, I assess men and women candidates' unique approaches to these communication tactics and argue that their decisions have both electoral and institutional implications, especially in shaping gendered rules of electoral engagement.

I conclude this dissertation in Chapter 7 by returning to the theoretical claims and motivations of the feminist institutionalist framework. I outline steps toward a transformative agenda in campaigns' strategic behavior that would promote re-gendering campaign institutions and presenting opportunities for men and women candidates to enter, negotiate, and succeed in campaigns on their own terms instead of the masculine terms so persistent in campaign institutions to date.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Campaigns are not typically described as political institutions, but this project challenges scholars to consider the institutional structure, function, and impact of political campaigns. Lovenduski (1998) reviews the characteristics of gendered institutions whereby institutional actors have a sex and perform gender; the experiences of individuals in institutions varies by both sex and gender; sex and gender interact with other components of identity to inform models of femininity and masculinity; and there exists distinctively gendered cultures involved in processes of producing and reproducing gender (see also Lovenduski 2011). In this dissertation, I argue that political campaigns have each of these characteristics and are unique, though not separate, from the larger definition of political institutions. Campaigns function according to norms, processes, and motivations distinct to electoral settings, and are influenced by a unique group of institutional actors: campaign practitioners.

<sup>2</sup> Those consultants listed as principals, senior/junior associates, and those sharing similar titles or responsibilities were included. Individuals with primarily administrative, technological, or managerial duties were not included.

<sup>3</sup> The unique URL address was tagged to an identification number that protected against false or duplicate responses and allowed me to track completion rates for each respondent.

<sup>4</sup> This response rate is calculated using AAPOR's standard definition for response rate 2, including partial responses (partial defined as 50% or more missing responses). Final disposition codes were determined by combining code definitions for mail and Internet surveys, as guided by AAPOR for mixed-method surveys.

<sup>5</sup> In selecting consultants for post-survey interviews, I sought the greatest degree of diversity in consultant party, gender, age, region of practice, and length of time working in the consulting profession (variables provided in the survey). Consultant party and gender were most important to me in these decisions, resulting in a greater sample of female consultants interviewed than completed the survey itself.

<sup>6</sup> No systematic analysis of these materials was completed for this project, but I have archived these materials for future analysis and include general findings and trends throughout analyses in Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>7</sup> Gender is uniquely salient in statewide offices due to the scarcity of women in these offices (Kahn 1996). Both types of races are also highly competitive, receive much public attention



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and media scrutiny, and are likely to employ both experienced campaign managers and political consultants. Campaign strategy is of particular importance in competitive races, as the campaign itself plays a larger and more significant role in deciding the election outcome. For these reasons, statewide contests provide an ideal forum in which to investigate gender dynamics in strategizing, and the variance in office types permits additional analysis of differences in gendered expectations and strategies for executive versus legislative posts.

<sup>8</sup> I considered campaigns competitive if they resulted in vote margins of ten points or less.

<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the campaign field in 2008 at these levels reflected the race and party disparities cited above; only one woman of color and three Republican women competed for statewide office as major party candidates. Only one non-white woman ran for statewide office in 2008; Vivian Figures became the first African American woman to be the Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate in Alabama. She lost her challenge to incumbent Jeff Sessions by nearly 30 points. Eight Republican women contested statewide posts in 2008, but only three made it to the general election. The two women not included in my analysis are Senate candidates Susan Collins (R-ME) and Christine O'Donnell (R-DE). Neither woman was involved in a competitive race.

<sup>10</sup> Women competed in 17 gubernatorial primaries and 22 U.S. Senate primaries in 2010; of those, 6 gubernatorial contests and 7 U.S. Senate contests included at least one competitive woman candidate, meaning that she won the race or came within 10 percentage points of the party nominee. In general election contests, 7 gubernatorial races and 12 U.S. Senate races included a woman as a major party nominee. Of those, 3 gubernatorial contests and 4 U.S. Senate contests were competitive, according to the 10% margin measure. I tracked each of these races, with particular efforts for follow-up among competitive candidates and races, and races where both general election candidates were women. A complete listing of women candidates at the congressional and statewide levels in 2010 is available at [www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast\\_facts/elections/candidates\\_2010-primaries.php](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/elections/candidates_2010-primaries.php).

<sup>11</sup> I requested interviews - whether via email, letter, or phone - with 187 candidates, consultants, campaign managers (or strategic staff), and party committee leaders. A total of 82 (10 from 2008 and 72 from 2010) interviews were completed.

<sup>12</sup> The exact language from my script for oral consent read as follows: "Following press protocol, I would like to conduct this interview "on the record" so that I can quote you in the products of our research. Of course, you are free to not answer questions or to go "off the record" at any point, even if for the entirety of the interview. Anything that you tell me "off the record" will be treated as confidential information, and that information will never be attached to your name or attributed to you in anything I produce from my research."

<sup>13</sup> Dedoose is a web-based qualitative and mixed-method research application developed by social science researchers. I used the application primarily to excerpt, sort, and do simple counts of interview responses and themes. More information is available at [www.dedoose.com](http://www.dedoose.com).

## CHAPTER 2: CAMPAIGNS AS GENDERED INSTITUTIONS

Within political science, the study of gendered institutions began with feminist critiques of bureaucracy (Ferguson 1984), and moved to more explicit gender analysis that bridged from the study of gender roles to gendered institutions. ...Questions about masculinity and gendered institutions inevitably emerged precisely because men and masculinity have until recently so thoroughly dominated U.S. politics (Duerst-Lahti 2002, 371).

By challenging gender-neutral conceptions of U.S. campaigns, I contend not only that gender matters in the electoral process, but also that campaigns matter electorally and institutionally. These claims are rooted in established literature and political realities that reveal gender differences in political power dynamics, public perceptions, and approaches to campaigns and campaigning. Moreover, in a political climate where the business of campaigns has been increasingly professionalized, institutional analysis requires inclusion of the most important institutional actors: campaign practitioners. These actors play a vital role in shaping political perceptions, processes, and outcomes (both electoral and institutional), and remain too often overlooked in political science scholarship.

### **Does Gender Matter?**

#### Gendered Institutions

In the first comprehensive analysis of women's entry into electoral politics, Jeanne Kirkpatrick (1972) writes, "Politics has been deemed inappropriate for women. A woman entering politics risks the social and psychological penalties so frequently associated with nonconformity" (15). Discussing the structural and electoral barriers erected against women in American government today, Dolan (2008) writes, "Determining how women exist in a male-dominated system is still a fruitful area for research" (123). Politics en masse and electoral campaigns in particular are clear examples of systems rooted in masculinity and most often viewed as the territory of men (Carroll 1994; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Puwar 2004). Fox and Lawless (2005) write, "The organs of governance were designed by men, are

operated by men, and continue to be controlled by men” (10). Beyond the structural biases of American political institutions against women candidates (see Carroll 1994; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Fox 2006; Palmer and Simon 2006; Sanbonmatsu 2006), the cultural mores within them complicate women’s participation and ultimate success. Kenney (1996) notes that gendered institutions “produce and continually renegotiate gender meanings through language and images” (in Rosenthal 1998, 14). Moreover, gendered spaces like politics and campaigns code and recode competencies based on gender, encouraging women to adopt a “manly presence” that conforms to institutional norms of behavior. This “manly presence” confers upon women traits important to the offices sought or won, but that may be otherwise unexpected for her: authority and leadership (Kirkpatrick 1972; Kunin 1994; Mandel 1981; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994).

Campaign scholars and professionals alike frequently characterize campaigns as “wars” wherein strong men are both the soldiers (candidates) and generals (professionals). One male consultant argues, “Campaigns are wars and I think they probably want their top general to be a man to lead them into battle” (qtd. in Brewer 2003, 216). Scholars argue that male and female candidates fight these battles differently. Fox (1997) recognizes, “Women and men employ *different* strategies – linked to how the political socialization process manifests itself in the institutions within the election” (140). However, as Schneider (2007) makes clear, “males and females are fighting on male-stereotypical territory” in political campaigns (91). Women enter the masculine territory of electoral politics as deviations from the gendered norm – challenging existing gender power dynamics of different offices. As a result, they confront their gender early and seek an appropriate plan by which to abate negative impact while benefiting from perceived gender advantages. Men are rarely conflicted with similar disparities in role-gender expectations. Gender differences are made

stark in electoral campaigns, as they act as the audition through which men and women candidates demonstrate their capacity to “fit” within the institution in the specific role – or office – that they seek. Thomas (1997) describes the challenges women face as outsiders, newcomers, and political actors in the minority. She writes:

One implication of women as outsiders, apart from the norm, concerns the ways in which they seek entry into the elite arena. No better example of this assertion is available than one related to the development of campaign strategies. The very choices of how to present oneself in a legislature are replicated (or perhaps preceded) by the need to decide how to present oneself to the electorate during a campaign for office (Thomas 1997, 48).

These choices are undoubtedly tied to perceptions of and reactions from voters, for whom gender stereotypical expectations of political leaders persist (see Banwart 2010; Dolan 2010). Moreover, decisions regarding candidate presentation and strategy are linked to campaign strategists’ perceptions of the stereotypical ground on which campaigns are contested.

Finally, the decisions men and women make in auditioning for office have institutional implications. Acker (1992) writes, “To investigate the creation and re-creation of the gender understructure, I think it is necessary to look at organizational practices, the sites of concrete institutional functioning” (567). In campaigns, strategic development and execution act as these sites that both confront and create institutional gender dynamics. Acker (1992) notes that “people replicate gender; they ‘do gender’ as they do the ordinary work of the institution” (568). Moreover, internal processes exist “in which individuals engage as they construct personas that are appropriately gendered for the institutional setting” (Acker 1992, 568). Female candidates, for whom expectations of femininity conflict with masculine ideals of officeholders, are particularly challenged in constructing personas deemed “appropriately gendered” in campaign settings. If women work to align their public personas with prevailing expectations, they do little to challenge the gender understructure of campaigns. On the contrary, innovative campaign decisions and strategies for men and

women candidates have the potential to disrupt, instead of replicate, institutional norms and power structures. In her study of women legislators, Thomas (1997) argues, “Women today who operate in the political realm face the absence of a defined and accepted role and have had to develop entirely new ones” (44). In doing so via campaign strategy and candidate presentation, women have the potential to “reshape American political institutions so that [they] can enter them on their own terms” (Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994, 313).

### Gender Stereotypes

The terms of political engagement today remain rooted in masculine ideals of leadership, upheld by masculine institutions that have, in part, shaped citizens’ expectations of appropriate political actors and officeholders. In a recent analysis, Fridkin, Kenney, and Woodall (2009) conclude, “Gender stereotypes are pervasive, widely shared, and have proved to be resistant to change” (55). Moreover, Dolan’s 2010 data on voter beliefs yields this claim: “Despite the integration of women into elected office and the presence of high visibility figures like Nancy Pelosi, Sarah Palin, and Hillary Clinton, reliance on gender stereotypes is still the most common response when evaluating political women” (78). Evaluations of political women rely on gender stereotypes that predict traits, beliefs, behaviors, and overall competencies for men and women (Dolan 2010). Scholars who have explored gender stereotypes in the public psyche have noted the influence that these expectations have on women’s electoral experiences and fortunes. As Dolan (2010) explains, “At their most basic, stereotypes tell us whether people see candidates to be capable of governing or not” (72).

Women candidates are seen as more liberal than men (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Koch 2000; 2002; McDermott 1997), more honest (Dolan 2004), more interested and capable on certain issues like education, health care, the

environment, and issues surrounding seniors, children, and families (Dolan 2010; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; Kahn 1996; Koch 1999; Leeper 1991), and more likely to find consensus, draw upon compassion, and express emotion (Burrell 1994; Banwart 2010).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, men are viewed as more assertive, tougher, and most able to lead (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Eagly and Karau 1994; Rosenwasser and Seale 1988; Sapiro 1981-1982). They are perceived as more conservative than their female counterparts and more competent than women on issues of crime, defense, terrorism, and foreign policy (Banwart 2010; Dolan 2010; Lawless 2004; Matland 1994). Beyond shaping expectations of candidate image, these stereotypes influence expectations of candidate behavior and tactics. While the influence of gender stereotypes varies by office type, office level, and electoral context, the most valued attributes and issues in political evaluations are most often those that advantage men (Kahn 1996; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989).<sup>2</sup>

These beliefs are not uniformly held by all voters and are conditioned by voter identity and candidate differences beyond gender. For example, Sanbonmatsu (2002) finds that women are more likely to express a “baseline gender preference” for women candidates.<sup>3</sup> However, that support might be tempered by candidates’ party identification (Brians 2005). Party identity often provides a cue to voters for candidate evaluation (Lodge and Hamill 1986; Petrocik 1996; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009), and some scholars have argued that its explanatory power for voter beliefs and behavior far exceeds that of candidate gender (Dolan 2004; Huddy and Capelos 2002; Matland and King 2002). However, Sanbonmatsu and Dolan (2009) test this claim directly and find that “the presence of the party cue does not preclude a role for candidate gender” (6). Moreover, they conclude, “gender stereotypes transcend party,” particularly in respondents’ evaluation of issue competency and issue positions of male and female candidates (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan

2009).<sup>4</sup> While respondents express gendered beliefs toward both Democratic and Republican candidates, respondents' own party identification interacts with gendered evaluations. Dolan (2010) finds a significant interaction between respondent sex and party in measuring people's evaluations of female stereotypes. More specifically, Sanbonmatsu and Dolan (2009) find that Republican women may be less likely to benefit from issue competency stereotypes among Republican voters than Democratic women do among Democratic voters. They add, "In general, Democrats are more likely to hold gender stereotypes that benefit women in politics" (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009, 6). Consistent with previous studies, they suggest that these differences can be explained, in part, by the consistency between stereotypic expectations of women and Democrats on issues and traits, while stereotypes of women and Republicans are often perceived as incompatible (Dolan 2004; Koch 2000; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). However, the effects of *both* gender and party persist in candidate evaluation. Investigating partisanship effects in relation to gender - whether in voter perceptions, beliefs of practitioners, or candidate strategy - is important in distinguishing institutional dynamics of campaigns unique to Republican and Democratic candidates.

Though findings on the content of voter stereotypes have been fairly robust in studies over the last two decades, scholarship on stereotype impact is less clear. Contextual variance contributes to this lack of clarity, wherein expectations of women's issue competence or traits are seen as advantageous in certain contexts and disadvantageous in others (Burrell 1994; Fox 1997; Kahn 1996). Stereotype impact is also masked by women's equitable success at the ballot box and the now common refrain that "when women run, women win." Opposed to the claim that equitable outcomes reflect parallel processes to get there, Banwart (2010) offers an alternative site for stereotype impact: "Perhaps female candidates are successfully employing strategies that enable them to overcome the negative

consequences of gender stereotyping” (267). In other words, while a candidate’s gender is not necessarily a direct harbinger of electoral success or defeat, gendered perceptions are politically relevant and, moreover, influential in campaign experience and strategy-building (Carroll 1994; Hayes 2007; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; 1993b). Candidates and campaign professionals must grapple with when and how to address these stereotypes (or not) in campaign message, image, and tactics. While, at times, this may mean highlighting competitive advantages unique to candidate gender, other instances may call for inaction, so as not to undermine prevailing assumptions that benefit a candidate.<sup>5</sup> In effect, we may not see electoral biases *because* campaigns shape strategy to conform with prevalent stereotypes and voter expectations of candidates and officeholders; women’s electoral success may be due to *adaptation to* instead of *triumph over* gender barriers. As Huddy and Terkildsen (1993b) argue, “Results from real-world elections may obscure the importance of voter prejudice because women candidates go out of their way, particularly when running for higher office, to portray themselves as women who do not conform to typical gender stereotypes” (503). While female candidates may challenge gender stereotypes in this way, they uphold stereotypes of ideal candidates and officeholders that are grounded in masculinity. Stereotypes, then, both ground and maintain the prevailing gender regime within institutions like campaigns, providing the rules by which male and female candidates’ images and behaviors are interpreted.

By investigating the decision-making process by candidates and campaigns, and gender considerations therein, in this dissertation, I expose if, when, and to what extent candidates and their teams adhere to the dominant gender regime in cultivating candidates’ communication and presentation strategies. Moreover, I demonstrate the utility of analyzing



campaign practitioners' perceptions of voter stereotypes, as their beliefs of voter expectations and demands shape the strategic and tactical decisions they make.

Many scholars and practitioners have emphasized the need for women to “balance” those gender stereotypes that act as assets or liabilities to their campaigns (Carroll 1994; Dolan 2008; Fox 1997; Jamieson 1995; Mandel 1981; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994).<sup>6</sup> Banwart (2010) claims, “To be successful, women must exhibit the traits that voters desire in a political officeholder, which typically are masculine, while still meeting stereotypical expectations of femininity” (269). Evidence from analyses of campaign content demonstrates that female candidates attempt this balance of masculine and feminine traits and issues in political advertising (Bystrom et al. 2004), on websites (Dolan 2005; Banwart 2006; Schneider 2007), and in debates (Banwart and McKinney 2005). Others argue that women’s greatest electoral security comes in emphasizing the masculine traits and issues that are most associated with political office, particularly those at the national level (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b; Kahn 1996; see also Sapiro and Walsh 2002). Still others ask whether women can run “as women” – emphasizing those traits and issues most associated with women – without electoral cost or, even more, with electoral benefit (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003; Plutzer and Zipp 1996; Schaffner 2005; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994).<sup>7</sup>

These varying approaches to gender and campaigns all share a common assumption that women candidates cannot ignore voters’ gender stereotypes, even if their electoral impact is unclear. They also present a conundrum for women candidates. In playing to gender stereotypes that advantage women in winning elections, female candidates risk perpetuating gendered expectations that may disadvantage women in the aggregate (Dolan 2008; Kahn 1996; Witt, Paget and Matthews 1994). In an institutional sense, they risk maintaining conceptions of “appropriate” behavior for male and female institutional actors,

conceptions that deem men the *most appropriate* candidates. At the same time, in challenging gender stereotypes by adapting to masculine norms of political campaigns and offices, female candidates risk maintaining the imbalance of gender value in political institutions that favors masculinity. While female candidates grapple with the practical, institutional, and philosophical implications of their strategic choices, male candidates have little incentive to pursue a strategy in any way incongruent with gender stereotypes for male traits or issues, and they rarely do (Fox 1997; Schneider 2007). Men – unlike women – are not likely to benefit from performing their gender in any way inconsistent with prevailing expectations. In 1981, Ruth Mandel wrote, “When he runs for public office, a man does not exhibit behavior unusual for his sex. Because he is performing in an arena where men have always been active, he is playing a role consistent with established social patterns” (65). Despite women’s advancement in the public sphere writ large, findings from three decades ago are applicable in today’s political sphere.

In grappling with the institutional implications of women’s strategic choices, Thomas (1997) notes:

Many women have been advised to market themselves as generic candidates and to avoid discussions of how their sex affects their perspectives or their political decisions. This strategy, while sometimes successful in the individual case, perpetuates the perception that women are not an integral part of the political realm (48).

Efforts to “neutralize” gender or play it up, she argues, are equally problematic and represent short-term strategies for women’s electoral success, instead of offering a long-term strategy toward institutional change. Adapting to the gendered institution of campaigns instead of challenging its underlying norms and structures, therefore, does little to advance women’s long-term political integration. Thomas (1997) concludes, “No matter how women try to fit into the present system, they are still apart from the norm. Only when the norm itself is redefined will the situation be ameliorated” (49). This redefinition begins with “alternative

role development” for women candidates that neither replicates the male model nor relies on traditional female roles (Thomas 1997).<sup>8</sup> In Connell’s (1987; 2002) terms, institutional norms are only disrupted when gender performance contradicts the existing gender order.

Therefore, those directly responsible for how candidates perform and portray gender – campaign professionals - can determine whether campaigns uphold or disband the current gender regime. Understanding the degree to which they consider and re-imagine gender in their professional work is important in determining the degree to which an alternative role will be created and altered power structure developed in modern campaigns and campaigning.

### **Do Campaigns Matter?**

Early behavioral scholars argued that campaigns were ineffective at changing electoral outcomes, as party identification served as the primary determinant of vote choice (Berelson et al. 1954; Lazarsfeld et al. 1944). Therefore, “scholars had little reason to study campaign strategy, because there was not much to suggest that campaign activities had a strong effect on electoral outcomes” (Burton and Shea 2010, 5). More recent scholarship, however, has addressed the simultaneous weakening of party politics and professionalization of campaigns, noting that campaigns do matter, even if not directly determining electoral outcomes (Fridkin and Kenney 2007; Holbrook 1995; 2006; Kahn and Kenney 1999). Burton and Shea (2010) cite an emerging view in the literature that “Campaign effects might be minimal, but they are real, and they matter” (6). Hillygus and Shields (2008) contend that campaigns “have more than ‘minimal effects’ on the public,” and are worthy of more in-depth investigation (83). In this project, I argue that campaign effects, whether recognized or not, are universally underestimated and too narrowly defined. In this study, campaign effects include electoral *and* institutional outcomes, whereby candidates and their teams’ strategic

decisions, informed in part by perceptions of gender dynamics, influence candidate success and the potential for realignment of institutional norms and expectations of candidates – male and female.

In Holbrook's (2006) review of campaign effects, he cites a Republican media consultant who claims, "Campaigns do matter, but academics and journalists may not always know why. And that's because there is so much that goes on internally in a campaign that never gets recorded" (19). This project focuses on the internal campaign (the activity guiding the conduct of the race) instead of the external campaign (that visible to voters) to best evaluate campaign effects (Salmore and Salmore 1989).

### Campaign Strategy

The professionalization of campaigns has occurred from the nation's top executive to high-stakes races for local office (Johnson 2001). Literature on the "new style" of campaigning emphasizes the shift in strategic control from parties to campaign professionals and the employment of new tactics and greater resources (Shea and Burton 2010). The focus of this work is on campaign process, campaign strategy, and campaign actors. In this project, I am most concerned with strategy formation and its contributors. Herrnson (2000) most succinctly describes campaign strategy as "a plan that is designed to elect a candidate" (77). Included in this plan are a campaign theme and/or message and a strategy by which to disseminate that theme to particular voters (Burton and Shea 2010; Herrnson 2000; Shea and Burton 2001; Salmore and Salmore 1989; Thurber 1995). For women, the development of campaign strategy forces them to confront institutional biases, prevailing stereotypes, or complications that arise due to their gender in ways dissimilar to men. In choosing a campaign image and message and deciding on tactics and tone, women simultaneously build a campaign strategy with a unique gender strategy (Dolan 2008; Mandel 1981; Sapiro and

Walsh 2002; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994). Scholars have set forth theories of campaign strategy that assume candidates and campaign professionals are rational actors who seek electoral victory as their ultimate goal and can follow concrete steps to get there (Bradshaw 1995; Dulio 2004; Petrocik 1996).<sup>9</sup> However, these theories do little to recognize institutional biases rooted in gender (for exception, see Harrell 2009); the expectations of issue ownership and trait congruency with voter expectations has proven more complicated in studying female candidates (Schneider 2007). Even male candidates are unlikely to adopt any one strategic path or style, but it is up to more comprehensive scholarship to determine when and why the differences in strategy between men and women emerge.

Campaign strategy confronts gendered expectations of candidate image, message and tactics. Sweeney (1995) writes, “As the product of the campaign, the campaign plan must virtually dissect the candidate so as to organize campaign activities to mirror human strengths and minimize human frailties” (19). It is in voters’ perceptions of these strengths and frailties that female and male candidates differ. Sweeney (1995) adds, “Personal characteristics... are critical to the campaign’s success,” noting that candidate image is tied to the traits attributed them by campaigns and voters (19). Candidate image – in its capacity to highlight specific traits and characteristics of candidates – cannot be measured in isolation from the issues most prevalent in campaign theme and messages (Medvic 2006). Instead, issues act as cues for candidate images as they tell voters something about the traits and priorities they advance (Hayes 2005; Salmore and Salmore 1989, 113). Finally, campaigns make strategic decisions about the tactical ways in which candidates present themselves to the public. The scholarship most prevalent here are debates surrounding negative campaigning, voter targeting, and decisions between communication mediums like television, the web, phone, and direct mail. Schneider (2007) argues that politicians send gendered cues

to voters through “gender-based marketing strategies” made evident in candidates’ use of these mediums. Sanbonmatsu (2009), too, describes male and female candidates’ use of gender-based mobilization strategies, probing scholars to seek when and why such strategies are adopted. Similarly, she adds, “The decision *not* to mobilize on the basis of gender would seem to be as important as the decision *to* mobilize on gender” (Sanbonmatsu 2009, 10). Thus, a full analysis of gender and campaign strategy should include recognition of gender dynamics and considerations in candidate presentation, message, and tactics like targeting and mobilization. Moreover, it should incorporate the insight and expertise of professionals directly engaged in campaign processes and decision-making. More recent campaign scholarship begins this task by engaging campaign practitioners in scholarly dialogue (Craig 2006; Shea and Burton 2001; Thurber and Nelson 1995). However, the research on campaign practitioners has spent almost no time asking questions about gender differences – whether among candidates or professionals themselves.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, research on gender and campaign strategy has largely ignored the important voice of practitioners. In this project, I present existing findings from both realms and attempt to marry them through a new and innovative research approach.

#### Output-based Approach: Gender and Candidate Presentation

Candidate presentation – the image and messages taken to the public – is often evaluated as the manifestation of campaigns’ strategic decisions. Medvic (2006) describes campaigns as communication events, arguing, “it makes sense to assume, therefore, that campaign messages would be central to understanding the strategic behavior of the campaign generally” (17). These events, too, are assumed to be the most controlled measures of candidate presentation, unimpeded by outside factors and directly shaped by campaign insiders and candidates themselves (Sapiro and Walsh 2002). While Kahn and Kenney (1999)

cite the multiple factors influencing candidate presentation (e.g. candidate status, office type or level, and candidate gender), they maintain that evaluating campaign output effectively measures sites of gender difference in campaign strategy. Expressing a preference for analyzing television advertisements over probing practitioners, they write, “data from commercials provide us with the *exact content* of candidates’ messages delivered during campaigns rather than a general summary of the messages supplied by the managers” (emphasis added, Kahn and Kenney 1999, 61). In this project, I investigate *why* these messages emerge in the form and content that they do, asking *how* decisions are made before the final product is communicated to the public. More specifically, what impact do the gender norms and processes of campaigns, and professionals’ perceptions of them, have in drafting campaign output?

The literature on campaign output is highly relevant to the questions that I ask in the remaining chapters. The most substantive work thus far has been centered on campaign advertisements, measuring both their content and their impact on voters, and providing one route by which scholars’ attempt to measure campaign strategy. Those scholars studying gender most often analyze advertisements for their presentation of candidates via traits, issues, and rhetoric, asking how these presentations align with or reject gendered expectations among voters and the media (Bystrom et al. 2004; Bystrom and Brown 2009; Kahn 1996). A few conclusions are consistent throughout this body of work: women present themselves most often in formal attire, are more likely to use male voice-overs or be with men in images, and are less likely to emphasize their own family in campaign communications (Bystrom 1994; Bystrom and Brown 2009; Bystrom and Kaid 2002; Kahn 1996; Williams 1998). Even the same scholars have come to different conclusions on whether or not men and women differ in style and/or content of candidate presentation

when using different samples (Bystrom et al. 2004; Bystrom and Kaid 2002). Scholars have discussed why women present themselves in these ways – from reassuring voters of their professionalism to abating doubts of their credentials or legitimacy for officeholding. Many have noted the adaptation of female candidates to male traits and issues, implying that women’s campaign strategies seek to counter gender stereotypes which describe them as unsuited for political office while conforming to institutional expectations of officeholders (Benze and DeClerq 1985; Bystrom and Kaid 1996; Kahn 1996). In evaluations of advertisements’ impact, scholars agree that emphasizing masculine traits, appearing in masculine settings, and displaying competence on masculine issues is the most successful strategy for female candidates (Bystrom et al. 2004; Chang and Hitchon 2004; Kaid et al. 1984; Wadsworth et al. 1987). However, the most overarching finding in studies of gender and campaign advertising is that context matters, particularly with the issues that the ads address.

The study of campaign advertisements, while illuminating, is incomplete as the sole measure for campaign strategy or candidate presentation. More recent scholarship has emphasized the critical importance of analyzing electronic media (websites, YouTube, and social media) to more completely evaluate candidates’ strategic image, message, and tactics (Banwart 2002; Bystrom et al. 2004; Bimber and Davis 2003; Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2007; Schneider 2007). Additionally, direct mail and debates continue to provide sites for study of candidates’ presentation strategies (Bos 2007; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Nteta and Schaffner 2011; Schneider 2007). Findings in these areas are generally consistent with the mixed findings from television advertisements, though there is some evidence that medium expectations interact with gender stereotypes in shaping presentation style (Bystrom et al. 2004). While expanding and updating the mediums for evaluation enriches analysis of



candidate output, this research provides no clear answer about why candidates and campaigns cultivate the images and messages that they do. As Harrell (2009) argues in her modeling of gender and campaign strategy, “Most of these studies focus more on documenting the presence (or absence) of sex differences rather than developing a theoretical framework to explain and predict gendered behavior in campaign strategies” (4). I confront this challenge directly by moving the site for study well before campaign output (ads, websites, mail, etc.), to campaigns’ earliest moments of strategic planning. Delving deeper into the campaign mind at this stage enables researchers to both engage important political actors and understand campaigns as gendered institutions whereby strategy is informed by prevailing gender expectations. As Thomas’ (1997) indicates, the choices that practitioners and candidates make in how to present themselves to the public can either redefine or reaffirm existing conceptions of gender and leadership.

Very few studies exist that probe campaign practitioners directly about gender and campaign strategy. A number of pieces – authored both by scholars and journalists - explore specific campaigns and elections to analyze individual women’s strategies and campaign decisions (Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994; Bystrom et al. 2004; Robson 2000; Mandel 1981). Fox’s (1997) study of gender dynamics in U.S. House campaigns in California takes a more systematic approach to engaging campaign insiders, providing a foundation for future scholarship looking to explain the internal campaign strategies and goals that shape external campaign output. Finding that the different challenges faced by men and women are “subtle yet pervasive,” Fox makes evident the need to probe both earlier and more deeply into campaign dynamics and considerations to determine gender differences in campaign strategy. Moreover, Fox (1997) finds that female candidates are not alone in considering gender in campaign message and tactics. Men also change their strategy when running

against women. They may do so to highlight women's deficiencies on those traits and issues advantageous to men, to avoid being viewed as bullying their female counterparts, or to trespass into women's stereotypically advantageous territories on issues and among women voters. Overall, Fox's (1997) interviews of campaign managers reveal that practitioners are guided by differing stereotypical conceptions of men and women in developing campaign messages for male and female candidates. To better understand how candidates and their teams negotiate the gendered terrain of campaigns, I adopt a similar approach to probe those most influential in campaign strategizing about perceptions of voters' gender stereotypes and gender's function in campaigns – from early planning to Election Day.

#### Input-based Approach: Campaign Professionals

Campaign strategy is governed by perceptions. Waged on stereotypical ground, campaigns for male and female candidates must confront differences in voter expectations across gendered lines. As campaigns become increasingly "consultant-based," the ways in which they address voter beliefs are often determined by professionals' perceptions and understanding of gender (Burton and Shea 2010, 219). More specifically, as those most intimate to campaign dynamics and with experiences across campaign contexts, campaign professionals are the political actors whose perceptions are most commonly translated into electoral practice.

Thurber (1995) writes, "Campaign professionals are a staple of contemporary elections" (12). Campaign professionals include those individuals for whom campaigns are their primary occupation for at least a period of time, including campaign managers and campaign consultants. As campaigns have professionalized at all levels, it is no surprise that names like Penn, Ickes, Axelrod, Plouffe, and Rove have achieved celebrity status, at least in political circles. In a political climate where campaigns are candidate-centered, they are also

increasingly consultant-dependent. A growing scholarship on political consultancy notes its rise to a legitimate profession and its importance to candidates across levels and types of office (Burton and Shea 2010; Dulio 2004; Grossman 2009a; Herrnson 2004; Johnson 2001; Medvic 2001) Dulio (2006) writes, “In campaigns today, no serious contender for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, or a governor’s mansion goes into battle without help from political professionals” (184). This trend has expanded over the past decade to down-ticket races at state and local levels, particularly prominent state legislative and competitive mayoral contests (Johnson 2000). Campaign professionals play a direct role in shaping campaign strategy and crafting candidate image, campaign message, and tactics. Burton and Shea (2006) comment, “To the professional, strategy can seem like *everything*” (33). As a result, these are the individuals most apt, and likely most inclined, to both explain the considerations made in shaping campaign strategy and illuminate the influence of institutional structures and function on actors’ behavior. More importantly, they are political actors in their own right, worthy of study and necessary to consider in understanding dynamics of political campaigns.

Distinguishing among campaign professionals is sometimes difficult, but scholars and practitioners have provided some guidelines for clarity. Campaign managers are those individuals in charge of directing individual campaigns, typically taking on only one campaign at a time and often having a direct tie to or history with the candidate for which they are working. These individuals may even follow their candidates into office if they are successful, becoming permanent advisers or appointees. Campaign consultants, on the other hand, are individuals for whom campaigns are their permanent business. Sabato (1981) defines political consultants as “campaign professional[s] who [are] engaged primarily in the provision of advice and services (such as polling, media creation and production, and direct

mail fundraising) to candidates, their campaigns, and political committees” (8). Dulio (2004) adds that these professionals often provide services to more than one candidate during any given election cycle and continue their services from cycle to cycle. Existing research on political consultants, though limited, evaluates the business of consulting (Grossman 2009a; 2009b; 2009c), and consultants’ impact on fundraising (Dulio 2001; Herrnson 1992, 200; Medvic 2000) or on vote choice (Dulio 2006; Medvic 2001). However, almost none of this research considers gender (see Brewer 2004 for exception). Dulio (2004) notes, “To ignore political consultants in an analysis of U.S. elections means an incomplete analysis of the phenomenon” (7). Just as political consultants should not be ignored in analysis of gender and campaign strategy, neither should gender dynamics be ignored in the study of the campaign profession.

Like other political actors, campaign professionals, including consultants, bring with them identities and experiences that may influence their behavior and decision-making. In this project, I am most interested in potential differences rooted by gender and partisanship. Existing research evidences gender and partisan differences among voters in their perceptions of gender stereotypes or gender preferences toward male and female candidates (Dolan 2010; Dolan and Sanbonmatsu 2009; King and Matland 2003; Koch 1999; 2000; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). Similar findings are also available among elites like party leaders and convention delegates (Jennings 1990; Sanbonmatsu 2006). Gender and partisan identities may be similarly influential for campaign practitioners as they perceive and negotiate the political landscape. In a survey of consultants through American University, Thurber et al. (2000) found differences in perceptions of the consulting profession, political parties, and voters’ knowledge between Democratic and Republican consultants. These differences might extend to consultants’ perceptions of voter stereotypes

and gendered politics, whether due to variance in their experiences with female candidates and/or resulting from unique cultural dynamics within each party (Freeman 1987; 2002; Grossman 2009c).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, if voter perceptions are informed uniquely by *both* gender and party (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009), consultants working with candidates from either party may perceive gender dynamics differently or navigate gendered terrain in unique ways.

If partisanship of campaign professionals has the potential to inform their perceptions and behavior, does the gender of the professional, too, influence campaign strategy or decisions, particularly those surrounding candidate gender? From Rosenbloom's (1973) *Election Men* to recent scholarship on campaign professionals, the absence of women professionals is glaring. According to a survey of consultants through American University, roughly 18% of those professionals in the consulting industry are women (Thurber et al. 2000).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, female consultants often have less influence in campaign's strategic development due to their significant presence in fundraising roles (Brewer 2003). My own analysis in 2009 showed that men made up at least 75% of political consultants with strategic influence.<sup>13</sup>

The existing empirical data does not indicate whether, when they do play an advisory role, women address gender considerations more, less, or differently than their male counterparts. However, as women, they are exposed to similar challenges as female candidates in entering the gendered terrain of campaigns, forced to negotiate between "gender-appropriate" behavior and those masculine behaviors, traits, and priorities most valued by the institution. This experience may influence female consultants' attention to gender in drafting campaign strategy. Brewer (2004) finds that female consultants are more likely to have female clients and have more ties to women's organizations than their male peers. Additionally, when asked, women consultants were more likely to cite the success of

women in politics as motivating their work (Brewer 2004, 141). Rooted in evidence of women's different perspectives and experiences, Brewer (2004) proposes, "It could be that more women consultants as campaign strategists could change the messages and priorities of campaign politics in the U.S." (71). She argues that women may read polls with a subtle difference, construct different messages, prioritize different issues, or have a more nuanced understanding of women voters (Brewer 2004, 220). One way to test this presumption is to compare how male and female consultants describe and address gender considerations in campaign strategies for male and female candidates. In Chapter 3, I provide preliminary analyses of gender differences in perceptions and behavior among campaign practitioners by evaluating survey responses of men and women consultants. My findings reflect the need for more focused study on women's insight and approaches to campaign strategy.

Beyond providing greater insight into the ways in which and reasons why consultants make decisions and develop strategy, studying consultant identity ties the study of consultants to larger theoretical debates on the role of institutional actors in both reacting to and influencing the gender dynamics of political institutions. Moreover, work on gender strategy in campaigns and the role of female professionals challenges an overwhelmingly masculine literature on campaigns and elections to recognize the role that gender plays throughout the campaign process, both internally and externally. In so doing, this research challenges gender-neutral conceptions of campaigns.

Methodologically, focusing on the internal campaign process reveals what is too easily missed in existing research on campaign output. Dulio (2006) writes:

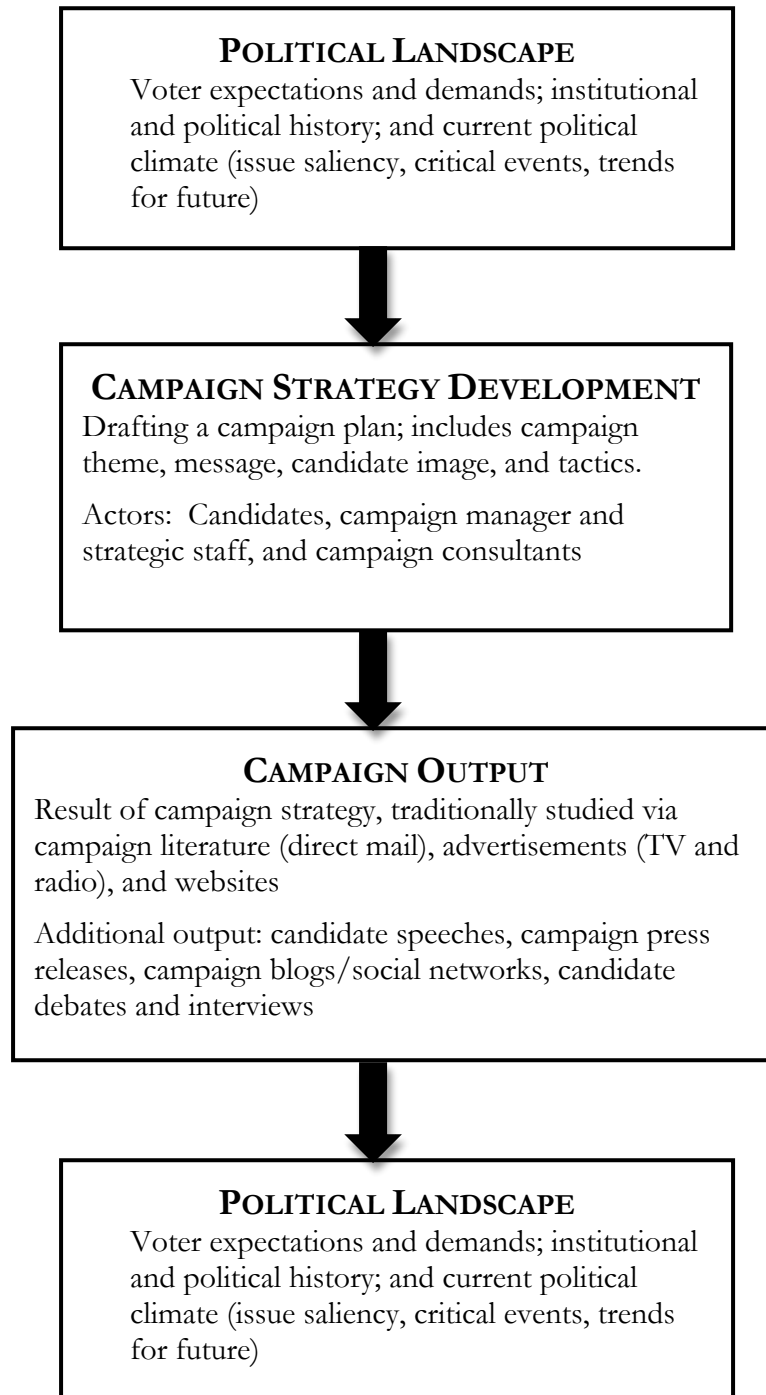
Those who maintain that consultants have a manipulative effect on the public begin their critique too late in the process, by focusing on the point at which electronic and print communications are created. The missing piece of the puzzle is the *process* that consultants go through to determine the content of their ads and mail pieces (193).

That process is examined in the following chapters to illuminate to what degree and in what ways in gender influences campaign strategy both in particular contexts and in consultants' general perceptions of the modern "rules of the game" for men and women candidates.

### **Processing Gender in Campaigns**

Visualizing the campaign process, and the role of gender therein, is an important step to understanding the theoretical and practical implications of this research and its findings. Figure 1 describes a simplified version of the process in which I am interested. First, voters hold particular expectations of candidates and officeholders, and men and women. These expectations, or stereotypes, inform both the lens through which voters evaluate candidates and consultants' survey of the political landscape for their candidate(s). Contextual factors are predominant in any campaign landscape and interact with voter demands of candidates and consultants perceptions of the most important determinants of campaign strategy. As I note in greatest detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the unique circumstances of national, state, and campaign-specific political climates, in addition to differences in expectations by type and level of office and contrasting settings of primary and general elections, inform the saliency of certain traits and issues in candidate messages. Moreover, and specific to gender, the dynamics of a particular race are altered when at least one candidate is a woman. These and other factors are examined in more detail in the analysis that follows, reminding scholars that campaigns are dynamic institutions.

Campaign practitioners, then, examine voter expectations and develop strategic recommendations for candidates with knowledge of the political context. Their insight is also informed by previous experiences and personal identities, as I describe in Chapter 3. The recommendations practitioners make are processed by the candidates by whom they are hired and who most often have the final say on whether or not (and how) these strategies are

**Figure 1: Campaign Process**



executed. In Chapter 6, I note how male candidates, for example, continue to push for altered campaign tactics when running against women candidates, often against the advice of paid professionals. Once strategy is drafted, its execution is most blatantly revealed in candidate presentation to the public, whether via television, radio, mail, or the Internet. That presentation either reaches voters directly or is filtered through media frames and coverage, which continue to be different for men and women candidates. Finally, and most important to the institutional process I outline in this project, the images and messages that voters receive from campaigns (either directly or indirectly) inform their expectations in future campaigns. In other words, presentation strategies may challenge voters' conceptions of who is an ideal candidate in image and substance, or they may conform to voters' expectations in ways that maintain the institutional norms that founded the current campaign. The bulk of existing research and literature on this potential for change in voters' gendered expectations focuses on how women can be viewed as political and, ultimately, as equally capable candidates and officeholders to their male counterparts (Bystrom et al. 2004; Chang and Hitchon 2004; Kahn 1996; Kaid et al. 1984; Wadsworth et al. 1987). More concretely, scholars have long asked how women can effectively operate in a masculine world. Where this study differs is in asking if and how campaign strategies might challenge the masculinity inherent in the institution itself. Based in her analysis of congresswoman, Duerst-Lahti (2002) clearly illuminates the challenge for women entering governing institutions:

Congresswomen must adapt to, not challenge, structures in order to gain credibility. In the process of fitting in, however, congresswomen face a lose-lose situation: their success inside the institution paradoxically reinforces masculinism, which in turn perpetuates their difficulties in gaining power and influence (382).

I argue that women face this paradoxical situation even earlier, as they present themselves to the public as candidates for office. Do candidates and their teams redefine what it means to be a candidate and officeholder so that women are not simply asked to uphold a male

model? Or do they merely adhere to and reinscribe masculine norms? Moreover, does women's entry into campaigns alter the gender power dynamics of the institution so that men, too, address gender in the strategies they develop and deliver?

### **A Feminist Institutional Approach: Evaluating Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The existing literature on gendered institutions, gender stereotypes, and gender and campaigns and elections provides numerous important pieces to the puzzling dynamics of candidate gender and U.S. elections, in addition to confirming that campaigns do matter, and gender matters within them. Engaging each of these literatures with hopes of linking them and exploring new facets of each, I focus on how candidates and campaign professionals negotiate the gendered landscape of campaigns in the chapters that follow. More specifically, I ask about the gender considerations made in the internal campaign that inform the image, message, and tactics of the external campaign – that phase of the campaign most often evaluated by scholars and observed directly by voters. Gender considerations include any recognition of and deliberation on how to deal with gender norms, stereotypes, affinities, and differential experiences between men and women. These considerations include analyses of how gender functions in campaign systems and when and how gender may advantage or disadvantage male and female candidates. They demonstrate the impact of gender stereotypes well before Election Day and inform campaigns' negotiation of gendered terrain. Finally, in addition to highlighting gender's function in campaigns, I evaluate in what ways – if any – candidates' and practitioners' strategic decisions either maintain or disrupt the dominant gender order in campaigns that preference masculinity and men.

I accomplish the latter task by taking a feminist institutional approach toward campaigns. A feminist-institutionalist theory of campaigns combines the “insights of institutionalism” - which offer explanations for institutional continuity and change, and the

role of individual actors therein - and feminism, which seeks to highlight the gendered dimensions of campaign institutions, the ways in which they uphold masculine power, and the routes toward institutional change (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Krook 2010). The transformative agenda resulting from this approach, and detailed in the conclusion, translates theoretical analysis into practical implications for candidates and campaign professionals. It exposes campaign effects beyond winning or losing to demonstrate how campaign decisions can challenge predominant expectations about candidates, officeholders, and governance.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> While gender stereotypes and schemas may play out differently for Democratic and Republican women, both sets of candidates seem to be affected by gender cues (Brians 2005; King and Matland 2005; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). Sanbonmatsu and Dolan (2009) find that voters see gender differences within political parties, even if gender stereotypes play out differently in each.

<sup>2</sup> Dolan (2010) finds a “sex superiority effect” where people tend to see one sex or the other as more capable on all of the issues and possessing the more positive characteristics across the board.

<sup>3</sup> Other studies support this finding that women voters are more likely to support women candidates, even where partisanship holds an independently strong influence (Cook 1994; Dolan 1998; King and Matland 2003; Plutzer and Zipp 1996; Selzter, Newman, and Leighton 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Banwart (2010) finds slight differences in respondents’ evaluation of female Democrats and female Republicans on measures of issue competency on compassion issues, with the female Democrat being rated higher on this measure. On remaining measures of issue competency, however, she found no differences between women of different parties.

<sup>5</sup> For example, women are perceived as best able to address women’s issues in comparison to male candidates to such an extent that they win a perceptual advantage on those issues without even highlighting them in campaign marketing (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b).

<sup>6</sup> Banwart and McKinney (2005) cite that women candidates strategically employ a “gendered adaptiveness” strategy to compensate for and balance stereotypic expectations.

<sup>7</sup> Duerst-Lahti (2002) reacts to questions regarding whether women can run “as women” by writing, “That this question can continue to be asked speaks to the assumptions of masculinity and men that dominate thinking about elected representatives. It speaks to the norms of normal and women marked as abnormal” (37).

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<sup>8</sup> This alternative is consistent with Duerst-Lahti and Kelly's (1995) conception of "transgendering" political institutions to alter dynamics of gender power that privilege masculinity and men without calling for gender neutrality, which they claim is impossible.

<sup>9</sup> Harrell (2009) reviews the theories of campaign strategy proposed by rational choice scholars, noting that none consider gender seriously in their analyses. She outlines three strategies: agenda setting - prioritizing issues on which candidates have a perceived advantage (Petrocik 1996), "riding the wave" – emphasizing issues already salient in the political context to assure voters candidates are well-informed, and trespassing – choosing issues on which candidates are presumed weak in order to inoculate them from this perceived weakness.

<sup>10</sup> For exception, see Brewer (2004).

<sup>11</sup> Grossman (2009a) describes structural differences in the consulting profession between Democratic and Republican consultants, wherein Republicans have a core-periphery structure of organization and Democrats work between several central clusters. Republican consultants are also more likely to establish regular ties with other professionals than are their Democratic peers.

<sup>12</sup> The field of professionals is also disproportionately white (95%), wealthy (average income \$122,000), and highly educated (50% with advanced degrees) (Thurber et al. 2000).

<sup>13</sup> See methodology in Chapter 1 for details on this calculation.

### CHAPTER 3: CONSULTANT PERCEPTIONS OF A GENDERED POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

[Voters] do not want someone who would be the first mama. But there is a yearning for a kind of tough single parent. [Voters are] open to the first father being a woman.

Mark Penn, internal campaign memo to Hillary Clinton and Hillary for President team, 2007

From Mark Penn's aversion to Hillary Clinton running "as a woman" to the McCain campaign's marketing of Sarah Palin, the 2008 presidential campaign pointed out both the importance of gender and the influential role of campaign advisors in drafting campaigns' images, messages, and tactics. More importantly, it demonstrated that these two factors are inextricably linked, whereby practitioners' perceptions and understanding of how gender operates in campaigns influences the extent and ways gender functions in campaign strategy. To investigate this link, I fielded a survey of active campaign consultants to probe practitioners about gender stereotypes, identity, and campaign strategy in 2010. In this chapter, I draw upon survey findings to explore the variation among and between consultant perspectives, highlighting areas where gender matters more or less and recognizing the influence of consultants' identities and experiences on their perceptions of gender and campaigns.

Grossman (2009a) writes, "If scholars want to know the causes of candidate behavior and variation in campaign content, they need to be attentive to the business side of politics" (15). The business side of politics – or the profession of campaign consulting – has increased in size and influence in modern campaigns (Burton and Shea 2010; Dulio 2004; Grossman 2009a; Herrnson 2004; Johnson 2001; Medvic 2001; Thurber 1995). More specifically, campaign consultants' beliefs and behaviors drive candidate decision-making as they navigate the path from announcement to Election Day (Grossman 2009b). Therefore, political consultants provide important insight into the campaign process and the gender

dynamics therein. In addition to evaluating campaigns' gendered terrain, political consultants navigate that terrain for candidates in ways that may replicate or redefine prevailing institutional norms of gender. As a result, they are political elites in need of greater study, especially when it comes to questions of gender and campaigns.

In this chapter, I examine multiple research questions about consultants' perceptions and behaviors. How do campaign professionals perceive the gendered landscape of political campaigns? More specifically, where and to what extent do they view gender as influential in voter beliefs and campaign strategy? Finally, what are the roots of differences in consultant perceptions of gender dynamics, and what strategic and institutional implications do these differences have for the replication and/or disruption of gendered expectations in campaigns? Answering these questions goes beyond measuring gender differences in campaign strategy or output to better explain why these differences emerge or not and in what ways they are linked to decision-makers' perceptions of voter beliefs and stereotypes.

### **Hypotheses**

As Chapter 2 details, research on gender stereotypes evidences persistent differences in how voters view men and women candidates (Banwart 2010; Dolan 2010; Taylor et al. 2008). Voters associate women candidates more often with feminine traits, attribute women expertise on "social issues" like education and health care, and expect them to take a more relational, versus sovereign, approach to leadership (Alexander and Anderson 1993; Banwart 2010; Dolan 2010; Eagly and Karau 2002; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Matland 1994; McDermott 1997; Kahn 1996; Koch 2000, 2002; Lawless 2004; Leeper 1991; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989; Sapiro 1981-1982). In contrast, men are viewed more often on a masculine spectrum of issues and traits, perceived as tough, assertive leaders on issues of crime, defense, and foreign policy (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Banwart 2010; Dolan 2010;

Eagly and Karau 1994; Lawless 2004; Matland 1994; Rosenwasser and Seale 1988; Sapiro 1981-1982; Taylor et al. 2008). Based upon this prevailing literature, I hypothesize that campaign consultants will report that voters hold gender stereotypes regarding candidates' traits, issue expertise, and behaviors. As experts in their field, consultants should accurately perceive these enduring voter beliefs and expectations.

Scholarship on campaign output, primarily television advertisements and candidate websites, has investigated differences in presentation between male and female candidates as one potential indicator of campaigns' strategic thinking. A few conclusions are consistent throughout these studies: women present themselves most often in formal attire, are more likely to use male voice-overs or be with men in images, and are less likely to emphasize their own family in campaign communications (Bystrom 1994; Bystrom and Kaid 2002; Kahn 1996; Williams 1998). Scholars have discussed why women might present themselves in these ways – including claims that women's campaign strategies seek to counter gender stereotypes that describe them as unsuited for political office (Benze and DeClerq 1985; Bystrom and Kaid 1996; Kahn 1996). While these assumptions may be true, they remain untested without engaging campaign insiders directly about the considerations made in strategy development. In this chapter, I ask campaign consultants about effective strategies and tactics for male and female candidates. I hypothesize that consultants' perceptions of winning tactics for male and female candidates will be linked to their views of voter stereotypes. Driven by the ultimate goal of electoral victory, consultants are most apt to recommend strategy that reduces skepticism of candidates' suitability for office while maintaining their likability among voters. Candidate gender is tied to voters' perceptions of suitability for office and likeability, whereby female candidates face conflicting demands to

fit a masculine ideal while upholding femininity and expectations of masculinity and men are complimentary.

Consultants' perceptions and recommendations, however, are not homogeneous. As institutional actors themselves, I hypothesize that consultants are guided by the identities and experiences with which they enter and negotiate institutional culture. More specifically, I focus on the role of consultants' partisanship and gender in informing when, where, and to what extent they believe gender matters in political campaigns.

Existing research demonstrates gender and partisan differences among voters in their perceptions of gender stereotypes or gender preferences toward male and female candidates (Dolan 2010; Dolan and Sanbonmatsu 2009; King and Matland 2000; Koch 1999; 2000; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). Similar findings are also available among some elites; for example, female and Democratic Party leaders and convention delegates were more likely to perceive gender discrimination toward candidates (by voters) than their Republican and male counterparts (Jennings 1990; Sanbonmatsu 2006). In an American University survey, Thurber et al. (2000) found differences between Democratic and Republican consultants' perceptions of the consulting profession, political parties, and voters' knowledge. I expect that partisan differences will extend to consultants' perceptions of voter stereotypes and gendered politics.

The differences in partisan consultants' perceptions may be guided, at least in part, by interaction of party and gender stereotypes in voter expectations for the candidates with whom they work. Many scholars have investigated the relationship of party and gender in shaping voter beliefs and preferences (Brians 2005; Dolan 2004; Hayes 2011; Huddy and Capelos 2002; King and Matland 2003; Koch 2000; 2002; Matland and King 2002; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). While some scholars argue that party stereotypes weaken or



remove the effects of voters' gendered perceptions (Hayes 2011; Huddy and Capelos 2002), others find that party does not transcend gender, but interacts with it in voters' candidate evaluations (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). Though findings sometimes conflict, this literature at least demonstrates that Republican and Democratic men and women are rarely viewed solely on partisan or gender dimensions. Instead, trait and issue stereotypes are often cross-cutting, with unique implications for candidates in each gender-party cohort.

Democrats, according to existing scholarship, are most often associated with the feminine traits and areas of expertise that voters also expect of women (Dolan 2004; Hayes 2005; Petrocik 1996). Voters' expectations of Republicans' traits and issue competency, on the other hand, most often contradict the femininity they associate with women and, instead, are most consistent with stereotypes of masculinity and men (Dolan 2004; Hayes 2005; Petrocik 1996). As a result, Republican women embody stereotypical contradictions that can, depending on the electoral setting, work to their advantage or disadvantage with voters (King and Matland 2003; Koch 2000; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009).

I expect that the interaction of gender and party stereotypes will inform Republican and Democratic consultants' perceptions of voters' gendered expectations, especially if their answers are rooted in their experiences with clients from their own party. While I outline some more detailed expectations of party-gender interactions on specific traits, issues, and behaviors below, I hypothesize that, overall, Democratic consultants will be more likely than Republican consultants to perceive gender differences in voters' trait and issue attribution.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Democratic consultants will be more likely to report voter expectations that align with traditional beliefs of femininity and masculinity and Republican consultants will perceive fewer gender differences on those issues and traits – like toughness, leadership, crime, and national security – on which their candidates' perceived party advantage might

abate gender stereotypical expectations. In other words, if Republican consultants assume that party stereotypes transcend or counteract gender stereotypes for members of their party, they would be less likely to report gender differences in voter perceptions. Likewise, because gender stereotypes of women often align with the stereotypical expectations for their party, Democratic consultants may see greater influence of gender in voter beliefs and strategic decision-making. While these expectations hold for those areas where partisan expectations are strong, I do not expect partisan differences in perceptions or behavior in areas where no consistent or persistent party stereotypes exist.

Beyond stereotypical contradictions and interactions, consultant perceptions may also be informed by their experiences with men and women candidates and clients. Female candidates in U.S. history – across levels and types of office – have been most often Democratic. From 1974 to 2008, 66% of female U.S. Senate candidates, 63% of female U.S. House candidates, and 62% of gubernatorial candidates were Democrats (CAWP 2010). As a result, Democratic consultants are more likely to have worked for female candidates, potentially amplifying their perception of campaigns' gendered landscape.

This amplification might occur, too, among female consultants who not only have historically had more female clients than their male counterparts, but have also navigated the gendered terrain of campaigns within their own profession (Brewer 2004). Brewer (2004) argues that women may bring a unique approach to campaign strategy – from their analysis of polls and understanding of women voters to their attention to diverse issues and development of messages different from their male colleagues (Brewer 2003, 220). I test this presumption by comparing male and female consultants' survey responses throughout the survey. I expect that women, like Democratic consultants, will be more likely to identify sites of gender difference in voter perceptions and, in turn, translate those perceptions into

strategic recommendations. Beyond providing greater insight into the ways in which and reasons why consultants make decisions and develop strategy, studying consultant identity ties the study of consultants to larger theoretical debates on the role of institutional actors in both reacting to and influencing the gender dynamics of political institutions.

After detailing practitioners' general perceptions via survey findings in this chapter, I use the remainder of this dissertation to analyze practitioner perceptions, recommendations, and behaviors in particular campaign contexts. Together, these analyses demonstrate that campaign professionals play an integral role in modern campaigns. Grossman (2009c) argues, "The choices of campaign consultants are collectively determining the kind of political discussions that most Americans observe" (102). I add that campaign consultants' strategic choices not only determine campaign results, but also to what degree and in what ways individual campaigns disrupt or defer to prevailing gender norms. Though scholars debate the impact of gender stereotypes on electoral outcomes, I find that stereotype impact is evident in political campaigns well before Election Day via campaign strategy and decision-making.

## **Findings**

### Voter Perceptions

Campaign scholars and professionals alike frequently characterize campaigns in masculine terms of competition suited best for male actors. For example, campaigns are often described as wars complete with soldiers (candidates), generals (professionals), battlegrounds, and weaponry (ads, web, mail, etc.).<sup>2</sup> In an environment like this, can women be perceived as soldiers on the front line of battle? Responses from consultants indicate that this imagery is not as natural for women candidates as it is for men among voters, especially due to the persistence of voters' reliance on gender stereotypes that predict traits, beliefs,

behaviors, and overall competencies for men and women. Moreover, while some scholars argue that these stereotypical beliefs do not impact electoral outcomes, consultants' responses show that they are likely to inform the strategy that leads to those outcomes. Below, I report findings from my 2010 national survey of political consultants (see methodology in Chapter 1 and full survey in Appendix A). Throughout my analysis, I report survey responses by consultant party to better distinguish between insiders' perceptions of their constituents' beliefs and effective strategies to address them in campaigning. I also include more specific hypotheses on independent measures of traits, issues, and strategic recommendations, discussing them alongside consultants' actual responses.

### *Traits*

In my national survey of campaign consultants, I asked respondents, "Do you think that voters associate the following traits and characteristics more with male candidates, more with female candidates, or about the same for both male and female candidates?" Among the battery of traits presented to consultants, I expect them to report traditionally feminine traits – emotional, honest, compassionate, cooperative, accessible, and liberal – as associated with women candidates, and traditionally masculine traits – corrupt, assertive, tough, strong leader, conservative – as associated more often with male candidates.<sup>3</sup> Because they are so innately tied to individual backgrounds, I expect consultants to see minimal gender differences in voters' evaluations of candidates as experienced or qualified. While research to date has found differences in the level of voter and media scrutiny of men and women candidates' experience and qualifications for office, I do not foresee this baseline association of "experienced" and "qualified" traits will evidence those more nuanced and gendered expectations. Finally, while I think these reports will hold for both Republican and Democratic consultants, I hypothesize that perceived partisan stereotypes and personal

experiences with candidates in their own party might temper Republican evaluations of gender difference in voter perceptions on ideological traits (liberal and conservative), strongly feminine traits (emotional and compassionate), and strongly masculine traits (tough and assertive).

Table 1 outlines Democratic and Republican campaign consultants' perceptions of voters' trait associations by candidate gender. Consistent with my hypothesis that consultants would report that voters associate traditionally gendered traits with men and women candidates, I find that both Republican and Democratic consultants report that voters associate emotional and compassionate traits with female candidates and view male candidates as tough and assertive. Almost all Democratic and Republican consultants report that voters are more likely to perceive female candidates as emotional than they would male candidates (see Table 1). Moreover, the vast majority of Democratic and Republican consultants say that voters are more likely to associate compassion with women than men in evaluating candidates. No consultants report that voters would attribute either emotion or compassion more often to men. Republican and Democratic consultants do not differ significantly in the degree to which they view either of these traits as gendered. This finding is contrary to my expectations of gender and party stereotype interaction, but indicates that consultants perceive these feminine stereotypes as particularly strong across the electorate.<sup>4</sup> While associations with compassion can be beneficial to candidates, a persistent view of female candidates as emotional can have harmful effects in a strongly masculine political environment.<sup>5</sup>

Large majorities of Democratic and Republican consultants describe voters' attribution of toughness to male candidates, with less than 3% of all consultants reporting that toughness is more often associated with women running for office.<sup>6</sup> Finally, majorities

**Table 1. Perceptions of Voters' Trait Associations with Male and Female Candidates by Consultant Party**

|               | Republican Consultants    |                             |                             | Democratic Consultants    |                             |                             | <i>Pearson<br/>Chi-Square<br/>Value</i> |
|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
|               | Male<br>Candidates<br>(%) | Female<br>Candidates<br>(%) | About<br>the<br>Same<br>(%) | Male<br>Candidates<br>(%) | Female<br>Candidates<br>(%) | About<br>the<br>Same<br>(%) |   |
| Emotional     | 0                         | 93.6                        | 6.5                         | 0                         | 96.9                        | 3.1                         | 1.0                                     |
| Honest        | 3.2                       | 37.1                        | 59.7                        | 1.0                       | 72.2                        | 26.8                        | 19.2*                                   |
| Compassionate | 0                         | 85.5                        | 14.5                        | 0                         | 89.7                        | 10.3                        | 0.6                                     |
| Cooperative   | 3.2                       | 51.6                        | 45.2                        | 1.0                       | 79.4                        | 19.6                        | 13.6*                                   |
| Accessible    | 1.6                       | 33.9                        | 64.5                        | 0                         | 66.7                        | 33.3                        | 17.1*                                   |
| Liberal       | 1.6                       | 38.7                        | 59.7                        | 1.0                       | 59.8                        | 39.2                        | 6.7*                                    |
| Corrupt       | 72.6                      | 0                           | 27.4                        | 89.8                      | 0                           | 10.2                        | 8.0*                                    |
| Assertive     | 59.7                      | 9.7                         | 30.7                        | 73.5                      | 8.2                         | 18.4                        | 3.6                                     |
| Tough         | 69.4                      | 1.6                         | 29.0                        | 83.7                      | 2.0                         | 14.3                        | 5.2*                                    |
| Experienced   | 27.4                      | 1.6                         | 71.0                        | 46.4                      | 0                           | 53.6                        | 6.9*                                    |
| Strong Leader | 43.6                      | 1.4                         | 54.8                        | 76.3                      | 0                           | 23.7                        | 18.2*                                   |
| Conservative  | 43.6                      | 1.6                         | 54.8                        | 63.9                      | 0                           | 36.1                        | 7.4*                                    |
| Qualified     | 21.0                      | 1.6                         | 77.4                        | 32.4                      | 1.0                         | 66.7                        | 2.5                                     |

*Cells represent the percentage of Republican and Democratic consultants responding to the question, "Do you think that voters associate the following traits and characteristics more with male candidates, more with female candidates, or about the same for both male and female candidates?"*

N ranges from 158 to 160; N (Republican Consultants)=62, and N (Democratic Consultants) ranges from 96 to 98

Pearson chi-square values measure differences in responses by consultant party.

\*p<.05

of Democratic and Republican consultants say that voters more often identify assertiveness in male candidates, with less than 10% of all consultants saying that voters associate assertiveness more with women candidates. Both findings are consistent with my initial hypotheses that consultants would identify stereotypical perceptions on traditionally masculine traits. While no partisan differences emerge among consultants' reports on assertiveness, Democratic consultants are significantly more likely than Republican consultants to report that toughness is associated most with male candidates ( $\tau_c = -.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These findings may reflect views among Republican consultants that the toughness and/or masculinity more often associated with their party might temper gender stereotypical effects on voters' candidate trait evaluations.

In post-survey interviews, consultants underscored these trait stereotypes in voter perceptions of men and women running for office. Chris Esposito, Democratic consultant at Dover Strategy Group, noted, "There are stereotypical advantages and disadvantages that are inherent or intrinsic in a campaign that matches man versus woman" (Personal interview). Republican consultant Brett Feinstein argued, "I still think there are some cultural expectations that the public has of female candidates that they're going to be a little bit softer" (Personal interview). Similarly, Democratic consultant Chris Panetta identified the challenge this presents to women candidates: "If a woman comes across as forceful, she has a very fine line to walk where, you know – a lot of [voters] would see that as bitchy. Whereas if a male comes across that way, he's seen as forceful and an authority" (Personal interview).

On seven of thirteen traits that consultants were asked to evaluate, survey responses from Democratic and Republican consultants differ significantly, with Democratic consultants more likely to view voters' trait assessments as gendered and Republican consultants more likely to perceive voters as equally likely to attribute these traits to men or

women candidates. Consistent with my expectations, Republican and Democratic consultants differ in their reports of gender differences on ideological trait attribution. While the majority of Democratic consultants say that voters are more likely to associate liberalism with female candidates and conservatism with male candidates, the majority of Republican consultants – who are more likely to consider the contradictory expectations of gender and party for Republican women candidates - report no gender difference in voter perceptions of candidates' ideology ( $\tau_c$  [Liberal] = .20,  $p < .01$ ;  $\tau_c$  [Conservative] = -.20,  $p < .01$ ). These perceptions have strategic implications for consultants who address voters' ideological expectations and demands – often in different ways - in primary and general election settings.

I did not expect partisan differences among consultant perspectives on the remaining traits, but they did emerge in survey responses. First, I expected that both Republican and Democratic consultants would report voter associations of honesty, cooperation, and accessibility with female candidates. In the current divisive political context, no party appears to have an advantage in being viewed as honest. Moreover, research on women in government has shown that female politicians – across party lines – are more likely to bring a collaborative or cooperative approach toward governing (CAWP 2001; Kathlene 1994; Rosenthal 1998), and are perceived as more accessible to their constituents (Beck 2001; Carey et al. 1998; Epstein, Neimi, and Powell 2005; Weikart et al. 2007). Despite these claims, Republican and Democratic consultants offer different perspectives on how gendered each of these traits is. While, consistent with my expectation, the majority of Republican and Democratic consultants say that voters associate the “cooperative” trait most often with female candidates, Democratic consultants are much stronger in this view than their Republican counterparts ( $\tau_c = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The partisan differences in perceptions



of voters' attribution of honesty and accessibility are even starker. A majority of Democratic consultants report that voters believe women candidates are more honest and accessible than men, while a majority of Republican consultants say that voters associate both traits to about the same extent with men and women candidates ( $\tau_{\text{c}}[\text{Honest}] = .34, p < .01$ ;  $\tau_{\text{c}}[\text{Accessible}] = .32, p < .01$ ). Little research exists to explain these disparities in partisans' perceptions. In regard to accessibility, the "big tent" image of the Democratic Party may work to amplify this perceived trait attribution among Democratic consultants and temper it for Republican consultants. Though a less recent finding, Klarner and Busch (2006) find that honesty is associated more often with Democrats; the interaction of partisan and gender expectations may again explain the party-based differences in my survey results on this trait.

Consistent with my hypothesis that consultants would identify "corrupt" as a trait most often associated with men, a strong majority of both Republican and Democratic consultants say that voters associate corruption most often with male candidates. Though there is a significant difference in partisan perceptions on this trait ( $\tau_{\text{c}} = -.16, p < .01$ ), it appears to be pushed mostly by Democratic consultants' overwhelming sense of voters' gendered beliefs on this trait. Partisan contrast is more evident in consultants' perceptions of which candidates they view as strong leaders. While a strong majority of Democratic consultants surveyed report that voters are most likely to associate this trait with male candidates, Republican consultants are nearly split between saying that voters associate "strong leader" with male candidates (43.6%) and reporting that voters are about equally likely to associate this leadership trait with men or women candidates (54.8%) ( $\tau_{\text{c}} = -.32, p < .01$ ). These findings challenge my hypothesis that both Democratic and Republican consultants would view a male advantage on "strong leader" among voters.

Partisan stereotypes and/or Republican voter perceptions do not explain these disparities across consultant party. First, in a recent evaluation of party and gender stereotypes using 2006 CCES data, Hayes (2011) finds no differences in perceived leadership strength between Democratic men and Democratic women or Republican men or Republican women, which would predict that both Democrats and Republicans would view this trait as gender neutral. On the other hand, experimental results from King and Matland (2003) show that Republican respondents rated women lower on the trait “strong leader” than they did Republican men, which would predict that Republican consultants would hold gender-based expectations of voter beliefs. Taking this research into account, my survey findings seem to show that gender differences in voter perceptions of strong leadership are being either amplified or diminished by consultants from either party.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, as I expected, both Republican and Democratic consultants report that voters view both men and women as experienced and qualified candidates. Strong majorities of consultants from both parties report that voters view men and women as equally qualified candidates, likely evidencing the fact that this trait is tied more to individual backgrounds than gender or party-based cues. And, while a majority of all consultants also report voters view neither male nor female candidates as more or less experienced, just under half of Democratic consultants still report that voters associate experience more often with male candidates than with female candidates ( $\tau_c = -.19$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This partisan difference is contrary to my expectations and not rooted in any strong partisan stereotypes regarding candidate experience. These perceptions have strategic implications related to credentialing candidates to assure their electability. In a post-survey interview, a prominent Democratic pollster noted, for example, that she begins work for any female client (unlike a male client) by asking, “Do we need to establish her credentials?” (Personal interview). According to my

survey results, that question may be declining in its persistence, but it has not disappeared for women launching their bids for political office.

### *Issue Expertise*

Beyond predicting traits of male and female candidates, voters have also used gender as a cue for candidates' issue expertise. To evaluate consultants' perceptions of voter stereotypes on issues, I asked survey respondents, "Do you think that voters think of the following policy issues as areas of greater expertise for male candidates, greater expertise for female candidates, or about the same for male and female candidates?" Based on prevailing research on gendered perceptions of issue competency and issue ownership, I expect consultants of both parties to report that voters are most likely to think that issues typically deemed as "women's issues" – social programs, education, health care, and family policy – are areas of greater expertise for female candidates.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, I expect consultants of both parties to report that voters are most likely to think that issues typically deemed as masculine – national security, defense, foreign policy, and crime – are areas of greater expertise for male candidates. Economic issues have also been largely deemed masculine in gender scholarship, though my expectation of gender difference on this issue is tempered by the overwhelming focus on the economy in the political climate in which this survey was completed. Finally, my survey probes consultants on two additional issues – immigration and the environment – that are not strongly associated with gender stereotypes in research to date. I do not expect that Republican and Democratic consultants will perceive voter beliefs as gendered on these areas of issue expertise.

As I hypothesized with the traits analyzed above, I expect partisan stereotypes and personal experiences with candidates might temper some Republican consultants' evaluations of voters' gendered perceptions of issue expertise, especially because issues

typically associated with Republicans are also those viewed as best handled by men. Therefore, for example, Republican women may be less likely to receive stereotype-based advantages or disadvantages on issues than Democratic women, for whom stereotypes of gender and party issue competency coincide. I expect this potential for partisan differences in perceptions of voter beliefs on those issues associated more often with Democratic politics and women (social programs, education, health care, family policy) and those issues more often associated with Republican politics and men (national security, defense, crime) (see Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003). I expect no partisan differences to emerge on salient issues on which competency is evaluated by recent behavior and reputation than long-held stereotypical assumptions; in 2010, these include immigration and the economy.<sup>9</sup> I also expect no partisan differences in views on environmental expertise because, although it is an issue more often deemed Democratic, no persistent gender stereotype exists whereby consultants for either party would view it as a gendered site for voter evaluation.

Consistent with my hypotheses on “women’s issues,” a majority of Democratic and Republican campaign consultants name social programs, education, health care, and family policy as issues to which voters more often attribute female expertise (see Table 2). While the gender stereotypes motivating these findings likely interact with partisan stereotypes of issue ownership or issue competency, there are no significant differences in Democratic and Republican consultants’ reports on voter beliefs about expertise on social programs, education, and health care. Though I expected there might be some partisan variance in these responses, these data demonstrate campaign professionals’ strong perceptions of voters’ feminine issue associations with female candidates. On family policy, Republican consultants are less likely than their Democratic counterparts to view gender differences in

**Table 2. Perceptions of Voters' Issue Associations with Male and Female Candidates by Consultant Party**

|                      | Republican Consultants    |                             |                             | Democratic Consultants    |                             |                             | <i>Pearson<br/>Chi-Square<br/>Value</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
|                      | Male<br>Candidates<br>(%) | Female<br>Candidates<br>(%) | About<br>the<br>Same<br>(%) | Male<br>Candidates<br>(%) | Female<br>Candidates<br>(%) | About<br>the<br>Same<br>(%) |   |
| Social Programs      | 0                         | 66.1                        | 33.9                        | 2.1                       | 76.0                        | 21.9                        | 3.8                                     |
| Education            | 0                         | 64.5                        | 35.5                        | 1.1                       | 80.0                        | 19.0                        | 5.9                                     |
| Health Care          | 3.2                       | 59.7                        | 37.1                        | 1.0                       | 69.8                        | 29.2                        | 2.3                                     |
| Family Policy        | 0                         | 66.1                        | 33.9                        | 3.1                       | 86.5                        | 10.6                        | 14.5*                                   |
| National<br>Security | 75.8                      | 0                           | 24.2                        | 91.7                      | 0                           | 8.3                         | 7.6*                                    |
| Defense              | 77.6                      | 0                           | 22.6                        | 92.7                      | 0                           | 7.3                         | 7.6*                                    |
| Foreign Policy       | 64.5                      | 0                           | 35.5                        | 76.0                      | 0                           | 24.0                        | 2.5                                     |
| Crime                | 24.2                      | 8.1                         | 67.7                        | 68.7                      | 3.1                         | 30.2                        | 27.2*                                   |
| Taxes/Economy        | 50.0                      | 0                           | 50.0                        | 66.7                      | 0                           | 33.3                        | 4.4*                                    |
| Immigration          | 19.4                      | 3.2                         | 77.4                        | 35.6                      | 0                           | 64.6                        | 7.3*                                    |
| Environment          | 0                         | 33.9                        | 66.1                        | 4.2                       | 22.9                        | 72.9                        | 4.5                                     |

*Cells represent the percentage of Republican and Democratic consultants responding to the question, "Do you think that voters think of the following policy issues as areas of greater expertise for male candidates, greater expertise for female candidates, or about the same for male and female candidates?"*

N ranges from 157 to 158; N (Republican Consultants)=62, and N (Democratic Consultants) ranges from 95 to 96

Pearson chi-square values measure differences in responses by consultant party.

\*p<.05

voter perceptions of expertise ( $\tau_c = .18, p < .01$ ). This inconsistency with the other findings on feminine issue areas may indicate different interpretations of “family policy” whereby Republican insiders think of more conservative policies on “family values” and Democratic professionals associate this with issues related to family support and social programs. Still, however, a majority of consultants from both parties view this as an area of expertise most likened to women candidates.

On issues traditionally deemed masculine by voters, consultant reports are largely consistent with my expectation that they would perceive voters as more often thinking of these as areas of issue expertise for male candidates. A strong majority of Republican and Democratic consultants report that voters are most likely to attribute issue expertise on national security, defense, and foreign policy to male candidates versus female candidates. Unlike the universality of responses they offered on feminine-associated issues, however, there are significant partisan differences on two of these issues: national security and defense. Over 90% of Democratic consultants note voters most often think of both issues as areas of expertise for male candidates, while nearly a quarter of Republican consultants think that voters evaluate male and female candidates’ similarly on national security and defense expertise ( $\tau_c$  [National Security] =  $-.15, p < .05$ ;  $\tau_c$  [Defense] =  $-.15, p < .05$ ). The slight partisan differences revealed here may best reflect the interaction of the gender and party stereotypes negotiated by consultants of either party, whereby expectations of Republican issue ownership or competency on national security and defense (Hayes 2005; Petrocik 1996) are viewed as helping Republican women to counter or transcend gender stereotypes that work to women’s disadvantage on these issues (Lawless 2004). Among Democrats, however, partisan expectations only reinforce the presumption that Democratic women are not experts in these areas. Consistent with my hypothesis, there is no partisan difference in

consultants' reports of voter beliefs on foreign policy expertise; similar majorities of Republican and Democratic consultants report that voters think this is an area of expertise for male candidates and no survey respondents report that voters would be more likely to view female versus male candidates as foreign policy experts.

Though I expected that the majority of all consultants would also view crime as an issue on which voters would associate male candidate expertise, survey responses show a split in reports by consultant party; a majority of Democratic consultants say crime is more often viewed as an area of male expertise, but the same majority of Republican consultants report that voters are no more likely to view male or female candidates as experts on crime ( $\tau_{\epsilon} = -.41, p < .01$ ). This difference among consultants of opposite parties is uniquely stronger than those described above and may be explained by persistent partisan platforms whereby the Republican Party has historically emphasized "law and order" and anti-crime policies as significant electoral strategies (Flamm 2005).<sup>10</sup> Again, Republican consultants may be less likely to view gender differences on this dimension if they expect partisan stereotypes for their clients will eliminate or strongly diminish those tied to candidate gender.

Though consultant reports of issue expertise attribution demonstrate much consistency with gender stereotypical beliefs, consultant perceptions also evidence potentially shifting gender dynamics in the economic domain that mirror my original expectations. Overall, while 59% of all consultants argue that voters most often view taxes and the economy as areas of greater expertise for men, 40% of all consultants argue that voters view these issues as areas for which men and women are equally capable. Republican consultants are evenly split in whether they perceive voters as thinking male candidates hold greater economic expertise, or whether they perceive no gender differences in voter evaluations on this issue. A slightly stronger majority of Democratic consultants report that

voters think male candidates have greater economic expertise than female candidates, yielding a significant partisan difference in responses ( $\tau_c = -.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ).<sup>11</sup> Aside from differences in partisans' perspectives, these findings are consistent with more recent surveys of voters that show little or no gender difference on economic issue association (Dolan 2010; Fridkin and Kenney 2009), and may demonstrate the impact of economic issues dominating recent politics in the United States for both parties (see Chapter 1).

Finally, and consistent with my original hypotheses, both Republican and Democratic consultants view two other salient political issues as minimally gendered: immigration and the environment. A strong majority of both Democratic and Republican consultants report that voters think that male and female candidates hold about the same level of environmental expertise. The same is true for immigration, though Democratic consultants are slightly more likely to perceive gender differences in voter beliefs on this issue ( $\tau_c = -.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Though a minority of Democratic respondents, they are more likely than Republican consultants to think that voters might associate immigration expertise more often with male candidates than female candidates. As I note at the start of this section, issues like immigration and the economy might be better understood as based on performance in the current political climate versus being reliant on stereotypes. The current rhetoric on immigration that focuses on masculine themes of toughness, crime, and illegality might explain why Democratic insiders associate this area with male candidates, while Republican consultants may not necessarily view these themes as deficits for women or particularly gendered within their party. Despite these partisan differences, the overall trends on these issues indicate that some of the most pressing issues on today's political agenda might not give unequal advantages to candidates of either gender.



As these findings demonstrate, those most involved in strategy development are – overall - well aware of voters’ gender biases, and for good reason. Kahn (1996) elaborates the importance of context in the intersection between issue stereotypes and electoral outcomes: “Women’s changing fortunes in electoral politics are driven by the correspondence between people’s stereotypical images of women candidates and the salient issues of the day” (1). It is often up to campaign professionals to be sure that voter perceptions of candidates and expectations of officeholders do correspond.

### *Office Expectations*

In addition to the “salient issues of the day,” women’s electoral fortunes are often influenced by the offices for which they run. Existing research outlines how the demands for executive officeholders are often more inconsistent with the traits and expertise attributed to women than are the demands for American legislators (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; 1993b; Lawless 2004; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989; Thomas and Wilcox 1998). Executive officeholders are more often tasked to address issues on which men are attributed greater expertise, like crime, security, and finance. As Fox and Oxley (2003) find, the majority of state executive posts are associated with the stereotypical strengths of men. Moreover, states’ chief executive post – governor – is associated with the most implicit assumptions of masculine strength, power, and leadership. These assumptions are tied to the singularity of executive leadership, whereby women’s leadership is more often viewed as relational. Describing the progress left to be made for women in executive posts, Duerst-Lahti (1997) concludes, “The lone woman at the top has not yet become a transgendered image” (23).

Based upon this literature, I hypothesize that, when given the option, campaign consultants will be more likely to think that voters would support women running for

legislative over executive office. However, Republican women candidates may have fewer stereotype-based liabilities associated with executive office-holding due to the interaction of party and gender. Therefore, I add that responses on this measure may differ by consultants' party identification if they respond based upon experiences with men and women candidates of their own party.

To test these hypotheses, I asked consultants in my survey whether voters are more likely to vote for a woman candidate for U.S. Senate (legislative) or gubernatorial (executive) office (see Table 3). Consistent with my discussion of potential party differences, a strong majority of Republican consultants report that voters are equally likely to vote for a woman for governor or senator. Again, the masculinity associated with executive offices is likely perceived as less incompatible for Republican women than Democratic women, shaping the perspectives of their consultants. Democratic consultants, on the other hand, identify a benefit for women running for U.S. Senate over governor, though there is no clear majority opinion among them.<sup>12</sup> The incompatibility of both gender and party stereotypes with the masculinity of the executive for Democratic women candidates may explain, at least in part, this more common conception of gender-based advantages or liabilities by Democratic consultants. Despite these differences, consultants' responses demonstrate that executive office remains a site viewed as more challenging for female candidates, with very few consultants arguing that voters are more likely to vote for a woman for governor than for U.S. Senator.

In open-ended responses from the survey, many consultants cite women's advantage in representative, cooperative roles instead of executive, or decisive, ones. One consultant writes, "Voters' biases toward male candidates tend to relate to 'executive' traits (decisive, strong leader) more than 'representative' traits (cooperative, problem-solvers, etc.)." Others

**Table 3. Perceptions of Voters' Likelihood of Voting for Women for Statewide Offices by Consultant Party**

|  | Republican Consultants (%) | Democratic Consultants (%) |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| More likely to vote for a woman for Governor                   | 3.2                        | 14.1                       |
| More likely to vote for a woman for the U.S. Senate            | 15.9                       | 43.4                       |
| Equally likely to vote for a woman for Governor or U.S. Senate | 72.0                       | 34.3                       |
|  | <i>N=63</i>                | <i>N=99</i>                |

Pearson Chi-square value =25.3 ( $p<.01$ )

*Cells represent the percentage of Republican and Democratic consultants responding to the question, "Do you think that voters are more likely to vote for a woman for Governor, more likely to vote for a woman for the U.S. Senate, or equally likely to vote for a woman for Governor or the U.S. Senate?"*

described voters' discomfort with a woman being the "sole" leader: "It's more difficult for voters to envision a female candidate in an executive role, than as 1 of 100 senators." In post-survey interviews, I asked consultants how they address these doubts via campaign strategy. They emphasized that women running for executive posts must appear tough. For example, Democratic consultant Chris Panetta said that female executive candidates benefit when they use assertive language, adding, "it's imperative when [women are] running for an executive statewide position because [they are] going to be the boss" (Personal interview, 8/2/10). These perceptions indicate that – at least for Democratic consultants – office type often interacts with trait and issue stereotypes to influence voter perceptions of men and women's electoral suitability, and campaign professionals' efforts to assure them of it.

### Gender and Strategy

Though findings on the content of voter stereotypes have been fairly robust in studies over the last two decades, scholarship on stereotype impact is less clear. Much of this literature emphasizes the importance of context in tempering or amplifying the influence of stereotypes (e.g., Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Fridkin, Kenney, and Wooddall 2009). Moreover, findings that women win to equal extents as their male counterparts challenge claims that gender stereotypes act as a barrier to women's electoral fortunes (Burrell 1994; Clark et al. 1984; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). However, this conclusion may be shortsighted. Dolan (2010) writes, "While a number of scholars have demonstrated that women candidates do not suffer disproportionately at the ballot box because of their sex, we should not assume that this means that voter attitudes about gender are irrelevant to politics" (70). While a candidate's gender is not necessarily a direct harbinger of electoral success or defeat, scholars have demonstrated that there is no question that it is politically

relevant and, moreover, influential in campaign experience and strategy-building (Carroll 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; 1993b).

Understanding campaign insiders' perspectives of voter stereotypes reveals how gender stereotypes impact electoral outcomes – albeit indirectly - by shaping how candidates and consultants negotiate campaign terrain. In my survey of campaign consultants, I asked a question to probe directly about the influence of gender in strategizing. More specifically, I asked respondents to report how important candidate/opponent experience, candidate/opponent age, candidate/opponent race, and candidate/opponent gender are in shaping candidates' campaign strategies (see Table 4). I expect that candidate and opponent experience will be viewed as particularly important in strategizing by campaign consultants due to the electoral focus on candidate resumes and achievements. While I expect them to be viewed as less important than experience, campaign consultants who view campaigns as waged on stereotypical terrain along lines of race, gender, and even age, should evaluate these demographic considerations as at least somewhat important to strategizing.

Over 85% of consultants name candidate and opponent experience as important in the development of campaign strategy, consistent with my expectations and steady across consultant party. When collapsing “very important” and “important” responses, candidate and opponent race are viewed as second highest in importance among these considerations by consultants from both parties. However, while 80% of Democratic consultants view candidate race as an important strategic consideration, a much smaller majority of Republican consultants agree ( $\tau_{uc} = -.32, p < .01$ ). Moreover, a minority of Republican consultants and a majority of Democratic consultants perceive the race of an opponent as an important strategic consideration ( $\tau_{uc} = -.24, p < .01$ ). This differential attention to race as a campaign consideration might be due to the overall lack of racial diversity in campaigns and

**Table 4. Perceptions of Important Strategic Considerations for all Candidates by Consultant Party**

|                      | Republican Consultants |               |                        |                          | Democratic Consultants |               |                        |                          | Pearson Chi-Square Value |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                      | Very Important (%)     | Important (%) | Not Very Important (%) | Not Important at all (%) | Very Important (%)     | Important (%) | Not Very Important (%) | Not Important at all (%) |                          |
| Candidate Experience | 37.7                   | 58            | 4.4                    | 0                        | 45.7                   | 43.1          | 9.5                    | 1.7                      | 5.3                      |
| Opponent Experience  | 37.7                   | 55.1          | 7.3                    | 0                        | 44                     | 44.8          | 9.5                    | 1.7                      | 2.8                      |
| Candidate Race       | 2.9                    | 50.7          | 39.1                   | 7.3                      | 18.1                   | 62.1          | 17.2                   | 2.6                      | 19.3*                    |
| Opponent Race        | 2.9                    | 36.2          | 32.2                   | 8.7                      | 10.3                   | 52.6          | 31                     | 6                        | 11.1*                    |
| Candidate Gender     | 0                      | 42            | 44.9                   | 13                       | 11.2                   | 56.9          | 26.7                   | 5.2                      | 17.2*                    |
| Opponent Gender      | 2.9                    | 30.4          | 50.7                   | 15.9                     | 6.1                    | 50.4          | 36.5                   | 7                        | 10.4*                    |
| Candidate Age        | 0                      | 37.7          | 38                     | 4.4                      | 1.7                    | 39.7          | 55.2                   | 3.5                      | 1.4                      |
| Opponent Age         | 0                      | 37.7          | 58                     | 6.4                      | 0                      | 35.1          | 60.5                   | 4.4                      | 0.1                      |

*Cells represent the percentage of Republican and Democratic consultants responding to the question, "How important would you say the following factors are in shaping a candidate's campaign strategy?"*

N ranges from 183 to 185; N (Republican Consultants)=69, and N (Democratic Consultants) ranges from 114 to 116

Pearson chi-square values measure differences in responses by consultant party.

\*\*p<.05

\*p>.05

elections, especially at the statewide level and particularly within the Republican Party. In other words, Democratic consultants may simply be more primed to address race as a campaign consideration due to their experiences with a slightly more diverse pool of candidates. Also, as I have described in regard to gender stereotypes, race-based expectations of candidates also interact with party stereotypes whereby expectations for non-white candidates often align with stereotypes of Democrats and counteract or conflict with stereotypes of Republicans. Overall, however, candidates in 2008 and 2010 at the national and statewide levels demonstrated that race is not a dynamic only navigated by Democrats.<sup>13</sup>

Similar partisan differences are evident in consultant responses about the importance of gender. Though candidate and opponent gender are viewed as less important than race overall by both Republican and Democratic respondents, majorities of Democrats view both candidate and opponent gender as important while majorities of Republican consultants view these demographic considerations as not very important and not important at all ( $\tau_{\text{c}}$  [Candidate Gender] =  $-.30$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $\tau_{\text{c}}$  [Opponent Gender] =  $-.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings are consistent with the hypothesis I outlined at the start of this chapter: that gender would be a more common consideration for Democratic consultants than Republican consultants. Moreover, this finding reflects, and logically follows, the findings I have presented on partisan perceptions of voters' differences in trait and issue expertise attribution by candidate gender. Put simply, if Republican consultants are less likely, overall, to view voter perceptions as gendered, they would be – and are – also less likely to consider gender important in their strategic calculations.

Finally, included as an additional measure of demographic considerations that is less associated with any one party, a majority of Republican and Democratic consultants view candidate and opponent age as unimportant in shaping campaign strategy. Though

scholarship on gender and candidacy might predict age to matter differently for male and female candidates, this particular survey question only probes age as a general consideration for candidates at large. Interestingly, comparing the importance of age with experience in campaign calculations reflects a difference between what consultants view as immutable (biographical age) and impressionable (framing/touting experience) candidate characteristics.

In order to more clearly evaluate the relationship between consultants' perceptions of voter beliefs and their strategic behaviors, I developed four scales to reflect consultants' perceptions of the strength of voter stereotypes on feminine traits, feminine issues, masculine traits, and masculine issues. High scores on these scales indicate that consultants perceive gendered advantages or disadvantages on these traits or issues that are consistent with studies of voters' gendered beliefs.<sup>14</sup> Those consultants who score high on each of these scales, meaning they perceive voters as holding gendered perceptions, are also those respondents most likely to say that gender is an important consideration in the development of campaign strategy.<sup>15</sup> Though not establishing clear causality, these correlations support my hypothesis that consultants' perceptions inform their strategic approaches, especially in their attention to gender dynamics and difference. Throughout the remainder of my analyses, I refer to these scales to measure the association between consultants' perceptions of voter stereotypes and the strategies they recommend for male and female candidates.

### *Themes*

The challenge to navigate voter perceptions and contextual demands in campaign strategy is evident in consultants' perceptions of effective themes for male and female candidates. After giving consultants a list of ten potential campaign themes, I asked consultants to report whether those themes would be more effective for male or female candidates in winning electoral support, or equally effective for both (see Table 5). I expect



**Table 5. Perceptions of Themes' Effectiveness for Male and Female Candidates by Consultant Party**

|                    | Republican Consultants    |                             |                             | Democratic Consultants    |                             |                             | <i>Pearson<br/>Chi-Square<br/>Value</i> |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
|                    | Male<br>Candidates<br>(%) | Female<br>Candidates<br>(%) | About<br>the<br>Same<br>(%) | Male<br>Candidates<br>(%) | Female<br>Candidates<br>(%) | About<br>the<br>Same<br>(%) |   |
| Compassion         | 11.3                      | 56.5                        | 32.3                        | 10.3                      | 62.9                        | 24.8                        | 0.7                                     |
| Strength/Toughness | 46.8                      | 13.0                        | 40.3                        | 45.4                      | 16.5                        | 38.1                        | 0.4                                     |
| Leadership         | 19.4                      | 6.5                         | 74.2                        | 32.0                      | 5.2                         | 62.9                        | 3.1                                     |
| Change             | 3.2                       | 25.8                        | 71.0                        | 1.0                       | 36.1                        | 62.9                        | 2.6                                     |
| Government Reform  | 3.2                       | 14.5                        | 82.3                        | 5.2                       | 40.2                        | 54.6                        | 13.0*                                   |
| Family Values      | 3.2                       | 12.9                        | 83.9                        | 16.7                      | 19.8                        | 63.5                        | 9.2*                                    |
| Ethics             | 1.6                       | 17.7                        | 80.7                        | 2.1                       | 43.3                        | 54.6                        | 11.4*                                   |
| Honesty            | 1.6                       | 14.5                        | 83.9                        | 6.1                       | 45.4                        | 50.5                        | 18.2*                                   |
| Moral Values       | 1.6                       | 12.9                        | 85.5                        | 4.1                       | 22.7                        | 73.2                        | 3.4                                     |
| Experience         | 11.3                      | 4.8                         | 83.9                        | 15.8                      | 10.5                        | 73.7                        | 2.5                                     |

*Cells represent the percentage of Republican and Democratic consultants responding to the question, "Do you think the following themes are more effective for male candidates, more effective for female candidates, or do you think that they are equally effective for male and female candidates?"*

N ranges from 157 to 159; N (Republican Consultants)=62, and N (Democratic Consultants) ranges from 95 to 97

Pearson chi-square values measure differences in responses by consultant party.

\*p<.01

these responses to mirror differences consultants perceived in voter associations on similar masculine and feminine traits and areas of issue expertise, thereby demonstrating the tie between perceptions and strategy. In expecting an affirmative relationship between beliefs and behavior, then, similar differences by consultant party should be found in their perspectives on effective themes across candidate gender.

While I hypothesized that consultants would perceive themes most associated with feminine traits as most effective for female candidates and themes most associated with masculine traits as most effective for male candidates, I find that both Republican and Democratic consultants rated eight of ten of the themes presented on the survey as equally effective for male and female candidates. First, these data may indicate the challenge of asking about effective themes outside of any political context. Campaign themes are often determined by the demands of political time and context over gender. In Chapters 4 through 6, I better account for the importance of context by drawing upon campaign evidence and interviews in mixed-gender contests in 2008 and 2010. Beyond the interference of context, however, these reports may also evidence differences in consultant responses when they are asked to evaluate voter perceptions versus their own reflections on gender differences or considerations in campaign strategy.

Majorities of Republican and Democratic consultants report that the themes of leadership, moral values, change, and experience are equally effective themes for male and female candidates. The expectations of leadership and experience for political candidates at any level are so strong that they likely inform consultants' perceptions that both themes are equally effective, and likely equally important, for men and women candidates. Interpreting the utility of a change theme is challenging when taking political context into account. Change themes are not universally beneficial to any one party, but instead are typically

adopted by the party that is out of power to draw contrast with incumbents. On the other hand, I expected that a theme emphasizing moral values would be viewed by consultants as more effective for female candidates, with whom voters associate less corruption and greater honesty. Instead, strong majorities of Democratic and Republican consultants viewed this theme as no more effective for men and women. The “moral” modifier used in this question may explain these results, as values-based politics in the current political context are more aligned with ideology (conservatives over liberals) than gender.

While consultants report fewer differences by party or gender overall on the effectiveness of change or moral values themes, those individual consultants most likely to report strong masculine and feminine trait and issue stereotypes are also those most likely to view a change theme as more effective for women candidates (see Table 6). Similarly, those individual consultants who report strong masculine trait and feminine issue and trait stereotypes among voters are also more likely to see a moral values theme as more effective for women running for office. Therefore, on an individual respondent level, there is evidence of consultant perceptions informing their strategic recommendations for male and female candidates.

Republican and Democratic consultants differ in their perceptions of four themes’ effectiveness for male and female candidates. On each of these themes – government reform, family values, ethics, and honesty – majorities of both Republican and Democratic consultants view no gender difference in strategic effectiveness. However, on each theme, there is greater diversity in responses among Democratic consultants. In evaluating the effectiveness of themes around government reform, honesty, and ethics, Democratic consultants are nearly evenly split in whether they perceive these themes as equally effective or more effective for female candidates, whereas less than 20% of Republican consultants

**Table 6. Measures of Association ( $\tau_b$ ) Between Consultant Perceptions of Themes' Effectiveness and Strength of Stereotypical Views**

|                    | Feminine Traits Scale | Feminine Issues Scale | Masculine Traits Scale | Masculine Issues Scale |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Change             | .16*                  | .17*                  | .16*                   | .17*                   |
| Moral Values       | .22*                  | .15*                  | .16*                   | .11                    |
| Honesty            | .34*                  | .27*                  | .24*                   | .24*                   |
| Ethics             | .36*                  | .25*                  | .21*                   | .22*                   |
| Government Reform  | .26*                  | .24*                  | .21*                   | .25*                   |
| Strength/Toughness | -.10*                 | -.15*                 | -.14*                  | -.08                   |

*Cells represent the  $\tau_b$  scores when measuring correlations between consultants' perceptions of voters' gender stereotypes on feminine traits, feminine issues, masculine traits, and masculine issues. Negative scores reflect a relationship between strong views of voter stereotypes and declaring a theme as more effective for male candidates. Positive scores reflect a relationship between strong views of voter stereotypes and declaring a theme as more effective for female candidates.*

\* $p < .05$

perceive any gender difference across these themes ( $\tau_c[\text{Government Reform}] = .22, p < .01$ ;  $\tau_c[\text{Honesty}] = .34, p < .01$ ;  $\tau_c[\text{Ethics}] = .24, p < .01$ ). These differences are consistent with partisan differences in perceptions of voter associations of honesty with female candidates and corruption with male candidates, though consultants reported a much greater degree of gender difference in those evaluations of voter beliefs than in their reports of effective themes. Consistent with my expectations that consultant behaviors and perceptions are related, I find that those consultants who believe that voters view women as more honest ( $\tau_c = .38, p < .01$ ) and men as more corrupt ( $\tau_c = -.17, p < .05$ ) are also those consultants most likely to view the honesty theme as more effective for women candidates. Moreover, those consultants who view strong masculine and feminine trait and issue stereotypes are more likely than those who do not to perceive honesty and ethics as themes more effective for female than male candidates (see Table 6). Similarly, consultants who perceive more gender stereotypical terrain on traits and issues are also more likely to view a government reform theme as more effective for female candidates than male candidates.

A majority of Republican and Democratic consultants view a theme emphasizing family values as equally effective for men and women, but there is greater variance in Democratic consultants' responses; 17% of Democratic consultants say family values is a more effective theme for male candidates with another 20% of Democrats reporting it is more effective for female candidates. The robustness of Republican responses, on the other hand, might reflect the more common adoption of this theme by Republican candidates and strategic teams. For Democrats, among whom family values are less universally defined in politics and policy, aligning this theme along gendered lines may prove difficult.

Finally, and most interestingly, Democratic and Republican consultants universally viewed gender-based advantages on effectiveness on only two themes offered on the survey.

Compassion is the only theme that is viewed by consultants as more effective for female candidates, with majorities of both Democratic and Republican consultants reporting a feminine advantage on this theme. While the majorities are smaller, this finding further bolsters the strength of consultants' beliefs that women candidates – across party - are viewed as more compassionate than their male counterparts (see above). Moreover, those consultants who report that voters are more likely to associate compassion with female candidates are also those who believe a compassion theme is more effective for women running for office ( $\tau_b = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

In evaluating the effectiveness of a theme that emphasizes strength and/or toughness, both Republican and Democratic consultants are split on whether this theme is more effective for male candidates, or equally effective for men or women running for office. There is no majority perspective across all consultants on this theme's effectiveness by candidate gender. However, those consultants who see strong masculine trait and feminine issue stereotypes are also those most likely to view strength and/or toughness as a more effective theme (see Table 6). While compassion and strength and/or toughness are the only two themes that consultants universally view as gendered, my analyses show ties between their perceptions of gender stereotypes and effective campaign practice on the other themes I presented to them.

### *Negative Campaigning*

The remaining survey questions asked consultants to help clarify where, in what ways, and to what extent they believe that candidate gender influences campaign tactics and candidate presentation. One area where consultants consistently point to gender impact is in their reactions to questions about the necessity of and backlash to negative campaigning. While the majority of consultants – across partisan affiliation – see emphasizing opponents'

professional and even personal faults as necessary (either sometimes or usually) (see Table 7), they point to the potential for gendered interpretations of candidate behavior. Overall, 65% of all consultants agree that male candidates need to “tread more carefully” in criticizing female opponents instead of male opponents. Republican and Democratic consultants are unified in this position; 64.2% of Republicans and 65.7% of Democrats either agree or strongly agree with the statement, “Male candidates need to tread more carefully in criticizing their opponent when that opponent is a woman.” Moreover, those consultants who perceive strong masculine trait stereotypes in voters’ psyche are even more likely to advocate caution for male candidates in mixed-gender contests ( $\tau_c = -.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ). These views evidence consultants’ perceptions of institutional norms of appropriate behavior in cross-gender contrast that are, at least partly, rooted in stereotypical expectations of gender roles, strengths, and vulnerabilities for men and women.

In post-survey interviews, consultants cited a certain “skittishness” or “queasiness” in going too negative against female candidates with male clients, both from voters and male candidates themselves. Despite women candidates’ experience and stature, stereotypic perceptions of appropriateness in behavior perpetuate images of male protectors and female victims. It is when the male candidate becomes attacker that they violate these norms and appear as a bully instead of a gentleman. Democratic consultant Erik Williams cautioned, “Certainly, you never want to be the guy drawing first blood on a woman. No doubt about it” (Personal interview). Similarly, Republican media consultant Scott Schweitzer said that men “don’t want to be the jerk throwing mud on a woman” (Personal interview). However, in elaborating on this challenge, consultants explained that it is more often a question of tone, wherein male candidates need to be more conscious of how – not if – they criticize a female opponent. According to Republican consultant Brett Feinstein, “You have to be very

**Table 7. Perceptions of Negative Campaigning By Consultant Party**

|  | Republican Consultants      |                               |                            | Democratic Consultants      |                               |                            | <i>Pearson<br/>Chi-<br/>Square<br/>Value</i> |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
|  | Usually<br>Necessary<br>(%) | Sometimes<br>Necessary<br>(%) | Seldom<br>Necessary<br>(%) | Usually<br>Necessary<br>(%) | Sometimes<br>Necessary<br>(%) | Seldom<br>Necessary<br>(%) |  |
| Emphasizing Opponents' Professional Faults | 67.2                        | 31.3                          | 1.5                        | 82                          | 16.2                          | 1.8                        | 5.59*  |
| Emphasizing Opponents' Personal Faults     | 15.2                        | 63.6                          | 21.2                       | 18.9                        | 63.1                          | 18                         | 0.56   |

*Cells represent the percentage of Republican and Democratic consultants responding to the question, "In your campaign experience, have you found the following tactics to be usually necessary, sometimes necessary, or seldom necessary in competing against your candidate's opponent?"*

N ranges from 177 to 178; N (Republican Consultants) ranges from 66 to 67, and N (Democratic Consultants)=111.

Pearson chi-square values measure differences in responses by consultant party.

\*p<.10



careful about tone...you can make the statement, but you can't necessarily be as heavy-handed with it" when running against a woman (Personal interview). Democratic consultant Hal Malchow agreed that men do not need to avoid the attack, "it's just 'lighten up a little'" (Personal interview). These perceptions are consistent with previous research on gender and negative campaigning that both examines historical troubles of men going negative against women and finds male candidates more likely to use these examples to caution their own strategic calculations, so as not to be perceived as bullies (Fox 1997; Renner 1993; Tolleson-Rinehart and Stanley 1994).

#### *Targeting Women Voters*

Fox (1997) finds evidence that men running against women also often adapt their campaigns to consciously reach out to women voters, based upon perceptions of female candidates' advantage among women voters.<sup>16</sup> This desire to be seen as attentive to women can take many forms—increasing the number and visibility of women active in a campaign, setting up a special campaign group for women supporters, increasing campaign attention to issues of concern to women, and/or targeting women voters for outreach efforts. With this in mind, I asked political consultants which candidates benefit most from targeting women voters, offering generic candidate match-ups varying gender and party. Based on the persistence of a gender gap in voting where women vote more Democratic and scholarly evidence of a baseline gender preference for women candidates (CAWP 2011; Sanbonmatsu 2002), I expect campaign consultants to see targeting women voters as most advantageous for women and Democratic candidates.

This expectation is confirmed by my survey results, where consultants see targeting women voters as most advantageous to Democratic and female candidates (see Table 8). In hypothetical match-ups between Democratic women against Democratic men, Republican

women, and Republican men, a majority of both Democratic and Republican consultants report that targeting women voters most benefits the Democratic woman candidate. However, far fewer Republican consultants than Democratic consultants cede this advantage to Democratic women when they are matched against Republican candidates. When Republican women are matched against Democratic men, a majority of Democratic consultants report that targeting women voters is most beneficial for Democratic men and a majority of Republican consultants perceive that advantage for Republican women ( $\tau_c = -.35, p < .01$ ). In a hypothetical primary race between a Republican man and a Republican woman, strong majorities of Republican and Democratic consultants identify greater benefit for Republican women in targeting women voters. Finally, when presented with an electoral match-up between a Democratic man and a Republican man, a majority of both Republican and Democratic consultants note that targeting women voters is more beneficial for the Democratic man. Still, over 90% of Democratic consultants see a Democratic advantage of targeting women in this match-up while nearly 35% of Republican consultants say that targeting women voters would be more beneficial to the Republican man ( $\tau_c = -.24, p < .01$ ).

While they indicate a strong view that Democratic women benefit *most* from targeting women voters via campaign strategy, these responses reveal that Republican and Democratic consultants are most likely to see the benefit of targeting women voters for members of their own party. This demonstrates that consultants affiliated with both parties perceive women voters as valuable sources of support from which their candidates would benefit. In cases where party is constant, strong majorities of consultants argue that targeting women voters is most beneficial to the female contender; therefore, consultants are more likely to advocate targeting women voters to take advantage of a potential gender-based

**Table 8. Perceptions of Candidate Benefit from Targeting Women Voters by Consultant Party**

|                                      | Republican Consultants (%) | Democratic Consultants (%) | <i>Pearson Chi-Square Value</i> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Democratic Man v. Democratic Woman   | 19<br>81                   | 6.1<br>93.9                | 6.31*                           |
| Democratic Man v. Republican Woman   | 22.8<br>68.4               | 60.6<br>35.4               | 21.0*                           |
| Democratic Man v. Republican Man     | 65.3<br>34.7               | 92.9<br>5.1                | 23.1*                           |
| Republican Man v. Republican Woman   | 12.5<br>73.2               | 9.1<br>85.9                | 4.9                             |
| Republican Man v. Democratic Woman   | 29.1<br>63.6               | 4.1<br>93.9                | 21.2*                           |
| Democratic Woman v. Republican Woman | 56<br>40                   | 79.4<br>16.5               | 15.9*                           |

*Cells represent the percentage of Republican and Democratic consultants responding to the question, "In head-to-head races, which of the following candidates stand to benefit MOST from targeting women voters?" They were asked to choose one of two choices for each pairing.*

*N ranges from 147 to 157; N (Republican Consultants) ranges from 49 to 58, and N (Democratic Consultants) ranges from 97 to 99.*

*Pearson chi-square values measure differences in responses by consultant party.*

*\*p<.05*

advantage than to try to compensate for that advantage in an opponent. In Chapter 6, I probe consultants and candidates more deeply about their direct appeals to women voters.

### *Candidate Presentation*

Much of the literature analyzing campaign output (television advertisements, direct mail, and websites) focuses on the images candidates present to the public. Those analyses finding gender differences in campaign imaging point to potentially heightened considerations of appearance, family roles, and credentialing for female candidates (Bystrom 1994; Bystrom et al. 2004; Bystrom and Kaid 2002; Kahn 1996; Schneider 2008; Williams 1998). Many scholars have cited these differences as evidence of female candidates' adaptation to male traits and issues, implying women's campaign strategies seek to counter gender stereotypes that describe them as unsuited for political office (Benze and DeClerq 1985; Bystrom and Kaid 2002; Kahn 1996). However, very little scholarship directly asks those drafting strategy and creating campaign outputs *why* they make the decisions that they do about candidate presentation.

To investigate this question, I asked consultants whether certain presentation styles related to appearance and family work better for male candidates, work better for female candidates, or work about the same for men and women in winning voter support. Guided by these prevailing findings on campaign output, I expect that campaign consultants will say that picturing candidates in professional dress works better for female candidates. In terms of familial presence, I expect that consultants will report that picturing candidates with their spouse and with their young children works better for male candidates as they reflect their masculinity. For female candidates, on the other hand, families might be perceived as highlighting the contrast between feminine gender roles in the family and the masculine expectations of political office. Finally, I expect that consultants will view a presentation

strategy where candidates are pictured with grown children as equally benign for male and female candidates. Existing research on gender and campaign output does not reveal significant partisan differences on any of these dimensions, but most studies include very few Republican women in their analyses. As Sarah Palin evidenced on the national scale in the 2008 presidential contest, there may be alternative images adopted and motivations for presenting family for conservative women. At the same time, the scrutiny she faced over wardrobe and family situations demonstrated a more persistent experience for women candidates that may inform unique presentation strategies on these dimensions.

In survey responses, a narrow majority of consultants say that picturing a candidate with his/her spouse and picturing a candidate with his/her children – whether the children are young or old – work “about the same” for male and female candidates (see Table 9). Just slightly smaller proportions of consultants cite spousal presence and picturing candidates with his/her own young children as working better for male candidates, and these perceptions do not differ between Republican and Democratic consultants. In a post-survey interview, one Democratic female consultant explained that while women candidates often benefit from having their mothers or daughters in advertisements, for example, husbands are unable to play a similarly helpful role. When asked about including husbands – versus wives – in campaign ads, she said, “I would never do that,” elaborating on the potential for husbands to undermine campaign messaging (Personal interview). Republican consultant Scott Schweitzer told me that, for men, showing families helps to show that they are devoted fathers and husbands. With women, he argued, “you are never trying to show that she is a devoted wife” (Personal interview). Other consultants interviewed pointed to the benefit of showing families for male candidates as a way to “humanize” or “soften” their image, while women are already perceived as maternal or nurturing.

**Table 9. Perceptions of Effectiveness of Presentation Styles for Male and/or Female Candidates by Consultant Party**

|  | Republican Consultants                           |  |                             | Democratic Consultants                           |  |                             | <i>Pearson<br/>Chi-Square<br/>Value</i> |
|--|--|--|-----------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------|---|
|  | Works<br>Better for<br>Male<br>Candidates<br>(%) | Works<br>Better for<br>Female<br>Candidates<br>(%) | About<br>the<br>Same<br>(%) | Works<br>Better for<br>Male<br>Candidates<br>(%) | Works<br>Better for<br>Female<br>Candidates<br>(%) | About<br>the<br>Same<br>(%) |   |
| Picturing the candidate with his/her spouse  | 45.59  | 1.47   | 52.94                       | 40   | 6.36   | 53.64                       | 2.55                                    |
| Picturing the candidate with his/her family ( <i>only</i> when children are grown) | 7.46   | 17.91  | 74.63                       | 5.5  | 13.74  | 80.73                       | 0.92                                    |
| Picturing the candidate with his/her family ( <i>even if</i> children are young)   | 37.31  | 4.48   | 58.21                       | 41.82  | 8.18   | 50                          | 37.31                                   |
| Picturing the candidate in primarily professional dress attire                     | 3.08   | 29.23  | 67.69                       | 2.73   | 50.91  | 46.36                       | 7.92*                                   |

*Cells represent the percentage of Republican and Democratic consultants responding to the question, "Do you think that these strategies work better for male candidates, work better for female candidates, or work about the same for male and female candidates?"*

N ranges from 175 to 178; N (Republican Consultants) ranges from 65 to 68, and N (Democratic Consultants) ranges from 109 to 110

Pearson chi-square values measure differences in responses by consultant party.

\*p<.05

However, some consultants described a shift in the “rules of the game” for women candidates, as showing their families in candidate imagery brings fewer risks and greater benefits than in the past. According to these consultants, female candidates can use family to emphasize points of shared identity, especially in attracting women voters. Consultants I interviewed cited shifting gender roles in the public and private spheres and greater diversity in images and familial situations of female candidates as helping to break down these supposed rules of engagement for women. Moreover, some consultants identified attempts to minimize family imagery and present a strongly professional, and masculine, appearance as potentially problematic for female candidates. This concern is amplified for Republican women candidates, according to Republican consultant Brett Feinstein. In a post-survey interview, he noted that stay-at-home mothers are one of the most reliable Republican voting groups, and that they are often most skeptical of women’s ability to balance office-holding with family responsibilities; “If they [stay at home], the automatic question is ‘If this is my life experience, why isn’t it your life experience?’” (Personal interview with Brett Feinstein). Therefore, Republican women candidates may be navigating uniquely gendered terrain whereby the accepted gender roles of their primary constituents conflict with the professional roles they are seeking. While the nuances of candidate presentation may be shaped by gender *and* party, these findings affirm that campaigns’ presentation decisions are at least somewhat influenced by consultants’ perceptions of gendered political terrain.

In addition to the role of candidates’ families, scholars and practitioners alike have often-cited the amplified role of candidate appearance for women candidates. In describing the “double standard” facing female candidates in a post-survey interview, Democratic consultant Chris Panetta explained, “they are more scrutinized [...] about their hairdos, about the way they dress, how much they spend on their clothes,” instead of more

substantive issues (Personal interview). This concern about being taken seriously is often combined with perceptions that female candidates are better off sticking to professional dress – both in advertisements and on the campaign trail. I asked survey respondents whether adopting this style of dress is most beneficial to men or women candidates, or equally beneficial to both. While a majority of Democratic consultants surveyed agree say that dressing primarily in professional dress works better for female candidates, a majority of Republican consultants report that this style of dress has equal impact for male and female candidates ( $\tau_{uc} = .20, p < .01$ ). This partisan difference may reflect, at least in part, the influence of party stereotypes on candidate credentials for leadership. Whereas party stereotypes associating Republicans with toughness may work to reduce gender-based liabilities for Republican women candidates, Democratic consultants may view appearance as an additional, and important, route toward overcoming the same liabilities for Democratic women. Or, as I mentioned above, these findings may evidence greater diversity in and acceptance of the images projected by female Republican candidates currently on the political scene.

In a post-survey interview, Democratic consultant Kari Baumgardner noted that her firm tends to shoot women in professional dress to emphasize accountability and experience (Personal interview). While this approach is consistent with consultants' perceptions of voter stereotypes, other consultants I interviewed cautioned that women are still tasked with connecting to women voters who may have other life trajectories. In this way, women are often asked to present two images – as credentialed candidate and empathetic woman. Dennis Bailey, consultant to gubernatorial candidate and businesswoman Rosa Scarcellì (D-ME), put it succinctly in advising his candidate when he said, “You need to be strong, tough; but you [still] need to be a woman” (Personal interview).



### Consultant Gender and Perceptions

Scholarship on voter beliefs and gender stereotypes has pointed to the important influence of voters' gender and partisan identities (Dolan 2010; Dolan and Sanbonmatsu 2009; King and Matland 2000; Koch 1999, 2000; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). Dolan (2010), for example, finds a significant interaction between respondent sex and party in measuring people's evaluations of female stereotypes. I argue that these identities are equally important to consider in consultants' evaluations of stereotypes and strategy. While political party appears to play a more significant role than gender in voter perceptions, it is often difficult to disaggregate these differences due to the strong correlation between women and Democratic Party identification. This problem persists in my data, as 75% of the already small number of women respondents (28) work primarily for Democratic candidates. In order to address this disparity, I compare only the findings for Democratic men and women below to provide an initial analysis of gender differences in consultant perceptions and behaviors.

Not only are there few Republican women among respondents, the overall population demonstrates – consistent with previous research (Brewer 2004) – that political consulting continues to be a male-dominated profession. Nearly 75% of consultants working for federal and/or gubernatorial races are men, based on my calculations.<sup>17</sup> This is consistent with the perspective of those in the profession, as more than 70% of survey respondents believe that women make up less than a third of all political consultants.<sup>18</sup> However, among my respondents, there is greater gender parity among those consultants in the field for five years or less (61% men, 39% women), which may reflect a move toward greater gender parity in the profession. As the gender diversity of consultants changes, will there be any substantive impact on strategy or campaign approach? Consistent with research on women's

unique approach to politics and professions, I expect that women might also offer a different perspective on gender dynamics when working on political campaigns. As women navigating the gendered terrain of campaigns, I expect they will be more likely than their male counterparts to identify gender stereotypical beliefs among voters, gender differences in consulting approaches, and gender-based challenges facing women candidates. I provide some preliminary insight on these areas in the analysis below.

### *Identity Influences*

First, I asked all consultants whether certain identities and affiliations – race, religion, political ideology, and gender - influenced their approach to campaign strategy, either a lot, a little, or not at all. The majority of Democratic and Republican (and male and female) consultants said that both their racial and gender identities mattered “a little” in their strategic approach. They also took a middle road when asked whether male and female campaign consultants approach campaigns in ways that are very similar, similar, or not at all similar. Sixty-one percent of Republican consultants and 57% of Democratic consultants shared this viewpoint, with only 2% of Democratic consultants (and no Republican consultants) saying that men and women’s approaches are not similar at all. In order to investigate these questions further, I compare survey findings across consultant gender. As explained above, only Democratic consultants are included in these calculations due to the dearth of Republican women in my pool of respondents.

When disaggregated by gender, Democratic women are more likely than their male counterparts to view women’s campaign approaches as *less* similar to men’s. While 100% of male consultants working for Democrats cite very similar (43%) or similar (57%) approaches across gender, only 29% of female consultants working for Democrats report very similar approaches. Moreover, 10% of women argue that men and women’s approaches to

campaigns are not similar at all. These findings evidence that women consultants not only view their approach as at least somewhat unique to men's campaign approaches, but also that they are more likely to perceive gender differences on the most basic measure of strategic approach.

*Gender Differences in Perceptions of Traits, Issues, and Themes*

Beyond their perceptions of gender difference in consulting practice, there are some places where Democratic men and women consultants differ in their survey responses on gender, perceptions, and strategy. Due to the preliminary nature of this data, I only present data that shows these differences in this section. However, contrary to my hypotheses, these sites for gender differences in consultant responses are few. Female consultants are more likely than men to see voters associating corruption with men ( $\tau_c = -.10$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and accessibility with women candidates ( $\tau_c = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ).<sup>19</sup> Additionally, while 48% of Democratic women consultants perceive a theme emphasizing moral values as more effective for female candidates, the majority of Democratic men consultants (81%) argue that this is a theme equally effective for men and women ( $\tau_c = .24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Male and female Democratic consultants do not differ at all in their views on voter perceptions of issue expertise and candidate gender (Data not presented). They also largely agree on their perceptions of whether particular presentation styles regarding dress and family work better for male or female candidates, with a slight difference in opinion over whether or not presenting a candidate with their grown children works better for women or works equally for both (Data not presented).<sup>20</sup> These findings are, overall, inconsistent and likely reflect the challenges of a small number of women and lack of partisan diversity among female respondents.

When asked about challenges that candidates might face, female consultants are more likely than male consultants to perceive a political landscape that is trickier for women candidates. Democratic women consultants are more likely than their male colleagues to say that fundraising is more difficult for women candidates than men ( $\tau_c = .19$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (see Table 10). While not reaching statistical significance due to a small subsample, female consultants are also more likely than men to perceive media and voter biases as greater challenges for female candidates; 81% of female consultants (v. 56.7% men) view media biases as more difficult for women and 76.2% (v. 55.4% men) say voter biases are more difficult for women.<sup>21</sup> Overall, while Democratic men and women view the political landscape very similarly in their responses, there is some evidence that female consultants perceive greater gender complexities in campaigning than do men. As one consultant pointed out in a post-survey interview, “Anybody’s background is going to bring a different perspective to a campaign. It’s all about where they come from and who they are” (Personal interview with Wooten Johnson). These different perspectives contribute to campaigns in unique and important ways, especially in influencing how, when, and to what extent campaigns consider gender in negotiating campaign terrain. Future research should take a more in-depth look at gender differences in consultant perceptions in behavior, with particular attention to gender differences among consultants of either party and partisan differences among male and female campaign professionals.

## **Discussion**

These survey findings provide insight into consultant perceptions of gender dynamics across the landscape of political campaigns. As both observers and practitioners, political consultants are experts in gauging public opinion, developing strategic plans, and

**Table 10. Democratic Consultants' Perceptions of Campaign Challenges, by Consultant Gender**

|                                      | Male Consultants                       |  |  | Female Consultants                     |  |  |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------|
|                                      | More difficult for male candidates (%) | More difficult for female candidates (%) | Equally difficult for male and female candidates (%) | More difficult for male candidates (%) | More difficult for female candidates (%) | Equally difficult for male and female candidates (%) | <i>Pearson Chi-Square Value</i> |
| Securing sufficient campaign funds   | 0                                      | 33.8                                     | 66.2   | 0                                      | 62.0                                     | 38.1   | 5.4*                            |
| Dealing with/ combating media biases | 2.7                                    | 56.8                                     | 40.5   | 0                                      | 81.0                                     | 19.1   | 4.2                             |
| Dealing with/ combating voter biases | 4.1                                    | 55.4                                     | 40.5   | 0                                      | 76.2                                     | 23.8   | 3.3                             |
| Managing campaign staff              | 2.7                                    | 13.5                                     | 83.8   | 4.8                                    | 23.8                                     | 71.4   | 1.6                             |

*Cells represent the percentage of male and female Democratic consultants responding to the questions, "Do you think that the following campaign challenges are more difficult for male candidates, more difficult for female candidates, or are equally difficult for male and female candidates?"*

N=95; N (Male Democratic Consultants)=74, and N (Female Democratic Consultants)=21. The small number of female consultants, while representative of the population, should be considered in data interpretation and generalization.

Pearson chi-square values measure differences in responses by consultant gender.

\*p<.05

navigating ever-changing political contexts. Their perceptions of gender stereotypes and gender influence not only provide scholars with unique measures of voter demands and expectations, but also indicate where and to what degree gender influences the development and execution of campaign strategy.

#### From voter demand to campaign supply

In returning to my original hypotheses, I find support for each. First, campaign consultants, overall, report that voters hold gender stereotypes on traits and issue expertise of male and female candidates. Both Republican and Democratic consultants report that voters are more likely to view women candidates as emotional and compassionate and male candidates as tough and assertive. Consultants also identify sets of issues assumed to be in the purview of men and women candidates – from national security to health care and education. Across the findings on trait and issue stereotypes, however, Democratic consultants are often *more* likely than Republican consultants to report gender differences in voter perceptions. These perceptions are correlated with consultants' beliefs about effective strategies for candidates of both genders.<sup>22</sup> Consultants who perceive strong voter trait and issue stereotypes are also those most likely to report gender as an important consideration in drafting campaign strategy. They are also more likely than consultants who report less voter reliance on gender stereotypes to point to clear gender advantages for specific campaign themes and candidate presentation styles. Republican consultants, unlike their Democratic counterparts, are less likely to view gender differences in voters' expectations of candidates.

Second, consultants provide evidence that their perceptions of voters' gender stereotypes influence campaign strategy and tactics. In survey results and supplemental interviews, political consultants elaborate on when, where, and to what extent gender informs their strategic recommendations. First, while consultants' evaluations of themes'

effectiveness evidence few gendered expectations and instead highlight the strong influence of political context, I show that consultants' perceptions of voter trait and issue stereotypes are related to their gendered evaluations of theme effectiveness. Democratic and Republican consultants identify another site for more gender-informed strategy by citing the fine line that male candidates walk when criticizing a female opponent. Despite women candidates' experience and stature, stereotypic perceptions of appropriateness in these mixed-gender settings reinforce norms of chivalry or masculine protectionism. Male candidates may also adjust tactics in mixed-gender races to disrupt female candidates' perceived advantage among women voters.

My findings demonstrate consultants' view that targeting women voters is most advantageous to Democratic women, who benefit from both a partisan gender gap and perceived gender-based affinities with women voters. However, when candidate party and gender is varied in hypothetical match-ups, my survey findings reveal that Democratic and Republican strategists perceive greater benefit for women candidates *of their own parties* in targeting women voters. Finally, campaign consultants are split in the presentation styles they recommend – especially in regard to families and dress - for male and female candidates. Though narrow majorities of consultants report that presenting candidates' spouses and young children works about the same for male and female candidates, nearly as many consultants identified a masculine advantage on these presentation styles whereby male candidates benefit more from being pictured with their wives and young children. Democratic consultants are slightly more likely to say that adopting professional dress works better for female candidates, while a majority of Republican consultants view no gender difference in the utility of dressing professionally in campaigns.

At the start of this chapter, I laid out a final hypothesis which argued consultants' perceptions and behaviors around gender and campaign strategy would be influenced by the identities and experiences that they bring to campaigns. More specifically, I argued that consultant party and gender would inform their perceptions of voters' gendered beliefs and their recommendations for best strategies for men and women candidates to negotiate them. And, as I outline in each section, I also expected to find an interaction of gender and party stereotypes informing consultant perspectives differently based upon their party affiliation. Republican and Democratic consultants perceive equally strong voter stereotypes on three traits – emotional, compassionate, and assertive, and four issues – social programs, education, health care, and foreign policy. However, on the remaining traits and issues, I found partisan differences that reflected either a much weaker, though shared, majority response by Republican consultants, or cases where the majorities of Republican and Democratic consultants differed in their responses. On each dimension of difference, Republican consultants were less likely than Democratic consultants to report gender differences in voter perceptions. In terms of strategic and tactical responses, Republican consultants were even more likely than their Democratic counterparts to discount gender differences in themes' effectiveness. As I describe above, slight partisan differences emerged in consultant evaluations of candidate presentation styles and perception of utility in targeting voters, but both Democratic and Republican consultants were unified in their belief that male candidates must tread carefully in going negative against female opponents.

My survey findings do not explain why these perceptions differ by consultant party, but I offer some potential explanations throughout my analysis. First, I argue that partisan differences in consultant perceptions and responses may emerge due to the interaction of party and gender stereotypes for the candidates for whom they work. In other words, if



consultants rely on their own professional experiences - where they face differently (or less) gendered terrain - in responding to questions about voter beliefs and expectations of candidates, their responses better reflect a difference in electoral experiences between consultants than conflicting views on gender. More specifically, I describe multiple hypotheses arguing Republican consultants will be less likely to perceive gender differences in voter perceptions or strategic effectiveness on traits, issues, themes, or tactics on which party stereotypes can be perceived as counteracting or transcending gendered expectations, particularly for Republican women candidates. I find that while no partisan differences emerged on multiple stereotypically feminine traits or issues – like compassion, social programs, education, and health care, they are more consistent across stereotypically masculine traits or issues, including toughness, national security, defense, and crime. Interestingly, these results reveal partisan differences only on sites perceived as gendered liabilities for women candidates, instead of all sites where gender and party stereotypes (Democrat and Republican) might interact to either amplify or counteract stereotypical perceptions. However, Republican consultants also discount the role of gender on traits, issues, and behaviors throughout survey responses, and on sites where no party and/or gender stereotypes predict this difference.

Therefore, I offer another potential explanation for partisan differences in consultant responses that is less tied to sites of expected stereotypical views. Consultants' experience working with female candidates or in mixed-gender races, where gender is viewed as most salient, may inform their evaluations of the degree to which campaign terrain is gendered. Democratic consultants in my survey are more likely than Republican consultants to have had a greater percentage of female clients overall. This is consistent with evidence that women candidates and officeholders have been majority Democratic. The same is true

among voters, where women have identified more often as Democrats since the 1980s (CAWP 2011). As a result, Democratic consultants negotiate a gendered electoral landscape that is unique from that of their Republican colleagues, but may also be more primed by their experiences to both consider and view gender dynamics when reflecting on campaign settings and strategy. Finally, differences in the structures, culture, and ideologies of the two major U.S. parties may explain some of my results (see Freeman 1987; 2000).

My survey results offer preliminary evidence that consultants' gender, too, may influence both their perceptions and navigation of campaigns' gendered landscape. In my limited analyses among only Democratic consultants, women are more likely to perceive differences in the approaches of male and female consultants generally. Moreover, they are more likely than their male counterparts to perceive greater challenges to female candidates – from fundraising to media and voter biases. These perceptions are consistent with female consultants' evaluations of voters' gendered associations on multiple traits and areas of issue expertise, wherein women professionals are more likely than men to identify gender stereotypes that advantage men or women instead of viewing campaign terrain as gender-neutral. However, many of these differences fail to reach significance, and are weakened by the small number of women in the population of consultants. Despite these challenges, my limited findings provide a foundation for future research on the impact of the consulting industry's dearth of gender diversity. If men and women do bring different perspectives to campaigns, it matters that there continue to be fewer women at strategic decision-making tables.

### Gender Matters

The survey data and interview findings help to clarify to what degree gender matters in consultants' perceptions and strategic recommendations. While both Democratic and

Republican consultants cite candidates' experience and background as the most important strategic considerations, Democratic consultants are more likely to view candidate and opponent gender as influential in strategic development. Still, consultants from both parties – and of both genders - emphasize that the candidate's story is most influential in drafting a campaign image and message, and gender is just one part of this story. One consultant wrote in an open-ended survey response, "[Gender] matters, but it is just one small element in a very complex equation." Another respondent wrote, "Strategy is shaped by the political environment and the attributes of the two candidates. Gender is simply another attribute that has to be taken into consideration." The important aspects of the political environment, as outlined by the consultants I surveyed, include partisan dynamics and differences, the level and type of office being contested, and voters' familiarity with a candidate, often through incumbency. In a post-survey interview, Democratic consultant Hal Malchow described how gender cues and expectations play a bigger role for unknown candidates, adding that gender advantages or disadvantages often diminish as candidates are individualized in the minds of voters (Personal interview). Another consultant I interviewed emphasized the important, and often difficult, relationship of gender and party, arguing – as I have - that perceptions of gender stereotypes, gendered behaviors, and even gender strategy are often conflated with or guided by partisan stereotypes and expectations. Disaggregating responses by partisan identity in this chapter and exploring individual cases of Republican and Democratic candidates in the remaining chapters of this project begins to disentangle some of these conflated perceptions. Despite consultants' reminders of the many important considerations *in addition to* gender, their responses caution against a "gender-blind" approach to campaigning or campaign analysis. As one survey respondent wrote, "To ignore gender in strategy, message, and how one deals with an opponent is malpractice!"

## Conclusion

This chapter takes an innovative approach to uncover the roots of gender differences in campaign output by investigating gendered perceptions in its development. More clearly, I investigate the perceptions of campaign consultants to determine if, when, and to what effect gender stereotypes influence campaign strategy and decision-making. Political consultants have grown in both presence and influence on campaigns in the past thirty years. As a staple of contemporary campaigns, especially for high-level contests, consultants are political elites not only worthy of study, but important to fully understanding the dynamics and decisions within political campaigns. In this study, the perceptions of campaign professionals not only evidence that campaign institutions are gendered – and remain so – but provide greater insight into the ways in which gender influences strategic development and the sites wherein gender power is held in campaigns. Women continue to face challenges that men do not face on the campaign trail as voters adjust their preconceived notions of masculine leaders to accommodate female candidates assumed to embody femininity. However, this power advantage to masculinism and men is somewhat altered as women's presence also challenges male candidates to negotiate their own gender identities with knowledge of voters' expectations. In addition, political consultants point to sites of gender advantage for women over men, reminding scholars and insiders alike that gender is not universally a boon for men and burden for women.

While political consultants' perceptions provide evidence of voters' gendered beliefs, it is important to consider the accuracy of those perceptions and what inaccuracy might mean for candidates' success and institutional change. Noting the importance of questioning consultant perceptions instead of simply accepting them as fact, Grossman (2009b) writes:

We need to combine theories of the causes of strategic decisions with theories of the effects of campaigns. We know that consultants make decisions with an eye to winning

elections but do so with incomplete and conflicting information and in response to salient historical lessons. As a result, there is much unexplained campaign variation based on strategic decisions that are not discernable by simply knowing the objective circumstances of each election (15).

In this chapter, I discuss consultants' perceptions of voter stereotypes as one cause of their strategic decisions, and add that those decisions influence the effects of campaigns – both institutional and electoral. Differences among consultants' perceptions do not necessarily indicate inaccuracy, and instead may simply reflect the important influence of consultants' diverse experiences negotiating uniquely gendered terrain – whether by party, state, region, or level of office. Therefore, my survey findings may just reflect Republican and Democratic consultants' different political realities. However, the inconsistency in consultant reports of voter stereotypes and partisan differences on traits, issues, and areas that are not associated with strong party stereotypes should encourage scholars and practitioners alike to reflect upon whether stereotypical perceptions are at all inaccurately amplified by some consultants or discounted by others. These perceptions have electoral implications. For example, consultants who perceive gender stereotypes among voters as few and uninfluential might miss important opportunities to best negotiate campaign terrain for optimal electoral outcomes; on the same note, consultants who amplify voters' stereotypical perceptions may overcompensate for them in the strategies they recommend.

Regardless of the accuracy of their perceptions of voter beliefs and effective strategy for male and female candidates, consultants' strategic decisions also have implications for the gendering of campaign institutions. As Grossman (2009b) adds in his analysis, “Scholars should [...] not underestimate the potential for [consultants'] strategic decisions to produce unintended outcomes even if they are unsuccessful in achieving their [electoral] goals” (21). Among those “unintended outcomes,” I argue, are the institutional implications of campaign decision-making. In the case of political campaigns, the behavior of male and female

candidates –shaped by their consultants’ understanding of the prevailing political landscape – have the potential to replicate, challenge, or even redefine gender norms. Among those consultants who view gender stereotypes as functioning in campaigns, two options, most often combined, are often proposed by scholars and practitioners: contend those gender stereotypes that disadvantage your candidate while taking advantage of gender stereotypes that work to your candidate’s advantage. While these approaches are strategically sensible in light of the stereotype-infused terrain, they do little to alter – and instead adapt to - the institution’s valuing of masculinity and societal expectations of women’s femininity. In contrast, Sue Thomas (1997) argues that significant institutional change will require “alternative role development” for women candidates that neither replicates the male model nor relies on traditional female roles.<sup>23</sup>

Moving toward recognition of and strategic emphasis on an alternative role for women candidates requires strategists come to the table with a full understanding of campaign’s contexts and the countervailing forces at play – including gender’s function within campaign institutions. Matching consultant perceptions to actual voter beliefs – as done here - provides a foundational measure of this understanding among consultants. Secondly, challenging traditional roles requires more complex re-imagining of candidates and officeholders by both practitioners and the public. Campaigns play a role in this re-imagining in the traits they value, messages they adopt, and tactics they espouse. The findings of this chapter offer a starting point for greater discussion and thinking about the evolution of gendered expectations of male and female candidates, and how those expectations influence how strategists and candidates negotiate political terrain. Survey research, however, is limited in the degree to which it accounts for the extreme variability of campaign contexts and the multi-faceted identities of any one candidate. In the remaining chapters, I bore more deeply

into specific campaign contexts and individual campaigns to better address the interaction of gender with the complex and ever-changing dynamics of modern campaigns. In doing so, I continue to engage political practitioners and campaign insiders about campaigns' strategic considerations. Their intimate knowledge of campaigns enriches existing research and better illuminates the ways in which they navigate electoral institutions. Together, the survey and interview findings presented in this project help to determine whether modern candidates and campaign practitioners are charting a new course for gendered politics, or whether their decisions preserve campaign institutions' masculine expectations.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> “Democratic consultants” and “Republican consultants” refer to those consultants who reported that they work primarily for Democratic or Republican candidates. Those consultants who reported working for both Democrats and Republicans (N=8) were removed from these analyses.

<sup>2</sup> In the survey, I asked political consultants, “Which of the following analogies best characterizes political campaigns?” Given the options of “Political campaigns are like selling toothpaste,” “Political campaigns are like cooking,” “Political campaigns are like sporting events,” or “Political campaigns are like waging wars,” respondents were most likely to describe campaigns as wars (46%) and sporting events (39%), instead of using less masculine rhetoric. Ten percent of consultants said that campaigns are like cooking and 4.4 percent said campaigns are like selling toothpaste. Both dominant themes of campaign rhetoric draw upon masculine terms of competition and perpetuate ideals of manly behavior that best suits male actors.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this chapter, I describe traits, issues, and behaviors as “feminine” or “masculine” based upon previous literature on voter characterizations or associations. These do not reflect a personal definition of feminine and/or masculine traits, issues, or behaviors.

<sup>4</sup> Contrary to these findings and more consistent with research showing an interaction between party and gender stereotypes, King and Matland (2003) and Hayes (2005) Republican women are not viewed significantly differently than Republican men on compassion. This finding would better reflect the influence of Democratic stereotypes that can amplify perceptions of Democratic women's compassion or expertise on issues deemed Democratic by voters.

<sup>5</sup> Sanbonmatsu and Dolan (2009) find that Republican voters are actually less likely than Democrats to see women as well-suited emotionally for politics. In this way, candidates' – and especially women's – emotion is often viewed as a weakness by voters. Popular reactions to and criticism of Hillary Clinton's display of emotion on the campaign trail compared to the emotion often showed by her husband, former President Bill Clinton, and other male

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politicians may better reflect these gender differences within electoral contexts (see Carroll and Dittmar 2009).

<sup>6</sup> There is a slight difference in views of toughness by consultant party ( $p < .10$ ).

<sup>7</sup> The only additional explanation I offer here is that the modifier “strong” in my survey wording may have primed respondents to consider that trait alone, which may be more associated with Republicans.

<sup>8</sup> This loose definition of “women’s issues” is based upon research on the substantive priorities of women legislators (CAWP 2001; Swers 2002).

<sup>9</sup> See Petrocik’s (1996) discussion of “performance-issue reputations” versus “issue ownership” by party.

<sup>10</sup> Tied strongly to the successes of the Civil Rights movement and Republicans’ so-called “southern strategy” to react to it, Republican presidential candidates Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon emphasized “restoring law and order” as central tenets of the electoral campaigns. Moreover, the presidency of Republican Ronald Reagan brought a “war on crime” that resulted in some of the toughest anti-crime legislation in U.S. history. See Gerald Shargel, “No Mercy: Ronald Reagan’s tough legal legacy,” *Slate.com*, <http://www.slate.com/id/2102352/> (accessed 7/23/11) for detail and criticism of these efforts.

<sup>11</sup> It is possible that Republican consultants may perceive women within their party as better able to present business and economic credentials due to party-based expectations; therefore, their perception of gender differences on economic issue expertise may be particularly weak when compared to Democratic consultants, whose candidates are less likely to come from private business backgrounds.

<sup>12</sup> The tau-c score measuring the relationship between consultant party and perspective on office-type voting is  $-.18$  ( $p < .05$ ).

<sup>13</sup> In 2008, Barack Obama became the first African-American president of the United States, evoking political discussions of race throughout his campaign. In 2010, multiple candidates at the statewide level navigated racial terrain. For example, in South Carolina, Governor Nikki Haley (R) became the second Indian-American governor in the country and shared the title of first women of color governor with 2010 victor Governor Susana Martinez (R-NM).

<sup>14</sup> The feminine trait scale includes consultants’ perceptions of voter associations of the following traits with women candidates, with a score of 1 for each trait for which the respondent views voters’ as associating the trait with women candidates ( $-1$  if they associate the trait with men and  $0$  if they report that voters associate the trait to about the extent with male and female candidates): emotional, liberal, accessible, cooperative, compassionate, and honest (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .71$ ). The masculine trait scale includes consultants’ perceptions of voter associations of the following traits with male candidates: corrupt, tough, leader, strong leader, conservative, and assertive (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .64$ ). The feminine issue scale includes consultants’ perceptions of voter attributions of issue expertise to female candidates on the following issues: health care, education, family policy, and social programs (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .80$ ). Finally, the masculine issue scale includes consultants’ perceptions of voter attributions of issue expertise to male candidates on the following issues: national



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security, defense, foreign policy, taxes/economy, and crime (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .74$ ). Scales are additive and scores range from 0 to 6 (feminine trait scale), -1 to 5 (masculine trait scale), -4 to 4 (feminine issue scale), and 0 to 5 (masculine issue scale). The lowest scores reflect weak perceptions that voters hold traditional gender stereotypes. The highest scores reflect strong perceptions that voters hold traditional gender stereotypes.

<sup>15</sup> This relationship is significant on 3 of the 4 stereotype scales: feminine traits ( $\tau_b = -.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ), feminine issues ( $\tau_b = -.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and masculine issues scales ( $\tau_b = -.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Dolan (2008) evaluates campaign websites and finds little evidence that men spend more time focusing on stereotypically women's issues in order to cede territory from their female opponents. She concludes: "In the end, it may be that the sex of an opponent is merely one of many considerations that candidates and campaigns consider when developing their issue messages. Amid the push and pull of national, local, constituency, and party influences, it may be that the sex of an opponent is not a significant enough factor to dramatically shape candidate choices" (Dolan 2008, 778).

<sup>17</sup> Due to my criteria for inclusion in the survey population, this calculation excludes direct mail and fundraising consultants (see also endnote 3). As Brewer (2004) reports, women consultants are much more prominent in fundraising. However, I focus on consulting specializations focused on strategic decision-making to determine how professionals address gender therein.

<sup>18</sup> In the survey, I asked consultants, "About what percentage of active campaign consultants would you guess were women?" They were given space to provide an open-ended response. Democratic consultants report a greater percentage of female consultants than do Republican consultants ( $p < .10$ ). This is not terribly surprising, as female consultants are disproportionately Democratic.

<sup>19</sup> All Democratic female respondents say that voters associate the "corrupt" trait more often with male candidates, compared to 86% of Democratic male respondents. Eighty-six percent of Democratic female consultants report that voters view female candidates as more accessible than male candidates, compared to 62% of Democratic male consultants who say the same.

<sup>20</sup> Twenty-nine percent of Democratic female consultants surveyed report that presenting the candidate with family *only* when children are grown works better for female candidates, and only 10% of Democratic male consultants agree. However, majorities of both Democratic women (71.4%) and Democratic men (83.6%) see little gender difference in the benefit of this particular familial image.

<sup>21</sup>  $\tau_c$  [Media Biases] = .17,  $p < .05$ ;  $\tau_c$  [Voter Biases] = .15,  $p < .05$

<sup>22</sup> Data not fully presented here, but available from author upon request.

<sup>23</sup> This alternative is consistent with Duerst-Lahti and Kelly's (1995) conception of "transgendering" political institutions to alter dynamics of gender power that privilege masculinity and men without calling for gender neutrality, which they claim is impossible.

## CHAPTER 4: DOES GENDER MATTER?

Scholars and practitioners debate the steps toward and considerations necessary to yield campaign success, offering both the most basic principles and highly complex equations to explain or predict electoral outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Despite efforts to draw generalizable conclusions across political space and time, the lessons learned from political campaigns are often unique to the climate from which they are drawn. In this way, campaigns are dynamic phenomena - moving targets for analysis and political institutions characterized by complexity over stability. To navigate this complexity, many scholars focus on a binary measure of campaign impact: electoral success or failure, as measured by vote choice (e.g. Holbrook 1994; Jamieson 1992). Campbell (2001) summarizes, “The net impact of the campaign is defined as the change in the vote distribution that occurs between the beginning of the post-convention campaign and the vote on Election Day” (438). Even those analyses that investigate campaigns’ influence on voter psychology or learning emphasize campaigns’ electoral implications (e.g. Finkel 1993; Gelman and King 1993). Moreover, practitioners – for whom the period between a campaign’s launch and outcome is their primary business – measure the impact of a campaign by virtue of its victory or defeat.<sup>2</sup> Two common threads emerge from the study and practice of campaigns. First, campaigns are complex and dynamic phenomena, in which multiple factors influence and are influenced by candidate and voter behavior. Second, campaigns matter, and they matter for candidates’ success or demise (Burton and Shea 2010; Hillygus and Shields 2009; Holbrook 1995; 2006). In this chapter, I contend that gender is not only a dynamic factor influential in campaigns’ strategic development, but is also an under-examined measure of campaign effects that are institutional instead of electoral. More specifically, in this dissertation, I argue that campaign decision-making affects institutional gender norms and expectations while on the path to

victory or defeat. By highlighting institutional over electoral outcomes as they pertain to gender, I shed new light on campaign scholarship and practice.

Thurber (1995) writes, “Campaign strategy simply charts the path to win the election and recognizes that campaigns are dynamic and in constant change, reacting to events and opponents” (4). In this type of environment, no one influential factor acts exactly the same across electoral climates, and significant campaign learning by political practitioners is thwarted. As a result, institutional progress is easily stunted and long-term “rules of the game” are adapted to each new political cycle with little disruption. The prevailing rules of campaign decision-making were developed for an institution defined by masculinity and maintained by masculine actors and ideals of leadership. As Kirkpatrick (1972) observed over three decades ago, “There is no question that [campaigning] involves a style of behavior more frequently associated with male stereotypes than female ones” (97). While scholars and practitioners have questioned how women might navigate masculine terrain by asking whether they “run as women” or “play the gender card,” they have done little to investigate the nuances of gender in decisions made by female *and* male candidates and how they may alter the gendering of campaign terrain itself. In other words, do political insiders – candidates and campaign practitioners – believe that gender matters in campaigns, and to what extent and in what ways? Moreover, how do contextual factors within individual campaigns or political environments alter the function of gender and the degree of its strategic influence or effects – both electoral and institutional?

This chapter begins analysis of these questions by outlining the factors that political insiders from specific electoral climates in 2008 and 2010 cite as most influential in shaping electoral outcomes. Then, I analyze in what ways, if any, they said that gender mattered in strategy, tactics, or campaign results. My findings begin to paint a picture of practitioners’

priorities in decision-making and perspectives on institutional gender dynamics. While my interviews reveal ways in which campaign effects of gender are sometimes overlooked or discounted, they also evidence the utility of probing insiders directly and in greater depth about gender to reveal its interactive and indirect effects on campaigning. Chapters 5 and 6 will further demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between institutional gender dynamics and campaign strategy – whereby gender norms both influence and are influenced by campaign decision-making – within specific statewide campaigns, each shaped by dominant climactic factors through which gender may have indirect effects.

### **Gender in Context: Political Climates in 2008 and 2010**

To account for the important dynamics of campaign context, this chapter relies upon interview data from two unique campaign cycles: 2008 and 2010 (see Appendix C and Appendix D). In 2008, the political climate was shaped by three general trends. First, the United States was ready for a change from eight years of the George W. Bush administration. The President's popularity had reached an all-time low, the War in Iraq was no longer popular, and the President's policy agenda had few highlights.<sup>3</sup> The second trend, tied to Bush's unpopularity, was the economic decline being felt by everyday citizens. The economic fears and troubles among citizens were exacerbated with the fall of Lehman Brothers in September 2008, blamed largely on the party in power: the Republicans.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the popularity of Barack Obama and his message of change and hope proved extremely effective in garnering voter support, not only for Obama but also for Democrats nationwide.<sup>5</sup> Together, these trends spelled a political climate favoring Democrats and challengers; Republicans, especially incumbents, faced strong political headwinds.

Gender dynamics were far from absent in the 2008 elections, especially at the presidential level, where Senator Hillary Clinton waged a hard-fought campaign for the

Democratic nomination and Governor Sarah Palin became the first woman on the Republican presidential ticket. Clinton's candidacy exposed many of the challenges that a woman faces in running for the nation's top executive office, from difficulties in balancing gender and office expectations to outright sexism (Carroll and Dittmar 2010). Moreover, Clinton's primary defeat left a sour taste in the mouths of many women voters inspired by her candidacy, causing the Obama campaign to expend extra effort winning their support going into November.<sup>6</sup> Many argued that the Republican candidate, Senator John McCain (R-AZ), was making a similar appeal to women when he chose then-Governor of Alaska Sarah Palin as his running mate.<sup>7</sup> While her selection did little to bring cross-over votes from women to McCain (CAWP 2008b; Gallup 9/24/08), Palin's nomination and short-lived candidacy raised many questions about gender – from inciting conversations about Palin's physical appearance and maternal role, to questions about women voters' and Republican voters' reactions to a conservative women candidate, and strategists' understanding of what those reactions would be. Despite the prominent headlines about Clinton and Palin's gender, gender dynamics were also evident in less blatant ways and beyond the presidential level in 2008.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the remnants of Clinton and Palin's efforts to "break the highest, hardest glass ceiling" in U.S. government were felt in 2010, as a new political climate took shape and a diverse cadre of women stepped up to compete.

If Republican candidates faced political headwinds in 2008 as the country pinned hopes of change and recovery on presidential candidate Barack Obama, they benefitted from a strong tailwind in 2010 that pushed them toward electoral victory. Interestingly, some major trends persisted from 2008 to 2010: the economic climate remained the number one concern of voters; financial policies fueled voter discontent – from lack of regulation before the Lehman Brothers collapse in 2008 to voters' skepticism of the financial bailout

(including the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP) in 2010; and, finally, the president's unpopularity plagued candidates from his party nationwide.

Gallup's October 2010 poll on voter priorities showed that 43% of voters rated the economy as the most important issue influencing their vote, with health care falling 20 points behind that as the second most influential issue.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the federal bailout received little support; as Rick Newman wrote in *U.S. News and World Report* in October 2010, "TARP might have saved the economy, but it can't save the Democrats" (10/1/10). According to Gallup, Obama's approval ratings dropped below 50% a year before the midterm elections, falling to 43% in the days leading up to November 2, 2010.<sup>10</sup> Voters were frustrated with the pace of recovery, depleted (Democrats) or mobilized (Republicans) by the health care debate, and angry not only at the administration, but at what they viewed as the establishment in Washington.

As a result, the more anti-establishment you were in 2010, the better, and no group took greater advantage of that trend than the Tea Party, who took the country by storm in primary and general election races at all levels. Organized originally in reaction to the financial crisis and subsequent government response (especially TARP), the Tea Party represented a loosely connected contingent of voters, candidates, and activists concerned about the direction and involvement of the U.S. government on major policy issues (Zernike 2010). Almost 140 Congressional candidates in 2010 identified as Tea Party contenders, and Tea Party-endorsed candidates for Governor won in states like South Carolina, Maine, Wisconsin, and Florida. Like the other major trends of the cycle, the Tea Party momentum demonstrated that 2010 was truly a national election. National financing contributed to that momentum and capitalized on the Supreme Court's *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010) decision, ruling that corporate funding of independent political broadcasts

in candidate elections cannot be limited under the First Amendment. The *Citizens United* ruling opened the floodgates to an unprecedented degree of corporate spending and involvement in U.S. campaigns, including that supporting Tea Party groups like Americans for Prosperity. Outside groups alone spend over \$280 million in 2010 races, with the majority of this spending benefiting Republican candidates.<sup>11</sup>

The shifting winds of 2010 resulted in a national wave that impacted politics at every level, and few states were immune from the Republican tide.<sup>12</sup> Republicans gained a net 63 Congressional seats, regaining control of the House of Representatives and erasing the gains that Democrats had made in 2006 and 2008. At the state legislative level, Republicans took control of 20 state legislative chambers from the Democrats. Moreover, entering 2011, Republicans controlled the legislature and governors' offices in 20 states, up from nine in 2010 (NCSL 2011).

Republican women, too, made significant gains in total representation at the state and national levels in 2010, gaining one seat in the U.S. Senate, nine seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, and a net of over 100 seats in state legislatures. All three new women governors elected in 2010 were Republicans, and two of them share the title of first woman of color ever elected to their states' top executive post. The media touted the cycle's rising female Republican stars, from Nikki Haley (R-SC) to Kelly Ayotte (R-NH). However, the Republican woman given the most sustained attention in 2010 was Sarah Palin. Media outlets and pundits spent a great deal of time reporting on what impact Palin would have, particularly in promoting the interests of the so-called "mamma grizzlies" – whether conservative women voters or candidates.

Despite the attention to Republican women in the 2010 election cycle and their numerical gains, they remain only 16% of all Republican state legislators nationwide and

10% of the Republican caucus in Congress, making no percentage gain from 2010 to 2011. While Republican women benefitted from huge Republican gains overall, these gains could have been more dramatic had more Republican women run and won their primaries.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the Republican gains could not counter the loss of Democratic women legislators, yielding the first-ever decline in women in Congress and the largest percentage decline in women state legislators in over 30 years (CAWP 2010). Currently, women make up 16.8% of members of Congress and 23.6% of state legislators (CAWP 2011). Therefore, Republican and Democratic women alike remain aside from the norm in U.S. politics.

The first section of this chapter focuses on interview subjects' responses when I asked them to identify the major factors influencing electoral outcomes in the statewide contests and climates I analyzed in 2008 and 2010. In the second section of this chapter, I analyze respondents' responses to questions asking specifically about gender's influence on strategic development and/or electoral results.<sup>14</sup> Based on existing research and my survey of campaign consultants, I expected that candidates and campaign practitioners would not identify gender among the top determinants of campaign outcomes. Even when probed directly about gender, I expected insiders' to discount its electoral impact. However, I anticipated that asking about specific sites of potential gender differences or dynamics would better reveal sites of gender influence in campaigning, and the ways in which it is tempered or amplified in particular political settings or situations. In Chapters 5 and 6, I explore these sites in greater detail, using individual cases from 2010 to best illuminate when, where, and how gender mattered in these statewide contests.

## **Findings**

### Factors Shaping Electoral Outcomes



The most common and widespread analyses of political campaigns seek to determine what led to a particular outcome. In other words, why did candidate A win or lose? And maybe, how might that influence campaign decision-making in the next contest? Consistent with these analyses, I asked campaign insiders to identify general determinants of campaign strategies and outcomes – beginning each interview by asking about campaigns’ early analyses of candidates’ strengths and weaknesses and later asking interview subjects to identify the factors that they perceived as most influential in shaping electoral results. The most common factors identified by interview subjects as shaping electoral outcomes include political climate, party influence, media, money, and strategy. The two most cited factors – political climate and campaign strategy – reflect the major tenets introduced at the start of this chapter: (1) that campaigns are dynamic phenomena within a particular political environment; and (2) that campaign practices – decision-making, strategy, and tactics – matter in shaping electoral outcomes. In this section, I outline how each of these factors was described by campaign insiders, noting the differences among interview subjects who viewed these factors as more or less important to electoral results. Additionally, I include brief analyses of the gender dynamics of each factor, discussing where and when those dynamics were identified directly by interview subjects or when they were largely overlooked. As I argue in the conclusion of this chapter, understanding campaigns as gendered institutions and making moves to disrupt prevailing power structures within them necessitates looking at the most dominant factors in electoral campaigns with a gendered lens.

### *Political Climate*

Over two-thirds of interview respondents cited the political climate as one major factor shaping electoral results in their campaigns. This finding spans political time (2008 and 2010), insider type (candidates, managers, and consultants), and geographic conditions.

Unsurprisingly, climactic factors are *most* cited among practitioners (managers, consultants, and party operatives), as they are the professionals tasked with evaluating at the prevailing landscape and determining how candidates will best navigate it.

As the introduction to this chapter reflects, both 2008 and 2010 saw national partisan tides play a strong role in shaping electoral climates. Many insiders reported these tides as influential in their campaigns' success or defeat, and it is logical that the representatives from the party victim to these tides were most likely to view the national climate as detrimental to their electoral success.<sup>15</sup> Both political cycles provide evidence of referendum theses of campaign outcomes (see Kramer 1971; Lewis-Beck and Tien 2010; Tufte 1978), whereby a campaign acts as a referendum on the incumbent party or politician instead of a contest between two substantial choices. As a result, candidate gender played little role in who fell victim to these national tides or rode their waves to success. In 2008, interview subjects cited "Bush fatigue" as the impetus for voters' widespread enthusiasm for Democrats – especially at the presidential level. Democrats focused on tying Republican opponents to George W. Bush, as was evident in the statewide contests that I analyzed. For example, in almost half of New Hampshire U.S. Senate candidate Jeanne Shaheen's ads, she tied opponent John Sununu to President Bush, including photos and videos of the two men together and repeating the tagline, "Sununu followed Bush but failed New Hampshire." Washington state Governor Christine Gregoire reminded voters in her bid for re-election, "In tough times like these, the last thing we need is a George Bush Republican like Dino Rossi."<sup>16</sup> In 2010, the referendum seemed to fall again on the sitting president as a proxy for his party's ability to follow through with promises made in the previous election year. President Obama's declining popularity struck Democratic candidates across offices and at all levels. Democratic pollster Dave Beattie advised gubernatorial candidate Alex Sink (D-FL), a former president

for Florida operations of Bank of America, in 2010. Despite her ties to a banking giant on which voters put great blame for the economic crisis, Beattie noted, “You know, the biggest burden we had all year was not banking, it was the ties to Barack Obama” (Personal interview). Valerie Martin, campaign manager for 2010 senate candidate Paul Hodes (D-NH), outlined the shifting climate from 2008 to 2010 and the influence of policy decisions:

The mood of the electorate shifted substantially in August [2010]. And it was really over the health care bill. And I think growing concerns about the economy, some frustration at Washington. ... It all sort of came to a head in August. And that’s really when the dynamics of the race really shifted. We were no longer in a 2008 environment anymore. We were now looking into a different year that was going to be significantly harder for Democrats (Personal interview).

Therefore, the referendum on Democrats soured with perceptions of policy compromises and failures. Another Democratic campaign manager identified an even earlier shift in 2010 dynamics, calling the January 2010 special election defeat of U.S. Senate candidate Martha Coakley (D-MA) the “canary in the coal mine” to Democratic candidates in November.<sup>17</sup> He described how Coakley’s defeat did as much damage to morale as it did to fundraising for Democratic Senate candidates: “A lot of people that we were counting on to get excited about taking the [Senate] seat back [in North Carolina] – that money never materialized” (Personal interview with Morgan Jackson). The degree to which the national climate affected statewide campaigns varied by region or state, according to interview subjects, especially based upon citizen ideology and their favorability toward the president and the U.S. Congress.

As cited in Chapter 1, the economic climate – both nationally and in the states – was particularly influential in voter perceptions of candidates and parties in 2008 and 2010. From the collapse of economic giants in September 2008 to stalled improvement in unemployment and economic stability measures entering the fall of 2010, insiders reported the strong emphasis by voters and candidates alike on assuring the public of economic recovery.<sup>18</sup> One

Democratic consultant noted how the party in power is hit hardest by economic instability, “When people are economically troubled, they tend to vote out the incumbents” (Personal interview). That sentiment was accentuated in regions and states where the economic climate was worst, forcing Democratic incumbents in states like California and Nevada to devise strategies almost entirely focused on gaining voters’ trust on economic issues and painting their opponents as unfit or inexperienced to do the job.<sup>19</sup> In Chapter 5, I describe how voters’ gendered views of issue expertise make an environment dominated by economics slightly more challenging for women candidates, to whom economic credentials are not easily bestowed. While my interview findings do not indicate that candidate gender precluded victory for women within this type of climate, I do discuss how these voter beliefs informed the paths practitioners took to ensure success.

Beyond the national economic crisis, candidates and practitioners identified attention to other state-based issues, voters’ engagement and/or excitement in a race, and the presence and influence of other statewide or national campaigns as additional factors shaping a particular campaign climate. For example, while the passage of SB1070 – a strict anti-immigration measure in Arizona – gained national attention, its electoral impact was particularly strong in the Arizona’s gubernatorial race, where Republican Governor Jan Brewer’s campaign manager called it the “the steroid shot” that her campaign needed to win (Personal interview with Paul Bentz). The immigration issue also excited voters in Arizona to get behind a gubernatorial candidate that shared their viewpoint on the bill, assuring that the race remained competitive. The same excitement was lacking in states like Oklahoma where practitioners blamed the “sleepy” 2010 gubernatorial contest as cause for stagnation in the polls throughout the general election season. While that race featured two women competing to become the first female governor in their state, the historic nature of the race engaged few

voters. As I describe in Chapter 6, the political climate of 2010 provided little space for women to generate excitement due to gender progress, unlike 2008 – where making history engaged voters from the presidential level down.

Finally, some candidates and practitioners described the presence of other – often more exciting – statewide or national campaigns in their state as influential on both strategizing and outcomes. In 2008, insiders were quick to note the influence of the presidential race in their specific campaigns – from its monopoly of media to its down-ticket influence on get-out-the-vote operations. In 2010, some candidates reported the struggle to communicate their message amidst another statewide campaign given greater state and national prominence. Examples include the media fascination with the Florida U.S. Senate race over its gubernatorial contest between Alex Sink (D) and Rick Scott (R) and the interference of California gubernatorial candidate Meg Whitman's (R) campaign strategy and tactics on U.S. Senate candidate Carly Fiorina (R), according to her advisors.<sup>20</sup>

Together, these responses demonstrate the variability of influences attributed to political climate – from the strongest national tides to more specific state-based factors of attention, excitement, issue dominance, and contest co-influence. Overall, interview subjects addressing general election contests, especially from losing teams, more frequently reported political climate as a major factor shaping electoral results, indicating that the partisan shifts nationally, regionally, and/or within states were particularly influential. And while few interview subjects addressed gender dynamics as dominant in the political climates of 2008 or 2010, the interaction of gender with issue environments, historical precedent, and party politics provides important sites for the analyses I provide in Chapters 5 and 6.

*Money*

While interview subjects identified political climate as the dominant factor shaping general election outcomes, money was widely cited in my interviews as a major influence on primary campaign results. More specifically, campaign finances were identified as a determinant of candidate success most often among those defeated in 2010 primary races. Democrats in 2010 campaigns were also more likely to report financial factors than their Republican counterparts, evidencing the partisan shift in voter support from 2008 to 2010 and the struggle for Democrats to counter Republican fundraising from voters, parties, and external groups. Interview subjects engaged in open-seat contests discussed money more often than challengers or incumbents, at least partly because the incumbent campaigns with whom I spoke were often more prepared for and less surprised about the dominant influence of money in today's statewide elections. One Republican primary candidate for the U.S. Senate in Nevada told me that running in 2010 taught him that "money is absolutely essential" in statewide contests, a fact for which many incumbent candidates and campaign professionals were prepared (Personal interview with Danny Tarkanian).

Campaign expenditures for U.S. Senate and gubernatorial contests in 2008 and 2010 reflect the magnitude of financial input to modern campaigns. In 2010, over 568 million dollars was spent on 71 U.S. Senate campaign, more – on average – than the 389 million dollars spent on 66 senate races in 2008.<sup>21</sup> In 2008, about 119 million dollars was spent on only 11 gubernatorial campaigns, with individual races in North Carolina, Indiana, and Washington representing 97 million dollars, or 82 percent, of that total spending.<sup>22</sup> Money is necessary for candidates to communicate their message to the public, whether via print, radio, web or television. Therefore, a campaign's ability to raise money or attract outside spending on their behalf is an important piece to a campaign equation in which time and money are often the most sought after variables. When asked about the earliest steps in

developing a campaign plan, consultants in particular note the teams' calculation of candidates' existing money and fundraising potential as one of the strongest indicators of their electoral viability. While money's degree of importance varies by state due to size, media markets, and cost/style of campaigning, few insiders discount the major boon a financial advantage provides to any statewide candidate.

The role of outside money – non-candidate spending and independent expenditures – also varies by the competitiveness and location of a specific race. Candidates and practitioners in the races I analyzed were quick to point to the sources of expenditures spent against them, from non-profit interest organizations to corporate funders and ideological groups acting on behalf of their opponents. These expenditures were given greater attention after the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, stating that the government may not limit political spending by corporations in candidate elections. Democratic campaign manager for Barbara Boxer, Rose Kapolczynski (CA), told me, “We were on the front lines of the new environment created by the *Citizens United* decision,” in the 2010 elections (Personal interview). One aspect of that environment was a significant rise in spending from organizations on the extreme right of the ideological spectrum, with funders like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Action Network, American Crossroads, and Club for Growth bolstering candidates who best represented their interests.<sup>23</sup> Along with the Tea Party Express, FreedomWorks and other newly created organizations, external influence emerged early in the campaign process, often at the primary stage, and yielded successful electoral results in many contests across the country in 2010. While previous research of independent expenditures at the congressional level has shown a net advantage for female candidates (Carne 2010; 2011), this rise in conservative spending

may have uniquely gendered effects unless more conservative women candidates enter and advance in the political pipeline.

Carne's (2010) analysis of independent expenditures in congressional contests from 2002-2006 demonstrates that women candidates are the subjects of greater independent spending, in total, than men, as the recipients of both greater pro- and anti-candidate spending. While this finding controls for the support women receive from women's PACs, the influence of EMILY's List for pro-choice Democratic women candidates cannot be understated in equalizing campaign spending on their behalf. Interview subjects in 2008 and 2010 conveyed the importance of EMILY's List – whether their willingness to endorse a candidate or their financial and/or strategic support – in shaping campaign results. While the group has evolved to become a “full-service political network,” EMILY's List Executive Director Amy Dacey told me that the group's fundraising model is their greatest contribution to candidates:

We have trained candidates and women over the past twenty-six years with this unique model of going to the different areas in your life and parts where people would support you and to raise money. ... I think it's one of the most useful things that we do (Personal interview).

Research backs Dacey's claim (Hannagan, Pimlott, and Littvay 2010), as do comments from pro-choice Democratic women candidates and their teams in 2008 and 2010 interviews who noted both the value of the PAC's support and the pain felt when it was not there.

For Republican women, no equitable counterpart to EMILY's List exists. The two organizations most nationally-known are Susan B. Anthony List and the WISH List. The WISH List folded into the organization Republican Majority for Choice (RMC) in 2010, encouraging supporters to designate their donations to RMC for “The WISH List Project.” While these donations went to pro-choice Republican women, the overall spending by RMC totaled only \$64,500 in 2010, of which \$19,500 went to women candidates.<sup>24</sup> According to



the Center for Responsive Politics, Susan B. Anthony List spent about \$1.9 million in independent expenditures on behalf of its endorsed candidates in 2010, coming closer to, but falling far short of the nearly \$4 million spent by EMILY's List independent of its efforts to funnel money directly to female endorsees. Moreover, while Susan B. Anthony List is often described most prominently as a pro-life EMILY's List, it dedicated its support in 2010 not only to pro-life women, but also to pro-life men running against women candidates supporting choice.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, while Republican women stand to benefit from gender-based PACs of their own, the women's funding organizations in today's national political climate, particularly those providing financial support, play a more significant role for Democratic women.

Finally, multiple interview subjects emphasized that EMILY's List's role is not only financial. The group has expanded to provide strategic support to women candidates by connecting them with campaign professionals who will work on their campaigns and by deploying EMILY's List trackers to endorsed-candidates' campaigns to provide additional strategic insight and ideas. In Missouri, Democratic senate candidate Robin Carnahan's campaign manager described how vital EMILY's List was as the team waged their candidate's first federal campaign. She explained the benefit of having an EMILY's tracker at the table for almost every strategic discussion, adding that having "another person who's not in the middle of the bunker to get advice from" was invaluable to the campaign (Personal interview). Other EMILY's-endorsed candidates from 2010 were more skeptical of the group's strategic arm. Some women argued that the group pushed an ineffective "cookie-cutter" approach to strategizing, but they were hesitant to contest the approaches of a group on which they were financially dependent.<sup>26</sup>

Regardless of their strategic influence, candidates and practitioners I interviewed

agreed that EMILY's List provides women candidates with credibility among voters, donors, and political insiders. One Democratic consultant called the group a "game-changer," noting that EMILY's List's presence ensures that "there is someone who can argue on behalf of a woman candidate and her capacity to win and help raise money" (Personal interview with Diane Feldman). Pimlott (2007) adds that EMILY's List acts as a "party adjunct," able to wield greater influence by allying with party organizations. Speaking from her office at the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), Martha McKenna proved that point, noting, "EMILY's List is taken very seriously in this building, so an EMILY's List recommendation goes a long way" (Personal interview). As these responses show, no analysis of modern campaigns – especially in regard to campaign spending - can ignore the influence of an organization like this for women candidates, and more research needs to be done to understand if Republican women could benefit from a conservative counterpart and to consider whether or not women's organizations challenge prevailing masculine models of campaigning or instead assist women candidates in adapting to them.<sup>27</sup>

### *Party Influence*

Candidates' financial assets and advantages – like those provided by EMILY's List - are important to party leaders as well in determining their endorsements and plans for party spending in a particular campaign. In statewide races, these determinations are made most by national party committees or organizations including the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), the Republican Governors' Association (RGA) and the Democratic Governors' Association (DGA). Like references to insufficient financial support, candidates and practitioners from losing general election campaigns were most likely to name party support (or the lack thereof) as a factor influencing their victory or defeat. For example, Republican U.S. Senate

primary candidate Rob Simmons (CT) described the “rational financial decisions” of the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) as yielding his electoral demise against an independently wealthy opponent, Linda McMahon (R-CT):

So suddenly, the guy who’s not a multi-millionaire, the guy who served the party loyally and faithfully for 25 years, is in a situation where the party went with the self-funder – with the money lady – and that was just going to make my situation even more difficult (Personal interview).

Other practitioners argued that it is not only whether parties provide financial support or not to candidates that shapes outcomes, but also where that support is targeted – whether in advertising, direct mail, grassroots or get-out-the-vote operations, or elsewhere. These distinctions are particularly important in states where ground operations are vital (e.g. Vermont) and/or states where campaigns are often waged on the air (e.g. California). Finally, beyond financial support, many interview subjects discussed the early and often informal role of parties and party committees in recruiting candidates and introducing them to national networks of supporters and political professionals prepared to join their campaign. Because this type of support often comes before a primary contest is complete, it is both less overt and more maligned by those candidates and campaign teams who do not benefit from this type of informal party endorsement. This early support is also where there is greatest potential for gender disparities.

While party insiders I interviewed repeatedly told me that their goal was to recruit the best possible candidates in 2008 and 2010, existing literature demonstrates how party leaders’ perceptions of gender often influence whether they view women as capable of embodying that role or not (Sanbonmatsu 2006). In an institution defined by masculinity, perceptions of appropriateness and desirable characteristics of actors can easily be gendered male, even if subconsciously. Former DSCC Political Director Martha McKenna explained, “It can be very hard for women candidates to make their case to the insiders” (Personal

interview). And though she credited Democratic party leaders for making progress on this front, Democratic consultant Diane Feldman agreed, “It is still the case that it is often true that the [party] committees have a comfort level with known quantities and a more conventional read” (Personal interview). She added that those known quantities and more conventional candidates continue to be men. Both women referenced disrupting party culture and finding leaders attentive to inclusivity as vital to women’s advancement, particularly in candidate recruitment.<sup>28</sup> Once selected, party organizations do not appear to differ in degree and types of support they give to male and female candidates, at least according to the insiders I interviewed in 2008 and 2010.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, it is in campaigns’ earliest stages where party influence and the perspectives of party leaders appear to interact with gender the most.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, interview subjects tied to both men and women’s campaigns more often described the influence of national over state party organizations as significantly influential in their elections, an unsurprising finding due to the statewide nature of their campaigns. Together, these examples demonstrate insiders’ beliefs, especially candidates’ perspectives, that parties influence campaigns’ strategies and success via the resources and credibility that their support provides. Moreover, as I outline here, party involvement begins at the earliest stages of recruitment and strategic planning, and it is in those moments that particular attention to gender in party decisions and influence should be paid.

### *Media*

Candidates in 2008 and 2010 were more likely than practitioners to identify media coverage, and bias in particular, as a factor influencing campaign results. However, these findings are weighted strongly by a select number of interviews with candidates who received a great deal of negative media attention in 2010. For example, two female candidates

emphasized the disproportionate degree of criticism they experienced in media coverage, with one woman noting how it prevented her campaign from even communicating a message to the public at all. While she emphasized the significant interference of media coverage in executing her campaign plan, other female candidates cite more subtle biases evident in journalistic reporting of their candidacies consistent with scholarly research to date (Bystrom et al. 2004; Devitt 1999; Falk 2008; Heldman, Carroll, and Olsen 2005; Kahn 1996). Moreover, practitioners and candidates alike referenced how persistent media biases against female candidates, whether implicit or explicit, influenced campaign strategy and voter learning in their contests.

While these candidates reported frustration with a hypercritical media, many respondents argued that today's media is not critical enough due to the decline in resources and quality, and consumers' demand for entertainment over substance. Interview subjects repeatedly identified the decline of print media as a challenge to finding outlets through which to communicate their campaign message. Combined with a tendency for media to become fascinated with a small handful of races, campaigns struggled to secure earned media in ways they were able to in the past. Campaign practitioners – consultants and managers – more commonly referred to these media challenges as influential in campaign outcomes than the perceived bias reported more often by candidates with whom I spoke.

Practitioners were also more likely to share their strategies for overcoming this electoral hurdle, particularly by engaging the “force multiplier” of social media. A Republican consultant told me, “I think there's no question at this point that the secret's out that social media matters. I mean, at this point if you're not doing it, you're not going to win. The question, I think, for campaigns now is how do you do it effectively?” (Personal interview). An effective social media strategy, some argued, could compensate for mainstream media

challenges. The small expense of social media over television or radio advertising also benefitted campaigns faced with the high cost of competing across multiple media markets - like Delaware and New Hampshire. While few respondents – candidates or practitioners – described media as the driving force in their campaigns’ success or demise, they identified it as an intervening factor that could either amplify or overlook campaign messages. That intervention was described as particularly important to challengers’ campaigns that relied even more on earned media exposure against incumbent opponents.

### *Campaign Strategy*

Finally, and returning to the major factors laid out at the start of this chapter, campaign insiders recognized the important role of campaigns’ internal decision-making in grappling with the external factors of climate, money, media, and party influence (among others). Campaign strategy – whether of their candidate or opponent – was identified nearly as often as political climate among all interviews I completed and, unsurprisingly, was described as most important by those individuals whose business is campaigns: campaign consultants and campaign managers. While the focus on campaign strategy was not surprising due to the focus on strategic choices in both my recruitment materials and other interview questions, these base responses demonstrate that a population of intimate campaign observers find that campaigns do indeed matter for electoral outcomes.

Like political climate, the concept of campaign strategy is broad and encompasses many more specific campaign dynamics and influential variables. For the purposes of my analysis, I define campaign strategy as the decisions made by candidates and their teams to successfully negotiate the political landscape and meet their goal of electoral success. I focus on campaigns’ decisions surrounding candidate image, message, and tactics. While this chapter evaluates gender dynamics and influence amongst all of the factors cited above, the

remainder of my project focuses on campaign strategy alone to determine in what ways gender influences strategy and how strategic decisions influence institutional and electoral outcomes. For that reason, I limit my discussion of strategy in this chapter to these general findings.

### Does Gender Matter?

Gender alone was not identified by any interview subjects as a factor most influential in electoral outcomes. While three interview subjects highlighted gender as a candidate strength in the first question I asked in nearly each interview and one said it was an initial hurdle to the campaign overall, the remainder of insiders did not include gender dynamics among their very initial impressions of the campaigns on which they worked. Though I told all subjects that gender was an area of interest in my initial requests for interviews, in over half of my interviews (57%) candidates and campaign practitioners did not mention gender until I asked directly about it.<sup>31</sup> This finding is particularly interesting when broken down by interview subject gender. Among all interviews, 74% of female subjects brought up some influence of gender before I asked about it directly and 26% of women only discussed gender after being probed. On the other hand, 74% of male subjects only discussed gender dynamics after being asked directly about them, while 24% of men brought up gender on their own.<sup>32</sup> While gender appears to be more top-of-mind for female subjects based on this measure, I analyzed the data in greater depth to understand in what ways all interview subjects were discussing gender. In particular, I investigated whether and to what degree they viewed gender as influential in their races and in campaigns at large, especially once probed about it.

Using the *Dedoose* software to better analyze interview responses, I coded each interview excerpt addressing the influence (or lack thereof) of gender. Put simply, I coded

each excerpt as one that demonstrated how “gender matters” or one that said “gender does not matter” in campaigns. I describe the findings within those excerpts below. First, however, I present general findings that emerged when I translated individual excerpt codes into one cumulative code for each complete interview. Because most subjects provided responses of both kinds, I relied upon the position taken in the majority of all coded excerpts in each interview to assign a cumulative code.

A majority of subjects (72%) said that gender does matter more than it does not in campaigns, whether among voters, candidates, or strategists themselves. Another six, or 8%, subjects were completely split in their thinking – offering the same number of citations about ways in which gender mattered and ways in which it did not. Finally, about 15 subjects (20%) held stronger beliefs that gender did not make a difference in the campaigns of which they were part, or more generally.<sup>33</sup> Despite the fact that Republican candidates and practitioners are fewer in the overall sample, they were a majority of respondents that reported gender does not matter, consistent with the survey results presented in Chapter 3. Those perceiving little to no gender influence were split by insider type – whether candidates, consultants, campaign managers, or party operatives. Women of both parties were slightly more likely, on average, than men to talk more often about the influential role of gender dynamics in campaigning and the profession of campaigns.<sup>34</sup> Overall, 90% of female interview subjects were coded as noting gender matters in campaigns more than it does not, while 63% of male interview subjects could be categorized the same way. Thirteen percent of men (and no women) were split in their responses, and 24% of male campaign insiders spoke more about how gender did not matter than noting the ways it did. Across party lines, 88% of Democratic insiders and 67% of Republican insiders spoke more often about gender as influential in campaigns, while 12% of Democrats and 24% of Republicans



provided more commentary on gender not mattering in their contests or in elections at large. While this is a useful cut at the interview data, coding interviews as a whole does little to account for the variance in perceptions of gender influence by each interview subject. Moreover, it does little to reveal how and to what extent gender matters in specific electoral contests or settings.

Below, I present an overview of findings from all interview excerpts that identified ways in which gender matters or not in campaigns. I begin by touching on the multiple dimensions of gender influence identified by interview subjects – from voter perceptions of men and women candidates to uniquely gendered institutional hurdles for candidates and campaign professionals. Despite this review, I save much of the detailed analyses of these gendered dimensions of campaigns for Chapters 5 and 6. Next, I elaborate on the ways in which candidates and campaign practitioners temper conclusions about genders' influence in campaigns. In other words, I evaluate the excerpts where insiders diminished gender as a significant factor in campaigns and campaigning and situate these responses within the universe of interview subjects' discussions of gender. These findings help to illuminate the degree to which all insiders say that gender matters and the variables they identify as most indicative of the magnitude of gender effects. I find that while insiders are likely to report gender differences or dynamics when probed about specific dimensions of campaigns, their initial and/or overall responses about gender focus on the importance of context and the explicit impact of gender on electoral outcomes instead of the more nuanced effects identified when asked about particular campaign dimensions.

### *Dimensions of Gender Influence*

#### *Voter Beliefs*

Whether upon initial reflections on campaigns' gender dynamics or when probed specifically about gender differences in voter beliefs, many candidates and campaign practitioners told me that gender shapes voters' expectations of candidate traits, images, appearances, and affinities with candidates who share their gender. Moreover, candidates and their teams cited a range of gendered expectations that not only informed voter reactions to campaigns, but often influenced campaigns' strategic decision-making. One female candidate emphasized the overarching disjuncture between voters' expectations of officeholders and perceptions of gender, "Since the founding of our country, the voter has been conditioned to see [politics] as a male world [so] they are not used to seeing a feminine woman operating in that" (Personal interview). Democratic candidate Rosa Scarcelli cited some voters' discomfort with her being "*the* leader" in her 2010 race for governor of Maine. She explained, "The models of leadership in people's brains are inherently male," adding, "I found it hard to break through" (Personal interview with Rosa Scarcelli). In Chapter 5, I elaborate on the traits and images that insiders cited as advantageous and disadvantageous to men and women candidates, and the ways in which they navigate this gendered terrain via campaign imaging and messaging. Interview subjects identified the negotiation of family dynamics and candidate appearance as often most disparate between men and women candidates, with women candidates facing greater scrutiny in both areas and forced to allocate greater campaign resources and energy to address them.

Negotiating gendered terrain in candidate presentation, according to interview subjects, often elicits additional challenges for women candidates than men. Across campaigns, insiders noted the demands on women candidates to balance the expectations voters have of masculine officeholders with the feminine requirements of their gender. Republican consultant Whit Ayres told me, "Balancing the gender roles is something that ...

female candidates are going to have to deal with in a way that a man does not” (Personal interview). He added, “That doesn’t mean that they can’t do it successfully.” In Chapter 5, I investigate campaign behaviors to identify how gender roles are “successfully” balanced and consider what the implications of these strategies are for the gendering of campaign institutions.

In addition to addressing gender-office incompatibilities, candidates and campaign practitioners also identified demands on women candidates to meet higher standards of experience and preparedness for office-holding. Across party and office type, insiders told me that women face greater doubts than do men on both their capacity to serve and their fitness for office. Among my interviews, this site of gender difference was described most often in races where women candidates were not incumbents and on masculine traits and issues deemed areas of male expertise. Vermont Secretary of State Deb Markowitz (D) noted what she viewed as unfair and biased challenges made to her intelligence in her 2010 bid for governor: “People would say, ‘I think she’s not smart enough.’ Which was shocking because I’m magna cum laude from Georgetown, right?” (Personal interview). Oklahoma Republican campaign advisor to gubernatorial candidate Mary Fallin, Rita Aragon, cited doubts, especially among older generations, of women’s capacity to lead, saying of women, “Until you prove it to them that you are an equal, they still have that skepticism” (Personal interview). Democratic consultant Ann Liston echoed this sentiment, noting, “I think often times women have more to prove, right?” (Personal interview). Finally, a woman running for the U.S. Senate in 2010 told me that women can prove they are qualified to serve, but that it requires additional effort on their behalf. She said, “We do have to work twice as hard, so there is that,” adding, “When the woman can work twice or three times as hard, I think the voter will then be comfortable” (Personal interview). Interview subjects explained the ways

in which women candidates both meet higher expectations and challenge questions of their preparedness to lead. Often via candidate imaging and messaging, candidates credential themselves and their policy recommendations, tout all dimensions of their qualifications for office, and rely upon previous political service to, in many cases, deter these doubts. These strategies are meant to diminish the sites on which gender “matters” to the potential detriment of women in candidate evaluation.

In identifying where gender matters in campaigning, candidates and their campaign teams repeatedly referenced the potential for gender-based affinities in voter perceptions and candidate support that work to women candidates’ advantage. Mostly, their commentary referred to beliefs that women candidates could best court women voters, especially in primary contests when they were the only woman in a field of men or in general election contests where they could energize a strong female base for Democrats or mobilize a new female base for Republicans. Referring to a Democratic primary race for governor in which he was involved, one practitioner argued, “There’s always a certain calculation that we take that in a primary if you’re the only female candidate there’s a decent shot that you’re probably going to get a decent amount of the female vote” (Personal interview). Democratic consultant Morgan Jackson called this a “gender imbalance,” whereby women candidates have a “natural advantage” with women voters, especially in races where voters may not have strong opinions (Personal interview). This advantage is curbed, argued many insiders, when multiple women are in a race, especially from the same party. In the 2010 Republican Senate primary in Nevada, candidate Danny Tarkanian described how his concerns regarding gender diminished when Sharron Angle entered the race alongside candidate Sue Lowden. He told me, “We weren’t worried about [gender-based appeal] because there were two women in the race. It would have been a bigger deal if it was just me and Sue at the end”

(Personal interview with Danny Tarkanian). In Chapter 6, I outline the motivations for and ways in which candidates and their teams made direct appeals to women voters in 2008 and 2010 statewide contests. While these appeals were, in large part, informed by insiders' beliefs about voters' gender-based affinities, I detail the partisan differences that emerge when discussing gender-based affinities alongside a persistent gender gap whereby women are most loyal to Democrats.

In addition to voters' affinities, candidates and their campaign teams told me that gender also mattered in voter interpretations of candidate behavior or tactics. One Democratic strategist cited how his candidate's image and approach would be differently received if she were a man. He explained:

Some of her appearances and some of her habits of speech in the past have had a hextering quality that men identify with, shall we say, their ex-wives or mothers-in-law. I mean, that's sort of the mental image they have, which is not a positive one, just to be clear. And you know, a man who had that kind of stridency may or may not be liked for it, but it would not be seen in the same way (Personal interview).

He added that these perceptions and expectations of behavior affected how the campaign portrayed this female candidate so as not to reinforce a negative image. Voter expectations of "feminine" behavior are also challenging for female candidates engaging in negative campaigning, said some insiders. However, many more insiders described going negative as a more significant challenge for male candidates running against women. Consistent with my survey findings and detailed in Chapter 6, candidates and campaign practitioners often referred to being more careful in waging attacks against female opponents, though no insiders argued against it. Instead, they described the need to stick to policies over personal attributes, the challenges of attacking in a primary where there is only one woman among many men, and the need for caution in sensitive interpersonal settings. A greater sense of caution appeared most often among male candidates I interviewed than their campaign

teams, whether due to their personal beliefs or perceptions of potential backlash. One Republican consultant explained, “I think [male] candidates are careful just because they don’t want to look like they’re sexists,” adding, “I mean, look at the reaction that people get when they’re not careful” (Personal interview with Paul Bentz).<sup>35</sup> Overall, both men and women candidates, according to practitioners, face behavioral expectations and constraints from voters and political observers due to their gender. For women candidates, the expectations of their gender are more often incompatible with the behavioral demands of political campaigning. Though, in the mixed-gender settings I have studied, male candidates are presented new and unique gender terrain on which their campaigns are waged.

### *Institutional Hurdles*

The potential for gender-role incompatibility to affect voter perceptions of candidates is rooted in the masculine gender regime of campaign institutions. That masculinity was identified in multiple interviews as another way in which gender mattered in campaigns. Some interview subjects, especially female candidates and those who worked for them, referred to the masculine environment they faced in running for office, including examples of sexism waged against them. For example, Republican pollster Whit Ayres described the “blatantly sexual attacks” waged against 2010 Georgia gubernatorial candidate Karen Handel, who was labeled “barren” by pro-life advocates who criticized her lack of children (Personal interview). In Vermont’s 2010 gubernatorial race, a Democratic consultant cited that insiders, especially, painted a narrative of primary candidate Deb Markowitz as “cold and aggressive and basically a bitch” that was, according to him, both unfair and based in gender bias. As described in the first part of this chapter, insiders identified some of these biases as particularly strong among media, whether mainstream news or Internet blogs. Either via explicitly gendered claims – like *Gawker’s* piece telling a

supposed story of Senate candidate Christine O'Donnell's flirtation with a younger man<sup>36</sup> – or more subtle differences in how women are profiled in media reports, some candidates and their teams argued that gender mattered for their campaigns when the media interfered with the candidate image they sought to communicate to the public.

Finally, candidates and campaign practitioners mentioned two other potential institutional hurdles in campaigns: (1) the recruitment of women candidates and (2) fundraising challenges for women. Some insiders noted the challenge of women's personal ambition, with at least two women candidates referring to the "sense of entitlement" that their male colleagues brought to the campaigns. Additionally, they noted the need for women to put on, as one said, that same "mantle of power" (Personal interview with Deb Markowitz). However, the institutional hurdles to recruitment that interview subjects most identified were associated with political parties, as I described at the start of this chapter. Tied to these challenges based in political support networks, some interview subjects also identified fundraising disparities that work more often to female candidates' disadvantage. While none of these hurdles were universally cited by insiders, and some were refuted by others, they represent the variety among responses about the potential sites where gender matters in campaigns, and in what ways.

### *Running Campaigns*

Lastly, candidates and campaign practitioners identified differences in how men and women – candidates and practitioners – approach campaigns as an additional way in which gender informs campaigning. One Republican consultant challenged claims that differences in voters' perceptions of gender mattered much in campaigning. Instead, he told me:

I think there's an inordinate amount of time spent on studying how women come across in an electorate and whether it's a plus or minus. I think the biggest difference is in ... how you deal with a woman candidate and how they think through a campaign versus how a man thinks through a campaign (Personal interview).

Democratic consultant for 2010 gubernatorial candidate Alex Sink (D-FL), Rich Davis, explained, “Male and female candidates tend to make decisions differently. The women candidates I have worked with want to be much more informed, if not involved, day-to-day in the actual execution of the campaign” (Personal interview). Ann Liston, also a Democratic media consultant, agreed, saying, “I think women candidates often want more info, more policy, more debate training, more media training, because I think they’re better studies and also the standard is higher for them” (Personal interview). Similarly, Democratic insider Kate Coyne-McCoy, of EMILY’s List, called women candidates more “intellectual” than men, citing the struggle to sometimes get them to “dumb down” for an electorate (Personal interview). Finally, Democratic consultant Rich Davis also noted women candidates’ contribution to strategy: “Women candidates often tend to have ... a better sense of the electorate, just a better sort of intuitive sense of how to communicate something or how to connect with people” (Personal interview). That empathetic ability, multiple female consultants told me, is something women practitioners also bring to campaigns when helping to draft campaign images and messages. Liston described her own approach as “a little more emotional” when putting communications together for candidates, and Democratic consultant Mary Hughes explained her unique contribution to a campaign team:

I was really helpful to a number of my male colleagues in saying, “How about if we said it this way?” And taking a point that was in your face and making it less and putting it more in the zone in which people would actually consider it as opposed to be smacked upside the head by it (Personal interview).

While I do not analyze these differences in professional approach in greater detail in this dissertation, I point to this as an important site for future research of gendered campaign dynamics in Chapter 7.

*Tempering Perceptions of Gender Effects*



As the previous section makes clear, gender does matter in campaigns and it can matter in many different ways. Interview subjects pointed to various sites where gender might inform both voter perceptions and campaign decision-making, though – as my initial analysis of excerpts explained – they also offered multiple ways in which gender did *not* matter in their campaigns or campaigns at large. In analyzing my interviews in greater depth, two trends emerge to better explain these conflicting reports. First, in multiple cases, candidates and campaign practitioners’ initial response about gender influence was to discount it. Once probed on specific perceptions, strategies, or tactics, however, they identified sites of gender difference. A second trend, sometimes overlapping with the first, was for insiders to identify gender differences on the specific dimensions I asked about in my interviews, but then to temper those responses by arguing that those differences were either minimal or moot in specific cases or contexts, or had little overall impact on electoral outcomes. I provide greater evidence of these trends below to better explain insider perceptions of gender and illuminate their evaluations of the magnitude of gender effects in campaigns.

### *Initial Rejection*

As I explained in my overview of interview findings, some interview subjects rejected gender outright as influential in their campaigns or campaigns in general. For example, 2010 California Republican Senate primary candidate Chuck DeVore told me, “[Gender] wasn’t a concern at all for me” (Personal interview). Referring more specifically to the preferences of men and women voters, he added, “The statistics showed that in 2010, there is no more gender politics. It just doesn’t exist except in the minds of consultants for female candidates or in the press” (Personal interview with Chuck DeVore). When asked about gender considerations in his race against a woman - Democrat Libby Mitchell, 2010 Maine

gubernatorial candidate and victor Paul LePage (R) explained, “We never gave that any thought. ... That was never any part of our campaign” (Personal interview). While these men never shifted in their positions upon my probing, other interview subjects reversed their initial rejection of gender influence once asked about specific aspects of campaign thinking or strategy. For example, Democratic consultant Ann Liston brought up gender in responding to my first interview question, but did so to note its minimal influence in campaign teams’ initial inventories: “I don’t think in, sort of, taking a diagnostic or an analysis of the needs of the campaign, I don’t think gender plays much of a role” (Personal interview). However, in probing next whether or not she and her team make any different considerations or take unique approaches toward male and female clients, she first cited the demands from women candidates for more policy background and research and then added, “There is a standard that is different between male candidates and female candidates, and more is expected of female candidates” (Personal interview with Ann Liston). While noting that the influence of gender often “depends” on myriad contextual factors in individual campaigns, Liston went on to identify sites where gender matters in calculations made by campaign communication teams.

When first asked about the role of gender in 2010 races, Republican consultant Fred Davis explained that in 2010, nothing beyond the economy – including gender - mattered to voters. Asked if voters hold gendered perceptions and if they are influential on strategy, Davis told me, “I don’t think it is.” However, he then added, “Just to a small extent. Little things, like if you’re a man running against a woman, you can’t be quite as harsh toward the woman” (Personal interview with Fred Davis). When asked about gender dynamics in presenting familial images of candidates, Davis again cited no gender influence, but then described an example where a childless female candidate faced greater scrutiny than her male

peers. Finally, near the end of the interview, Davis responded to a question about potential advantages for women candidates affirmatively, citing multiple ways in which gender can help women in campaign communications.

The “small extent” to which Davis stated that gender mattered mirrored responses from a handful of other candidates and campaign practitioners. I asked Republican consultant Glen Bolger about whether gender influenced campaigns’ decisions to “go negative” when running against a female candidate. While his initial response was, “No, not really,” he went on to add that men need to “be careful about appearing like [they are] ‘beating up on a woman’” (Personal interview with Glen Bolger). Similarly, 2008 North Carolina gubernatorial candidate Pat McCrory (R) told me, “I don’t think [gender] was a big factor,” adding of his approach toward opponent Bev Perdue, “I treated her regardless of gender” (Personal interview). However, when I probed about the potential differences in his campaigning against a woman, he said, “There is a fine line [in debates], but I don’t think I crossed it” (Personal interview with Pat McCrory). Finally, 2010 Democratic Senate candidate Lee Fisher told me that, in his Ohio primary race against Jennifer Brunner, “[Gender] was just totally irrelevant” (Personal interview). Despite this initial claim, he continued to outline his need to focus more on his direct appeals to women voters to counter her perceived natural advantage, Brunner’s ability to play the “victim card,” and potential differences in women’s capacity to be viewed in executive leadership roles. Therefore, while his initial response was to discount the role of gender in his race, greater discussion with him revealed some more specific sites of gender-based considerations.

Examples like these emerged in a handful of other interviews I did to analyze 2008 and 2010 statewide races. While they do not focus on the ways and/or degree to which gender matters, they do evidence the utility of discussing gender with candidates and

campaign practitioners; these discussions both reveal diversity in their opinions of gender effects across different dimensions and provide an opportunity to probe them more specifically on gender dynamics in campaigns. Moreover, in many interviews, my interview subjects emphasized the importance of context in diminishing or amplifying gender influences and often focused on electoral outcomes as the variable by which they measured gender impact. Below, I describe interview subjects' explanations of how both of these factors temper gender influence in campaigns. In these excerpts, interview subjects better illuminate the magnitude of gender effects within specific campaign settings.

*Emphasizing Context and Outcomes*

When noting that gender influence in a particular campaign “depends” on multiple factors, some insiders emphasized the characteristics of individual candidates. For example, one Democratic consultant argued, “The truth is that different women, like different men, have different strengths and weaknesses. And to approach [campaign strategy] as a matter of gender as opposed to a matter of sort of an individual tonality, personality, etcetera, is, I think, a mistake” (Personal interview). Democratic consultant and former DSCC political director Martha McKenna said similarly, “[Campaign strategy] is not about the gender of the person on the ballot. It’s about what the case you can make is; what the facts will allow you to say and how well you package it in a series of four or five spots to tell a story” (Personal interview). Finally, a campaign manager for a 2010 U.S. Senate race explained, “I think it often comes down to the individual. ... I think that 2010 became much more about the individual” (Personal interview). These responses reflect insiders’ aversion to making general claims about gender in campaigns, noting instead how candidates’ individual characteristics, histories, and position in a contest inform the strategies they adopt and eventual electoral outcomes they find.

Though some insiders focused on the importance of an individual, others emphasized – consistent with the first part of this chapter - the role of the political context and climate in 2008 and 2010 as dominating strategic development and outcomes, and thus reducing the influence of gender in these particular cases. For example, multiple insiders discussed gender considerations they typically make in campaigns, but noted that they played little role in the contests of which I asked. Republican media consultant Bill Kenyon described the need for male candidates to “be considered a gentleman, even moreso when you have a female opponent” (Personal interview). However, in the next breath, he added of the 2008 U.S. Senate contest in New Hampshire between Jeanne Shaheen (D) and his candidate - John Sununu (R), “Having said that, I don’t think [gender] really came into play in this race. ... I don’t ever recall even discussing that. ... There were enough issues” (Personal interview with Bill Kenyon). Working on the same campaign, pollster Glen Bolger said that there was a “much broader force at play” in 2008, adding, “In a different political environment, [gender] may matter more or less” (Personal interview). Valerie Martin, campaign manager for 2010 New Hampshire U.S. Senate candidate Paul Hodes (D), noted that while gender dynamics are at play in some races, they seemed largely missing in the 2010 political climate in which she worked. She explained:

I’ve worked for or against a woman in almost every race I’ve done in the last 10 years, so I can tell you that sometimes [gender] matters more than at other times. ... I do think being a woman candidate can have its real advantages ... but, in this case, I frankly don’t think at the end of the day it made one iota of difference (Personal interview with Valerie Martin).

Democratic pollster Dave Beattie, working for gubernatorial candidate Alex Sink in 2010, agreed. He told me, “I have worked with several female candidates in the past and I would say that gender was less of a factor in this election than almost any other” (Personal interview with Dave Beattie). Finally, while he outlined specific gendered dimensions in 2010

gubernatorial races with which he worked, DGA deputy political director Zach Wineburg explained that gender was still not a major force in this climate, at least in voter perceptions. He said, “Voters were looking at a whole host of things or looking at one major thing before they kind of went down that sort of litany of other things. ... Then you get down the list to how you feel about a woman being in office; obviously that was not much of an issue or, because of the force of the other issues, [was] just overlooked” (Personal interview with Zach Wineburg). These interview excerpts provide an important distinction between insiders’ general perceptions of gender dynamics and their perspectives on the degree to which gender mattered in their individual races, especially in 2008 and 2010.

Beyond environmental factors like the dominance of the economy or the anti-Democratic wave in 2010, candidates and campaign practitioners argued that the role of gender is diminished or even neutralized by some more race-specific indicators. First, multiple insiders argued that gender plays less of an influential role once a candidate is well-known. In other words, gender acts a proxy for voters until they are familiar with the candidate’s individual persona and priorities. Democratic pollster Dave Beattie explained, “If you know nothing else, [gender] matters more” (Personal interview). When asked if voters view men and women candidates differently, Oklahoma Democratic consultant Pat Hall argued, “I think maybe they do if they don’t know the candidates” (Personal interview). Republican consultant Jon Lerner summarized this perspective by saying, “If a candidate is known, if they have been elected before and they have a long record that is widely known in office, then it doesn’t matter if you’re a man or a woman because people will know about your record and they’ll judge you on that” (Personal interview). Referencing his work for 2010 Republican gubernatorial candidate and relative political unknown Nikki Haley, however, he added, “When voters don’t know much about you, ... there’s a higher standard

for women to reach to prove that they are sufficiently conservative” (Personal interview with Jon Lerner). Gender does not completely fade once candidates, especially women, establish a political résumé, according to some insiders. Instead, they argue it simply matters less for that particular candidate.

Perceptions of gender neutrality were most evident among those respondents from races where the top two contenders were women. In the 2010 California Senate race, for example, where Barbara Boxer (D) and Carly Fiorina (R) each won their parties’ nominations, many insiders argued that the lack of gender variance removed its influence in the campaign. Boxer’s campaign manager, Rose Kapolczyzinski noted, “Gender in this race was neutralized,” because both candidates were women (Personal interview). Republican media consultant for Fiorina, Fred Davis, agreed, adding that the Californian context in 2010 was further neutralized because a woman – Meg Whitman - was also running competitively for governor. According to Davis, “You had two women running for the top two slots in the state so [gender] became less important. You didn’t have a choice but women by the time the general came around” (Personal interview). Similar sentiments were expressed among insiders from the 2010 Oklahoma gubernatorial race – where Mary Fallin (R) defeated Jari Askins (D) – and the 2010 Republican Senate primary in Nevada – where male opponent Danny Tarkanian argued that the entrée of 2 women, Sue Lowden and Sharron Angle, into the race assured that gender would “not be an issue” (Personal interview). In Oklahoma, one political observer concluded:

You can make the argument that the issue of gender was removed because you have two women running for governor. ... So although it was a point of interest and point of curiosity among the electorate and some pundits, it really did not become an issue until the final days of the campaign” (Personal interview).

I discuss the gender dynamics that emerged in the final days of the Oklahoma campaign in greater detail in Chapter 5.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, many interview subjects noted that, while gender did influence voter perceptions and/or strategy throughout a campaign, its net effect was null. In the 2010 Florida gubernatorial race between Alex Sink (D) and Rick Scott (R), Sink's pollster Dave Beattie explained "[Gender] was [neither] a net positive [or] a net negative" in the campaign (Personal interview). In describing the Republican Senate primary in Nevada, candidate Sue Lowden's consultant Robert Uithoven argued, "Sharron Angle did not win her primary because of her gender, and she didn't lose the general because of her gender. It was campaign tactics and policy positions at the end of the day that cost these people the elections" (Personal interview). These tactics and campaign strategies, according to interview subjects, also have a direct effect on reducing the degree to which gender matters – at least on outcomes. In other words, and as I will describe in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6, the decisions that candidates and their teams make to negotiate gender dynamics are often motivated by efforts to neutralize gender as a significant factor in vote choice or electoral results. For example, Democratic consultant Diane Feldman told me, "Preexisting stereotypes about women often make it more difficult for them to win executive office, but those are preexisting stereotypes and if you can define someone who is going to be a tough and strong manager then you can break that down" (Personal interview). Democratic pollster Dave Beattie referred to a higher threshold for women candidates in proving their credentials for political office. He added, however, "Once you pass it, it's not an issue" (Personal interview). In Chapter 5, I discuss the efforts made by candidates and their campaign teams to successfully pass these thresholds. Finally, in referencing the challenge for Republican women to be viewed as sufficiently conservative, Republican strategist Jon Lerner explained, "It takes more doing for the woman to do it, but once the woman can achieve that believability that she is really conservative enough, then most of the other sort



of gender considerations fall away” (Personal interview). I elaborate on all of these efforts in the next two chapters, noting that while insiders characterize electoral outcomes as gender neutral, they often address gender in strategic decision-making in order to ensure it has no or minimal electoral effects.

Some candidates and campaign practitioners told me that gender neutrality was already a reality, or at least near-reality, whether due to advancement of women in office over time or due to the historical precedent and presence of women in politics within the region or state where they campaigned. Republican consultant Marty Wilson said of gender influence, “I just got to believe we’re kind of beyond that” (Personal interview). Republican pollster Glen Bolger described gender as “less prevalent” and “less problematic” today due to the improvement of the political environment and public perceptions over the last ten years (Personal interview). In claiming that our conversation regarding gender would have been “much more robust” ten or fifteen years ago, Democratic strategist Jim Margolis said, “I do feel like there’s been a shift in the kind of conversation we have with a candidate” regarding gender. He quickly added, “I’m not going to suggest it’s not important at all. I’m suggesting it’s less important” (Personal interview). Vermont gubernatorial candidate and Secretary of State Deb Markowitz echoed that sentiment in telling me, “Gender is a factor, but I don’t think it’s anymore a guiding factor” (Personal interview). Similarly, Democratic advisor Mac McCorkle outlined gender dynamics in his 2008 campaign for North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue, but added, “To me, [gender is] just part of the landscape that you take as a the candidate and work with. ... [It’s] getting less and less to be hugely debilitating” (Personal interview). Democratic pollster Dave Beattie rightfully stated, the rise in the number of women candidates has altered expectations of voters to yield greater acceptance of female candidates and politicians (Personal interview). In other words, women’s increased

presence in the political arena has made strides in changing the literal face of power to be less exclusively male. Outside of politics, gains in women's rights and social status have also shifted perceptions and images of women and power. Democratic consultant Mary Hughes described this as an "evolution in the way voters look at female candidates," in particular, and concluded, "It doesn't mean gender isn't a factor; it doesn't mean it's never a factor in a big race, but it's less of a factor if you can demonstrate that you can do the job" (Personal interview).

The reliance on numerical equality as a proxy for equality of experience and power was also evident as many interview subjects equated gender advancement with the historic success of women politicians in their own states. In at least six states included among the campaigns I studied in 2008 and 2010, multiple insiders referred to the precedent of women's political advancement there (or lack thereof) as an indicator of how much gender would or did matter in their campaigns. Oklahoma Republican advisor Rita Aragon told me, "I don't think we're as progressive as perhaps the East Coast or the West Coast would be in terms of opportunities," and cited the cultural challenges among voters' and insiders' perceptions of women leaders as influential in the 2010 gubernatorial race (Personal interview). In Iowa, where Roxanne Conlin ran against two men in the 2010 Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate, her opponents both noted the historical struggle for women to win statewide office as a factor in the campaign. Democratic primary candidate Bob Krause considered whether the dearth of women in high-level leadership in Iowa was an "incredible statistical coincidence or culture" (Personal interview). That tie between numerical equality and women-friendly political cultures was something even more apparent in interviews with candidates and practitioners in states where women's political representation has been among the highest of all fifty states.

Maine gubernatorial candidate Eliot Cutler (I) spoke of his female opponent and gender dynamics by noting, “It’s not as though Libby [Mitchell] was trying to break some glass ceiling” (Personal interview). His campaign manager added, “[Gender’s] not a novelty thing anymore,” citing the names of prominent political women who have served in the state (Personal interview with Ted O’Meara). In Arizona, Governor Jan Brewer’s (R) campaign manager – Paul Bentz – claimed, “In Arizona, you look and we have – as compared to a lot of other states – we’ve had a pretty long string of women leaders. Whereas [gender] might play a bigger role in other states, it’s not as big of a role here” (Personal interview). In examining the New Hampshire Senate race of 2010, one Republican strategist identified the number of women in the state’s political offices as evidence that “New Hampshire’s pretty well advanced in term of getting beyond looking at politics through the prism of gender” (Personal interview). Finally, Senator Barbara Boxer’s (D-CA) campaign manager, Rose Kapolczynski, described how Californians have similarly moved beyond the “prism of gender” due to the success of women politicians throughout the state and at multiple levels of political leadership. She said:

In California we have now had women Senators for eighteen years, and women serving in statewide office as Secretary of State, ... women running for Governor in 1990 and 1994, and 1998. ... There are definitely some positions that a women has never held yet, like Mayor of Los Angeles or Governor, but I don’t think [gender] is as much of a factor in the voters’ minds, because they have gotten used to U.S. Senators and multiple members of Congress and legislators and Mayor and Secretary of State. And so it’s, it isn’t unusual (Personal interview with Rose Kapolczynski).

The ways in which these interviews evidence differences by state and indicate a potential tie between culture and numbers help in evaluating the prevailing gender regime in campaigns and its variance across cases and across the country.

While women have had greater political success in states like New Hampshire, California, and Maine than in many parts of the country, some responses evidenced potential

amplification of women's political equality (see Puwar 2004).<sup>38</sup> For example, California

Senate candidate Carly Fiorina's campaign manager, Marty Wilson, explained:

You know, in politics, it's...I won't call it gender-neutral, but politics and public relations are kind of two fields that are pretty open to both sexes. I mean they're not dominated by one sex or the other. It's not like engineering or math or something (Personal interview).

Republican media consultant, Fred Davis, discounted the importance of gender in campaigns by reporting:

These days, female equality has come a long way. And it's come a long way in the United States Senate and governor's houses and Congress. We have a lot of women in those bodies anymore. And a lot of women beat men (Personal interview).

As of 2011, women represent 17% of Congress, 24% of state legislatures, and hold only six of the governorships nationwide (CAWP 2011). While these particular types of responses were not widespread among interview subjects, they highlight one way in which the role of gender in campaigns – and politics at large – can be inaccurately diminished and/or overlooked by some of the most influential political actors.

The influence of gender is also diminished when scholars and practitioners alike focus on electoral effects or outcomes alone. My interviews reveal this tendency among candidates and campaign practitioners. Most commonly, insiders I spoke with argued that gender's effect, if evident at all, was not large enough to shape campaign results. For example, Republican gubernatorial primary candidate Randy Brogdon explained the role of gender in his race against Mary Fallin this way: "I don't think I could have been elected because she's a woman and I don't think she got elected because she's a woman" (Personal interview). In talking more broadly about gender's potential impact in campaigning, Democratic consultant Mary Hughes told me, "You either win the race or you don't, ... and gender really ceases to be an important factor if you do your work well" (Personal interview). In the excerpts outlined in this section, the focus is nearly universally on whether or not

gender – among candidates or voters – shapes campaigns’ victory or defeat. Therefore, while insiders said gender mattered on the individual sites I identified in the previous section, they often tempered those statements by noting that it did not matter *enough* to determine candidate success. Democratic consultant and former DSCC Political Director Martha McKenna concluded her interview by emphasizing the focus, especially of campaign professionals, on electoral outcomes. She said, “All in all, I think a campaign’s a campaign. It’s about making a better case against your opponent than your opponent makes against you” (Personal interview with Martha McKenna). In an institution like this, the influence of gender is, based upon my interviews, variable and often indirect.

## **Discussion**

The complexity of campaigns, and influential factors therein, is revealed in this chapter. I began the chapter by outlining the factors interview subjects identified as most influential in shaping electoral outcomes, from political climate and strategy to party influence, money, and media. I analyzed each factor’s gendered dimensions to convey the ways in which gender shapes campaigns even when it alone is not identified as a determinative factor in whether candidates win or lose. Campaign insiders described the specific dynamics of any particular political landscape – by region, contest, or otherwise – and the strategies by which campaigns navigate them as especially important factors to consider in any accurate analysis. The predominance of these factors challenges a campaign scholarship that seeks generalizable findings from a highly dynamic institution. In this project, I argue that institutional dynamism is, in fact, a challenge for study, but also points to the capacity for institutional change, especially as it relates to gender.

In returning to the chapter’s major question, does gender matter, I then analyzed insiders’ responses about the role and influence of gender in campaigns and campaigning.

First, I provided initial measures of interview subjects' discussion about whether gender mattered or not, noting how common it was for them to provide evidence in both directions. I described differences in perceptions by candidate and campaign practitioners' partisan and gender identities, finding that Republican insiders were slightly more likely to describe the ways in which gender did not matter in campaigns and female insiders were more likely than men to both talk about the influential role of gender and bring it up before being asked directly by me about gendered dynamics in their campaign or campaigns at large.

In order to better analyze the variability of these responses, I outlined the many ways in which candidates and campaign practitioners said that gender mattered – whether in the campaigns they worked on in this cycle or more generally. They described gender differences in voter perceptions, beliefs, and demands on candidates, in addition to institutional hurdles that are often unique for men or women candidates. However, many of these responses only emerged once insiders were probed about gender dynamics. In other words, and consistent with my initial expectations, it was not often a top-of-mind consideration for them, nor was it identified by any interview subjects as one of the major factors shaping their campaign's results. Next, I tried to better gauge the magnitude of gender influence amongst these myriad factors by analyzing the ways in which interview subjects tempered statements about gender influence. I showed how, in some cases, insiders' initial rejection of any gender effects was moderated when I probed them about specific campaign dynamics. In other cases, and more commonly, insiders noted multiple ways in which gender could and did matter, but argued that the magnitude of those effects was mitigated by their unique political environment and/or neutralized by other candidate characteristics and by strategy. Moreover, many interview subjects argued that women's numerical political equality in their states both indicated cultural progress and lessened the degree to which gender mattered in

their campaigns. Among all of these responses, insiders most often focused on electoral outcomes – winning or losing - as a measure for overall gender effects.

These findings reveal the importance of probing campaign practitioners and candidates more deeply on the nuances of gender in decision-making to best identify the sites for gender influence and impact, and its magnitude, in campaigns. Their responses provide a first look at how many campaign insiders perceive the overarching role of gender in today's national political campaigns. These perceptions both provide insight into the lived experiences of those interviewed and inform how major political decision-makers approach campaign strategy and execution. Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate in greater detail the utility of probing insiders directly about gender and analyzing their responses within particular campaign contexts. When subjects were probed about specific ways in which gender can or did influence political campaigns and campaigning, their responses revealed that – even if not the overriding or most decisive factor in this cycle or others – gender functions in today's political campaigns and influences strategy for male and female candidates. Moreover, gender acts as one among (and interacting with) many factors within the prevailing political landscape to inform the image, message, and tactics adopted by individual candidates and campaigns.

## **Conclusion**

While insiders' evaluations of gender effects are incredibly useful in indicating how and to what extent gender shapes campaign thinking, I conclude this chapter and, later, this dissertation, by urging both scholars and practitioners to analyze major influential factors in campaigns through a gender lens, to expand their definitions of campaign effects, and to consider whether neutrality of gender in campaigns is either possible or desired. I show the value of gendered analysis of the factors that insiders cited as most influential in campaign

outcomes at the start of this chapter, noting that gender's influence is often nuanced or indirect, but important to consider in negotiating campaign terrain. Moreover, the effects of campaigns on institutional gender dynamics are significant, but often – and understandably – overlooked or deemphasized by campaign insiders motivated exclusively to win elections. In revealing the multiple sites where gender mattered in campaigns before Election Day, this chapter evidences the utility of exploring specific sites of gender considerations, decisions, and influence, even if they are not determinative in a campaign's victory or defeat. In evaluating gender impact by electoral outcomes alone, insiders' claims of gender neutrality may make some sense due to women's success once on the ballot. However, Acker (1992) describes how easily a gendered reality is obscured when institutions are conceptualized in ideals of gender-neutrality and Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995) add that no institution can actually achieve gender neutrality, as multiple claims to gender power are continually in flux. Campaigns, as gendered institutions, can be better understood with attention to the shifting balance of gender power, whereby the influence of gender changes, but is not removed from electoral contexts.

This is especially notable in candidates and campaign practitioners' discussions of women's political equality within states and over time. Though these responses highlight an important tie that often emerges between numerical progress and women-friendly cultures, the intricacies and nuances of gender are not erased – even if altered – when women reach new levels of representation and political power. For example, instead of evidencing gender neutrality, women's numerical progress may reflect a political climate in which the advantages women bring are more salient. Moreover, women's advancement influences men in politics and the prevalence of masculine institutional dynamics, with the potential of disrupting gender dynamics instead of eliminating them. Equality, then, may be better



measured by institutional power dynamics instead of numerical presence; and institutional outcomes can provide additional, and often more intricate, evidence of gender dynamics than do electoral outcomes of men and women candidates.

This chapter presents an overview of candidates and campaign practitioners' evaluation of campaigns' most influential factors, and the role of gender therein. In Chapters 3, 5, and 6, I demonstrate that these perceptions, and gender considerations in particular, inform decisions and tactics at the earliest phases of campaigning, even if gender dynamics overall do not determine whether candidates win or lose. These findings complicate research and practice by arguing that the question is not whether gender matters or not in campaigns, but how, when, and in what ways gender functions within a complex political environment amass with other influential – and even interacting – variables, and how that function can be reinforced or disrupted by campaigns' strategic players.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The bulk of predictive studies of electoral outcomes develop, test, and refine forecasting models of campaign results (Abramowitz 1998; 2010; Campbell 1992; 1994; 2010; Lewis-Beck and Rice 1992; 2000; Lewis-Beck and Tien 2008; Rosenstone 1983). The variables described as significant in these models rarely include the behaviors of a campaign operation itself or the effects of campaign strategies. On the other hand, campaign professionals offer “how-to” guides for campaigning that emphasize electoral victory as the ultimate goal (Burton and Shea 2010; Faucheux 2003; Shaw 2009).

<sup>2</sup> It is not uncommon for consultants to report their “win rates” in promoting business for their firms.

<sup>3</sup> President George W. Bush's approval ratings remained historically low throughout the 2008 election, hitting one of their lowest points in November 2008 at 25% approval (70% disapproval), according to Gallup. According to Gallup, Bush's 25% approval rating was only three percentage points higher than the all-time low in presidential approval polls; in February 1952, President Harry Truman received a 22% approval rating from voters. Bush's personal approval ratings largely mirrored how voters viewed the situation in Iraq, with 65% of voters disapproving of the President's handling of the war in a November 2008 poll by Ipsos/McClatchy, a number that had not changed much for over two years. In October 2007, a Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg poll found that only 23% of Americans believed the

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country was headed in the right direction, and by September 2008, the same organization reported that 79% of Americans believed the country was on the wrong track.

<sup>4</sup> Home sales dropped by 60% between July 2005 and May 2008. At the same time, the number of delinquent subprime mortgage loans doubled and the hit on banks and financial institutions was unrepairable (Hubbard and O'Brien 2009). The collapse of Bear Stearns in March 2008 resonated with Americans who were both skeptical of financial giants and fearful of the impact of their decline. And while the government intervened to lessen the impact of Bear Stearns' collapse, there was no government involvement as financial giant Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy in September 2008, spurring financial panic and instability worldwide. See Justin Fox, "Three Lessons of the Lehman Brothers Collapse," *TIME*, <http://www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1923197,00.html> (accessed 7/22/11); The Lehman Brothers declaration of bankruptcy in September 2008 became the largest bankruptcy ever in the U.S.

<sup>5</sup> While President Bush's disapproval remained in the sixties as the election neared, Obama's approval hit the same level, according to 2009 polls by *Newsweek*. Journalists termed Obama's ascent as the "Obama revolution," and argued that the revolution was one that benefitted Democratic candidates down-ticket as well, especially due to an unprecedented level of excitement and engagement that yielded the highest voter turnout in U.S. history. Andy Barr of *Politico* reported on November 5, 2008 that more than 130 million people voted in the 2008 elections, the most ever to vote in a presidential election in the United States. See Paul Harris, "The Obama Revolution," *Guardian UK*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/feb/04/usa.uselections2008> (accessed 7/22/11); John F. Harris and Jim Vandehei, "The Obama Revolution," *Politico*, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1108/15300.html> (accessed 7/22/11)

<sup>6</sup> See Rebecca Traister's June 2008 analysis of "Why Clinton Voters Won't Support Barack Obama" from Salon.com. In the piece, Traister reviews the perspectives and behaviors of some frustrated Clinton supporters, especially women. In the summer of 2008, some of these supporters went so far as to name themselves "PUMAs," standing for "Party Unity, My Ass." Hillary Clinton's strong endorsement of Obama and efforts on his behalf on the campaign trail were considered particularly important for Obama to secure his female base of support (see Murray and Kornblut 6/24/08).

<sup>7</sup> *Washington Post* columnist Colbert King wrote on August 31, 2008, "Sarah Palin is on the Republican ticket because of her gender. She was chosen by a pandering John McCain, who thinks he can peel off some of Hillary Clinton's disgruntled supporters. This time, war hero John McCain pulled a role reversal: He put himself, not his country, first" (8/31/08). Colorado Representative Diana DeGette issued a press release upon McCain's selection of Palin, writing, "The selection of Governor Palin is an insult to women. ... To assume that women will simply support Governor Palin because of her gender is insulting" (8/29/08).

<sup>8</sup> For example, the number of women in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate reached all-time highs January 2009 (CAWP 2008).

<sup>9</sup> In October 2010, Gallup found that the prioritization of economic issues influencing vote choice held across all parties.

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<sup>10</sup> In an October 31 – November 2, 2010 poll by Gallup, President Obama’s approval rating was 43% and disapproval rating was 47%.

<sup>11</sup> According to the Center for Responsive Politics, groups promoting Republicans dominated outside spending in 2010, spending \$191 million, about \$70 million more than Republican-allied groups spent in any previous election. Groups aligned with Democrats, on the other hand, spent \$92 million in 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Party leaders and consultants note that California was a state largely immune to the Republican tide, as evidenced in the Democratic successes from the state legislative, congressional, and gubernatorial contests.

<sup>13</sup> The Republican women win rate in 2010 primaries for the U.S. House of Representatives was only 28% (versus 46% for Democratic women) (CAWP 2011).

<sup>14</sup> These questions were asked mid-way through interviews with candidates and campaign insiders. I first asked about the most important factors shaping campaign outcomes and then followed up by asking what role, if any, gender played in the campaign. After asking about gender effects generally, I probed interview subjects about gender considerations or perceptions in specific areas of campaign strategy, tactics, or voter perceptions.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Democratic respondents cited the political climate as especially important to candidate success or defeat in 2010, a political cycle in which the national mood was much more anti-Democratic than 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Republicans in 2008 knew that their party and President would tarnish their image in the campaign and sought ways to either avoid or counter those criticisms. For some, it meant turning the same strategy against their opponent by noting their support of the president’s policies in previous years.<sup>16</sup> Others tried very hard to distance themselves from not only President Bush, but also the Republican Party. For example, Washington state gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi adopted a “GOP” party label rather than calling himself a Republican. Despite these efforts, conservative candidates were hurt by the anti-Republican fervor facing candidates across the country.

<sup>17</sup> In a special election for the U.S. Senate seat vacated by staunch Democrat Ted Kennedy, Republican candidate Scott Brown defeated Democratic candidate Martha Coakley to the surprise of many political observers.

<sup>18</sup> As Nate Silver reported in the *New York Times* in November 2010, while voters who ranked the economy as the top issue in 2010 were more likely to say they would vote Democrat rather than Republican, voters’ skepticism of the federal bailout, or stimulus bill, seemed to hurt both Democrats and Republicans who voted for it.

<sup>19</sup> As of June 2011, California and Nevada had the highest unemployment rates of all states, at 11.8% and 12.4% respectively, according to the Bureau of Labor statistics (available at [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)).

<sup>20</sup> Interview subjects discussed the national media fascination with the Florida U.S. Senate race – where former Governor Charlie Crist ran as an Independent against Democrat Kendrick Meek and Republican Marco Rubio. In California, the extreme spending by Meg

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Whitman's campaign monopolized the airwaves and challenged any alternative statewide Republican efforts, according to insiders.

<sup>21</sup> The Campaign Finance Institute provides these reports based on their analyses of Federal Election Commission data. In their analyses of Senate campaign expenditures, they note that the average expenditures for Senate campaigns in 2010 was about \$8 million per campaign and \$5.9 million per campaign in 2008. Available at [www.cfinst.org/pdf/vital/VitalStats\\_t5.pdf](http://www.cfinst.org/pdf/vital/VitalStats_t5.pdf) (accessed 7/25/11).

<sup>22</sup> Data collected by Thad Beyle, University of North Carolina, and reported in the 2008 Book of States. Available at <http://www.unc.edu/~beyle/guber.html> (accessed 7/25/11). Data from 2010 gubernatorial contests is not yet available.

<sup>23</sup> These ranked among the top outside funders of Congressional races in the 2010 cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics (available at [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)).

<sup>24</sup> Data provided by the Center for Responsive Politics. Available at <http://www.opensecrets.org/> (accessed 7/25/11).

<sup>25</sup> In 2010, 16 of Susan B. Anthony List's 45 candidate endorsements, or 35.6%, went to anti-abortion men running against pro-choice women candidates (available: <http://www.sba-list.org/endorsed-candidates>). In a blog post titled "Empowering women...by endorsing men?" EMILY's List finance director Jen Bluestein Lamb criticizes this approach, writing, "I'm just saying: endorsing men is hardly an effective way of 'activating more pro-life women in the political and legislative arenas,' which SBA List gives as its goal" (7/15/10). Despite this criticism, EMILY's List did launch an effort to contrast their female endorsees with other women candidates running in 2010. In August 2010, they announced "Sarah Doesn't Speak for Me" to "fight back against the radical agenda of Sarah Palin, and her endorsed candidates." Complete with a campaign video and website, this effort challenged Palin's designated "Mamma Grizzlies," calling them "reactionary" candidates with a "backward-looking agenda" (available: [http://emilyslist.org/news/releases/advisory\\_sarah\\_doesnt\\_speak\\_for\\_me\\_launch/](http://emilyslist.org/news/releases/advisory_sarah_doesnt_speak_for_me_launch/)). Though it did not target any individual candidates, the "Sarah Doesn't Speak for Me" initiative exemplifies another way that a woman's organization distinguished its efforts from advancing women in politics to arguing that the women they have endorsed are the *best women* for the country. These efforts of both EMILY's List and Susan B. Anthony List illuminate the growing complexities of intersecting gender, party, and ideology in campaigning.

<sup>26</sup> Blaming the "cookie-cutter" national model that EMILY's List provides to its candidates, Vermont gubernatorial candidate Deb Markowitz argued, "it may be some of the things they had me [do] meant that I lost." She added, "And they're not going to help you unless you do their model, and that was the problem" (Personal interview, 10/13/10).

<sup>27</sup> Some critics argue that EMILY's methods for candidate selection, support, and strategizing evidence have brought women into a masculine campaign process, but have not altered the process itself. In other words, their support has helped women navigate masculine terrain successfully, but has not challenged the underlying masculinity in its expectations and processes. One Democratic female candidate from 2010 called on the group to be more "bold," "daring," and "decisive" in approaching a new generation of women candidates and voters (Personal interview with Rosa Scarcelli, 7/16/10).

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<sup>28</sup> McKenna spoke about the leadership of then-DSCC head Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) on gender advancement: “In most cases, he looked for a woman candidate. He just fundamentally believes that voters want change and voters understand that a government of all white men doesn’t do anyone good” (Personal interview, 12/14/09). She later remarked, “I never feel like I’m the only one pushing for women candidates or women managers. I’ve asked JB Poersch and the chairs – both Menendez and Schumer – they totally get it. And they get it in a way that – ... it’s really sort of extraordinary” (Personal interview with Martha McKenna, 2/25/10). Both McKenna and Feldman noted that progress at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has been slower and that leadership on the Republican side has demonstrated little concern for gender parity in recruitment of candidates or campaign professionals. Of the 88 “Young Guns” selected as top recruits by the National Republican Congressional Committee in 2010, only 8 were women. Even Ohio Republican Representative Deb Pryce said of her party’s recruitment of women, “I don’t think it’s a lack of trying or effort, but history has hurt us. I just wish our party had a gentler face once in a while” (quoted in Shiner and Thrush, “The GOP’s Women Problem,” *Politico*, available <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1109/29308.html>, accessed 7/25/11).

<sup>29</sup> However, Republican Party inaction on behalf of some of their 2010 female U.S. Senate candidates evoked anecdotal discussions over the party’s support of women candidates. In Alaska, incumbent Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski, the then-only woman in a top Republican leadership position in the Senate, campaigned against her party after they offered little support in defending her against her Tea Party primary opponent Joe Miller. Moreover, while the Republican leadership ignored and then came around to support Joe Miller in Alaska, they targeted and then ignored a similar Tea Party candidate in Delaware – Christine O’Donnell. Focusing on the GOP primaries in 2010, journalist Betsy Reed characterized the Republican Party as “a national party that, at best, takes its women candidates for granted even as it plays up its new female-friendly image” (“Sex and the GOP,” *The Nation*, available <http://www.thenation.com/article/155094/sex-and-gop>, accessed 7/25/11).

<sup>30</sup> The dearth of women in party leadership positions is also important to note in considering how women fare in party recruitment, endorsement, and allocation of resources. In 2011, Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) became the first woman elected as Chair of the Democratic National Committee by the full body. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) took the helm as Chair of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) and four of six leadership roles at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) are held by female members of the House Democratic Caucus, including Representative Allyson Schwartz (D-PA) as National Chair for Recruiting and Candidate Services. Of the ten leadership positions at the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), two are held by Republican women, and Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) continues to Chair the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) going into the 2012 election season. Finally, while men hold the top posts at both the Democratic and Republican Governors’ Associations, both organizations’ senior staffs include more women than in past election cycles. The entre of women into party leadership – among elected officials, senior staffs, and consultants – provides only one potential route toward institutional changes in gender dynamics.

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<sup>31</sup> In 2008, my interview requests for male candidates and male campaign practitioners did not include gender among the areas I wished to ask about. Women candidates and campaign practitioners received the same letter with a sentence about my interest in gender. In 2010, I included gender as an area of interest in interview requests. There are no significant differences in findings on the number of individuals who brought up gender on their own versus being probed about it. Removing the 10 2008 interviews from 2008 from this calculation, I still asked about gender in 56% of interviews before the subject mentioned it.

<sup>32</sup> If 2008 interviews are omitted from these data [see endnote 31], the findings hold; 77% of women brought up gender before I asked about it, while 23% needed to be probed, and 74% of men were asked directly about gender to elicit their first responses on the subject.

<sup>33</sup> Of all of the interviews I completed, 76 of 82 interview subjects (94% of all 2008 and 2010 case interviews) provided their perspectives on whether or not gender mattered in their campaign in at least one excerpt.

<sup>34</sup> This difference is difficult to determine among Republican subjects because of a low number of Republican women in my sample.

<sup>35</sup> In talking about the backlash that male candidates face when charged with sexism, Bentz referred directly to an incident in the 2010 Republican primary for the U.S. Senate in Colorado, where candidate Ken Buck was criticized for responding to a voter's question about why they should vote for him versus his opponent – Jane Norton – by saying, “Because I do not wear high heels.”

<sup>36</sup> Internet new site *Gawker* published a story called “I Had a One-night Stand with Christine O'Donnell” with this overview: “Three years ago this week, an intoxicated Christine O'Donnell showed up at the apartment of a 25-year-old Philadelphian and ended up spending the night in his bed. Here's his story—and photos—of his escapade with the would-be Delaware senator.” Available at <http://gawker.com/5674353/i-had-a-one+night-stand-with-christine-odonnell> (accessed 9/10/11).

<sup>37</sup> See page 221

<sup>38</sup> All of the states referred to in the previous paragraph ranked within the top 20 in the nation in 2010 for the percentage of women in their state legislatures. In 2010, New Hampshire ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for the percentage of women in its state legislature, with 36.8%. Fifty percent of the state's congressional delegation was female and New Hampshire has had one female governor. In Arizona, 32.3% of state legislators were women in 2010 (7<sup>th</sup> in the nation), but women only made up 20% of the state's congressional delegation. Arizona has had four women governors. Nevada ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation for women's legislative representation in 2010 (31.7% of the state legislature was female) and 40% of its congressional delegation was female. In Maine, 29% of state legislators in 2010 were women (13<sup>th</sup> in the nation) and 75% of the state's congressional delegation was female. Maine has never had a woman governor. Finally, while 38% of California's 55-member congressional delegation was female in 2010, only 26.7% of California state legislators were women and the state has never elected a female governor. All data available from the Center for American Women and Politics at [www.cawp.rutgers.edu](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu).

## CHAPTER 5: GENDER DYNAMICS IN STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT - IMAGE AND MESSAGE CREATION

The complexity of gender dynamics in political campaigns, as in other institutions, makes systematic study difficult. Many scholars have explored the role of gender in campaigns and campaigning by focusing on public opinion and perceptions, using surveys to evaluate the landscape that candidates – male and female – face (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Dolan 2010; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b; Koch 2000; 2002; McDermott 1997; Plutzer and Zipp 1996; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). Other scholarship has sought to control for the dynamism of campaign settings by using experimental methods to measure gender impact on vote choice or voter reactions (Banwart 2010; Chang and Hitchon 2004; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989; Sanbonmatsu 2002). And, finally, a strong literature exists that investigates gender differences in campaign output – advertisements, websites, and mail pieces – as a proxy for campaign strategy and decision-making (Banwart 2006; Bystrom 1994; Bystrom et al. 2004; Bystrom and Kaid 2002; Dolan 2005; Kahn 1996; Schneider 2008).

Across this latter scholarship is a persistent observation that women candidates most often adapt to a masculine environment of politics in the images and messages they communicate to the public (see Dolan 2008). In evaluating campaign advertisements and websites, scholars have found that women candidates present themselves most often in formal attire, are more likely to use male voice-overs or be with men in images, and are less likely to emphasize their own family in campaign communications (Bystrom 1994; Bystrom and Brown 2009; Bystrom and Kaid 2002; Kahn 1996; Williams 1998). Schneider (2008) found that both men and women candidates tend to become more masculine in their traits in mixed-gender contests. Thus, instead of trying to adopt the other candidate's strengths, *both* candidates move to masculine traits. These findings are consistent with public opinion

data showing that those traits viewed by voters as *most* important for officeholding are also those most associated with male candidates (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b; Kahn 1996; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989) and experimental data demonstrating the electoral value of assuring voters of candidates' masculine credentials (Bystrom et al. 2004; Kaid et al. 1984; Wadsworth et al. 1987). Still, this scholarship is inconsistent. Some experimental research findings point to the potentially unique advantages of women candidates capitalizing on gender-based expectations, whether in trait attributes or perceived issue expertise (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003; Plutzer and Zipp 1996). Moreover, evaluations of candidate presentation in specific electoral contexts often highlight the importance of context in shaping voter demand and observe and/or prescribe more fluid strategies where female candidates work to balance masculine and feminine traits (Banwart 2010; Fox 1997; Jamieson 1995; Schaffner 2005; Witt, Paget, and Matthews 1994).

This project uses a unique mixed-method design to explore how voter perceptions of gender are translated into campaign behavior and output. I do so by highlighting and investigating the important role of campaign insiders – candidates, campaign managers, campaign consultants, and party committee chairs, as they are the political actors whose evaluations of voter demand are most influential to the creation of campaign supply. In this chapter, I ask how gender influences campaigns' image and message creation. More specifically, how does candidate gender shape campaigns' decision-making around trait and issue emphasis, appearance, and family in candidate presentation? To answer these questions, I rely upon interviews with a total of 82 candidates and practitioners from 25 U.S. Senate and gubernatorial campaign contests in 2008 and 2010, with the bulk of interviews completed between February 2010 and January 2011 (See Appendix C and Appendix D). In addition to these interviews, I draw upon evidence from each campaign – from



advertisements and websites to news and commentary. These additional data both supplement interview findings and strengthen evidence in cases where interviews were unavailable.

In light of my findings from the national survey of campaign consultants, my review of the literature to date on gender and campaign strategy, and my evaluation of the political landscape presented to statewide candidates in 2008 and 2010, I began this research with three general expectations. First, in line with the survey results, I expected candidates and campaign practitioners to both perceive and apply gender stereotypical expectations of traits and issue expertise to their crafting of campaign images and messages, even if they did not recognize these considerations as primary to their efforts. Based on the persistent masculinity of political campaigns and offices, especially at the statewide level, I expected insiders to emphasize the need for women to meet masculine expectations of the office moreso than the feminine expectations of their gender. In other words, I expected that candidates and their teams would highlight the institutional demand of masculinity as more important to electoral success, especially for women candidates. While scholars and practitioners have frequently outlined the “balance” that women candidates must strike between femininity and masculinity, I felt that these interviews would reveal the constraint of masculinity more often than the advantage of “running as a woman,” at least in the eyes of those drafting campaign plans.

As I outlined in previous chapters, the benefit of investigating campaigns within particular electoral cycles is understanding how gender acts among and interacts with other contextual factors shaping campaign decision-making. Therefore, I also believed that campaigns’ decisions on message and image development would be significantly influenced by factors beyond gender. Thinking most about cultural differences and expectations, I

expected gender dynamics in strategic development would vary by candidate party, region or state, and type of office (executive or legislative). Moreover, I expected that the identities of insiders – candidates and practitioners – might also influence the degree to and ways in which they addressed gender in strategic thinking and candidate presentation.

Finally, I expected candidates, campaign managers, party leaders, and campaign consultants to identify nuances of gender in campaign decision-making that are neither evident in campaign output and/nor isolated to the gender differences outlined in existing literature. Highlighting these gender dynamics is an important contribution to the work on gender and campaign strategy, exposing sites for gender influence in campaigns that can easily be overlooked. Not only does probing campaign insiders help to confirm or challenge the prevailing theses on why gender differences in campaign output emerge, but this type of campaign analysis also reveals the ways in which insiders try to minimize differences between male and female contenders so that they conform to institutional images of appropriateness and, thus, masculinity.

In other words, this research moves the site for study to the earliest phases of strategy development and decision-making, instead of limiting the data to campaign output and electoral outcomes, helping to better explain how and/or why gender shapes campaigns' image and message strategies. Chapter 6 will continue this investigation of gender dynamics from the phase of strategic development to tactical decision-making and strategic execution. Together, these chapters provide real-world examples of the ways in which gender shapes campaign strategy. The approach I utilize in both chapters enriches existing scholarly work on gender and campaigns and permits greater recognition of the unique circumstances of individual campaigns and the contextual dynamics so necessary of recognition in campaign research. Moreover, these chapters offer evidence of both institutional maintenance and

change, whereby candidates and their teams both replicate and redefine institutional gender norms and expectations of ideal candidates and officeholders.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on gender dynamics in imaging and messaging in 2008 and 2010 mixed-gender or all-female Senate and gubernatorial campaigns, focusing especially on six particular races. After providing some background on the cases I highlight in depth, I discuss how candidates and their teams either meet or challenge voters' gendered perceptions of candidate traits and issue expertise and note how these decisions are influenced by political context and time. Then, I highlight two areas of candidate presentation where gender is described by insiders as particularly salient – appearance and family. Using evidence and interviews from 2008 and 2010, I consider how campaigns' decisions on image and message strategies replicate or help to redefine gender roles, expectations, and institutional ideals of statewide candidates and officeholders.

### **Introduction to 2010 Cases**

While my analysis below draws upon findings from all interviews I completed in the 2008 and 2010 election cycles, the detailed examples and evidence I highlight in both this chapter and Chapter 6 are drawn largely from six campaigns (see Table 11). I selected these races for emphasis to best vary regional, party, and electoral contexts in which gender functions. They include three gubernatorial contests and three campaigns for the U.S. Senate. They span regions, states, and political culture to include California, Oklahoma, Missouri, South Carolina, Florida, and New Hampshire. Moreover, they include two female-female general election contests and four mixed-gender races, with competitive mixed-gender primaries analyzed in four of six case examples.<sup>1</sup> Appendix E provides a more detailed analysis of each case than the brief introductions provided in this section. While no single case provides examples of each gender dimension I present in the following chapters,

**Table 11. Selected 2010 Senate and Gubernatorial Cases for In-depth Analysis**

| <b>State</b>   | <b>Office</b> | <b>General Election Candidates</b>            | <b>Primary Election Candidates<sup>a</sup></b>   | <b>No. Interviews</b> |
|----------------|---------------|---|--|-----------------------|
| Florida        | Governor      | <b>Rick Scott (R)</b><br>Alex Sink (D)        | N/A  | 3 (3D)                |
| Oklahoma       | Governor      | <b>Mary Fallin (R)</b><br>Jari Askins (D)     | <b>Jari Askins (D)</b><br>Drew Edmondson (D)<br><br><b>Mary Fallin (R)</b><br>Randy Brogdon (R)<br>Robert Hubbard (R)<br>Roger Jackson (R) | 8 (5D, 2R, 1NP)       |
| South Carolina | Governor      | <b>Nikki Haley (R)</b><br>Vincent Sheheen (D) | <b>Nikki Haley (R)</b><br>Gresham Barrett (R)<br>Henry McMaster (R)<br>Andre Bauer (R)   | 5 (1D, 4R)            |
| California     | U.S. Senate   | <b>Barbara Boxer (D)</b><br>Carly Fiorina (R) | <b>Carly Fiorina (R)</b><br>Tom Campbell (R)<br>Chuck DeVore (R)<br>Al Ramirez (R)   | 9 (4D, 5R)            |
| New Hampshire  | U.S. Senate   | <b>Kelly Ayotte (R)</b><br>Paul Hodes (D)     | <b>Kelly Ayotte (R)</b><br>Ovide Lamontagne (R)<br>Bill Binnie (R)<br>Jim Bender (R)<br>Dennis Lamare (R)                                  | 4 (2D, 2R)            |
| Missouri       | U.S. Senate   | <b>Roy Blunt (R)</b><br>Robin Carnahan        | N/A  | 3 (2D, 1R)            |

NOTE: Bolded names represent primary and general election winners. See Appendix C and Appendix D for more details on interview subjects.

<sup>a</sup> Only primary races for which I interviewed candidates or campaign teams are listed here.

together they highlight the multiple ways in which and reasons why gender influences the development and execution of campaign strategy.

The Florida gubernatorial election of 2010 pitted two relatively unknown candidates against each other in a battle of messaging and money. Alex Sink (D), the sitting Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the state, brought with her 26 years of experience in business and banking, culminating with her presidency of Florida's largest bank (1993-1997) and role as President of Florida Operations for Bank of America from 1997 to 2000. Rick Scott (R) is a multi-millionaire businessman most affiliated with for-profit health care companies and investment. He started his health care company, Columbia/HCA, in 1987, and it went on to become the largest private for-profit health care company in the United States. However, in 1997, Scott was forced to resign as CEO amidst convictions of billing fraud and questionable business practices. To the surprise of many, he announced his candidacy in April 2010, almost a year after Sink became the first official candidate for governor. After spending about \$4.7 million before the primary election, Scott defeated Republican favorite Bill McCollum. Both Sink and Scott entered a unique general election context where all three cabinet offices in the Florida, the governorship, and a Senate seat were up for grabs. In the nation's fourth largest state, this degree of high-level electoral competition meant that individual races struggled to be heard without significant resources dedicated to media expenditures. The partisan climate both statewide and nationally advantaged Republican contenders and Scott spent about \$73 million compared to Sink's \$11 million, making it the most expensive gubernatorial race in Florida history. After a campaign where Sink emphasized her integrity versus Scott's fraudulent past, and Scott tied Sink to an unpopular President Obama, Scott defeated Sink by just one percent of the vote – 53,000 votes out of the 5.3 million cast.

In South Carolina, Nikki Haley (R) entered the 2010 gubernatorial election against great odds. The daughter of Indian immigrants and three-term state representative faced a full Republican primary field of strong male contenders, including Attorney General Henry McMaster, Lieutenant General André Bauer, and Congressman Gresham Barrett. Her conservative voting record in the state legislature was helpful in a political year where Tea Party fervor was strong, but early estimates argued she would have little electoral success due to the experience and reputations of her opponents. Because South Carolina is an overwhelmingly Republican state, there was little question that the Republican nominee for governor would win in November. Therefore, the most competitive and interesting race to analyze in 2010 is the Republican primary contest. Nikki Haley ran to be the first woman governor of the state, the first governor of color, and an underdog committed to changing the way business is done in state government. Despite fundraising struggles and little name recognition, Nikki Haley's campaign took her primary opponents by surprise in May of 2010 after helpful endorsements from first lady Jenny Sanford and former Governor Sarah Palin. May also brought the two sets of affair allegations against Haley, in addition to a firm, consistent, and ultimately effective denial by Haley. In the June 8<sup>th</sup> primary contest, Haley defeated her closest opponent – Gresham Barrett – by 27 percentage points. Just missing the 50% threshold needed to avoid a run-off, she went on to defeat Barrett for the nomination on June 22, 2010 with 65% of the vote. While the affair allegations continued to make news through November, Haley was able to secure enough financial support and Republican loyalty to defeat Democratic nominee Vincent Sheheen in November by 3.5 percentage points.

In Oklahoma, both Jari Askins (D) and Mary Fallin (R) campaigned to become their state's first woman governor in 2010. Fallin won the Republican primary easily against two

challengers, using her 20-year record and more than \$2.4 million to defeat State Senator Randy Brogdon by 16 points. Askins, on the other hand, was expected to lose her primary bid against a very popular Attorney General Drew Edmondson. Edmondson, a four-term Attorney General, Vietnam veteran, and member of a well-respected political family, entered the Democratic primary after Askins announced, but – according to the *Associated Press* – raised more money than her overall.<sup>2</sup> Askins defeated Edmondson in a July 27<sup>th</sup> primary race by only 1,500 votes. At the start of the general election, much attention was paid to the unique circumstance of a woman-woman race for governor, especially in a state where women's representation has been historically low.<sup>3</sup> As the general election progressed, very little about the race received attention and many observers described it as boring and uneventful. The dearth of game-changing moments was particularly harmful for Lieutenant Governor Askins, who started behind in the polls, never closed the gap, and was defeated by 20 points in the November election.

While Oklahoma made history by electing their first woman governor in 2010, California's very female election for the U.S. Senate was consistent with the all-female Senate delegation in the state for the past decade. Senator Barbara Boxer (D), elected to Congress in 1982, faced a tough electoral climate for Democrats in her 2010 re-election bid. Carly Fiorina (R) announced her candidacy in November 2009 and soon became the favorite to be Boxer's opponent. Fiorina, former CEO of Hewlett-Packard and well-known for being the first woman to head up a Fortune 20 company, came to the race from working on John McCain's campaign for president in 2008. In 2009, before officially launching her candidacy, Fiorina was diagnosed and treated for breast cancer. Early on in her campaign, she joked with her supporters, "I have to say that after chemotherapy, Barbara Boxer just isn't that scary anymore." Though former five-term Congressman Tom Campbell entered the race

in January 2010 as the Republican frontrunner, strong advertising and messaging by Fiorina's campaign increased the gap between the top two Republican contenders and ultimately led to Fiorina's primary victory over him by 25 percentage points. Throughout the primary race and into the general election, Boxer's campaign focused on Fiorina's unflattering history at Hewlett Packard, where she laid off American workers. In response, Fiorina's team emphasized Boxer's failed leadership in her time in the U.S. Congress. After a race much closer than many would have expected, Boxer defeated Fiorina by 10 points on November 2, 2010. In her victory speech, Boxer told an audience of election night supporters that the campaign for her fourth term in the U.S. Senate was "the toughest and roughest campaign of my life."

Partisan dynamics in New Hampshire are often more complicated than in states like California. Reporting on 2010 election results there, the *New York Times* wrote, "No state swung more sharply toward the Democrats in the last few cycles, and none swung harder in the Republicans' direction on Tuesday" (11/4/10). Governor John Lynch won his fourth term, but his opponent came within seven percentage points in the final vote count. In this context, Democratic candidates for Congress fared poorly; Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter (D) lost by 12 percentage points as an incumbent and Ann McKlane Kuster (D) lost by 1.5 percentage points in an open-seat contest. In the campaign for the open U.S. Senate seat created by Senator Judd Gregg's (R) retirement, the partisan trend was upheld and Kelly Ayotte (R) assured that New Hampshire's entire delegation to the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress would be Republican. Ayotte (R) served as New Hampshire's Attorney General, the first woman in that role, from 2004 to 2009, achieving relatively strong name recognition and a reputation for being tough on crime.<sup>4</sup> Ayotte is also married to a small businessman and Iraq War Veteran and mother to two young children. Her campaign team contrasted her experiences



with those of Congressman Paul Hodes (D), who served in Washington for four years before the 2010 election. While Hodes faced no opposition in the Democratic primary, Ayotte faced a number of competitors in seeking the Republican nomination, including Ovide Lamontagne, Bill Binnie, and Jim Bender. Ayotte received support from much of the Republican establishment, but Lamontagne amassed his support and near victory by Election Day by appealing to the Tea Party and standing firm upon his strongly conservative beliefs. Lamontagne fell short by just 1,600 votes on election night and Ayotte took the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate. Ayotte moved from the September primary to November general election with a significant lead against her Democratic opponent. Hodes continued attacks on Ayotte's record as Attorney General and challenged her on social issues, but these efforts seemed ineffective as Ayotte took 60% of the November 2<sup>nd</sup> vote, defeating Congressman Hodes by 23 percentage points and winning majorities in nearly every demographic group. Ayotte's victory made her the first Republican woman to win a statewide office in New Hampshire, and the only female freshman member of the U.S. Senate in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Finally, in the Missouri race for the U.S. Senate seat opened by the retirement of Senator Kit Bond (R), both general election candidates fought to paint the other as a political insider tied to the unpopular policies of the day. With largely insignificant primary challenges between them, Secretary of State Robin Carnahan (D) and Congressman Roy Blunt (R) quickly shifted their focus on each other in messaging and strategy. While Carnahan called Blunt "the very worst of Washington," Blunt criticized Carnahan for her support of President Obama's health care reform bill and stimulus package. In a state where Obama lost to McCain in 2008, this tie to the White House was particularly challenging for Carnahan. Additionally the Missouri Senate race ranked sixth in the nation for the highest amount of

independent expenditures, according to the Center for Responsive Politics; pro-Blunt expenditures totaled \$6.8 million versus pro-Carnahan expenditures of about \$4.9 million. Whether due to finances, climate, or unsuccessful messaging, Carnahan was unable to take the lead in any polls throughout 2010, ultimately losing to Blunt at the ballot box by 15 percentage points.

## **Findings**

In their simplest reports, as Chapter 4 describes, campaign insiders – candidates and practitioners - recognize that gender matters in campaigns, but they debate how much, when, and in what ways it matters – and this variance holds across respondent type and demographics. Moreover, they emphasize the importance of context in investigating gender influence and impact. Like the consultant survey responses detailed in Chapter 3, the practitioners I interviewed believe that voters view candidates to some degree through gendered lenses, even if they debate the significance of those perceptions to electoral outcomes or processes.

Democratic consultant Mary Hughes explained that voter perceptions are an important aspect of campaign contexts: “Gender can be both an advantage and a disadvantage . . . . [It] is another criteria of choice that voters sort of turn over in their heads - whether consciously or subconsciously they’re interested in that as a quality or a factor in their vote” (Personal interview). Among all of the practitioners I interviewed, Republican candidates and professionals were less likely to argue that voters evaluated men and women candidates differently, or that candidate gender influenced vote choice. Interview subjects were also more likely to talk about differences in voter perceptions in gubernatorial over Senate contests, where expectations of executive office-holding are most entrenched in masculinity. Democratic consultant Diane Feldman explained:

People are still not used to seeing women in a position of power, and for men especially, but women too, their notion of a desirable woman isn't someone who wields power effectively. And so, you know, there's a clash between what they consider personally desirable and what they want in a governor (Personal interview).

This disjuncture in voter perceptions of gender norms and candidate ideals are often most blatant in trait and image expectations, attributions of issue expertise, and voters' evaluation of candidates' personal lives. As many practitioners noted, addressing this disjuncture is often most important for candidates with whom voters are least familiar. Finally, candidates and practitioners alike reported that voter perceptions of female candidates are most often more complicated than their perceptions of male candidates, for whom institutional norms and gender expectations coincide. Kelly Evans, 2008 campaign manager for Governor Christine Gregoire (D-WA), described how voters' confusion complicates campaigning for women:

Voters don't know all the time what they want from their women elected officials. ... It's very hard for women candidates to figure out what voters want because I think that voters – what they want and need from female candidates is different at any given time than it is for a man (Personal interview).

Evans concluded, "There's a more stable expectation of men leaders than there is of women," and that stability is something that candidates, practitioners, and scholars all desire (Personal interview).

In the absence of that stability, insiders must navigate the gendered terrain of political campaigns with an understanding of how voters perceive male and female candidates and what expectations they hold for them as men and women, and as candidates for office. That understanding among insiders shapes strategy development and decision-making. Returning to Democratic consultant Mary Hughes' explanation of gender advantage and disadvantage, she explained how important it is to "give [gender] its due" in strategizing to fully understand where campaigns can create competitive advantages (Personal interview).

If introduced to the political institution of campaigns as the territory of men and as defined by masculinity, voters may find it difficult to fit feminine images into masculine institutions. It is often up to candidates and their campaign teams to best address voters' confusion and find ways to shape voters' expectations in ways that benefit their candidate. As I detail below, they are tasked to do so via the candidate traits they emphasize, the ways they address salient policy issues, and the choices they make around candidate presentation, especially in regard to appearance and family. I ask: how do candidates and campaign professionals "give gender its due" in image and message creation? And, what do their decisions mean for adjusting voters' perceptions of gender and candidates so that women are viewed as able to wield political power in ways not constrained to masculine models?

### Traits

#### *Masculine Demand: Toughness and Strength*

Asked about gender differences in campaigning, interview subjects described the attribution and presentation of traits as unique for men and women candidates. More specifically, they pointed to advantageous and disadvantageous traits for women candidates in particular, and noted the influence of the political climate and campaign circumstance in amplifying or tempering voter demand for those traits. While interview subjects identified candidates' display of strength and/or toughness as important across political races and climates, they did highlight the enhanced demand for strong leaders in difficult times like those created by the economic instability and voter frustration in 2008 and 2010. Overall, in reporting on 2008 and 2010 statewide contests, candidates and campaign practitioners described a persistent demand for strength and toughness in candidate message and presentation. They told me that displaying toughness is especially important for women running for executive posts and, similarly, that women with executive experience or

prosecutorial backgrounds (e.g. Attorneys General) benefit on this dimension by touting those credentials. While insiders' perceptions of voter demand for tough candidates and officeholders were evident across party lines, some argued that the law and order persona of the Republican Party benefits Republican women candidates, making efforts toward reassurance less necessary. Despite differences in context, party, or type of race, campaign insiders' reports of voter demands for toughness and candidate presentation strategies meant to reflect it demonstrate a persistent value on masculine expectations of office-holding.

While studies of campaign output often analyze the use of “tough” language or imagery in candidate presentation, my interview findings present greater detail on how and why candidates and their teams work to assure voters that women candidates meet the masculine credentials of political office. Democratic pollster Celinda Lake described the need for women to develop a “toughness profile,” especially those women without a known record of taking on entrenched interests or “hard” issues, or candidates new to the political scene – at least at the statewide level. She added that establishing toughness credentials for women often requires greater care than it does for men. According to Lake, women are most advantaged when they can tout the toughness they drew upon in “slaying a dragon,” meeting the masculine demand of toughness in a way that justifies the potential disruption of gender norms of femininity. Similarly, insiders noted that women must be more attentive to the tone they strike in campaign messaging. While men are not immune to this sensitivity, expectations of femininity in language and tone often put women at a disadvantage when their rhetoric turns tough to meet the demands of a campaign. Republican pollster Whit Ayres cautioned:

You want to be tough, but not mean. You want to be tough, but open and friendly. And that's true of male candidates as well as female, but there is more of a burden of proof on a female candidate to demonstrate that she's tough enough to do a difficult job (Personal interview).

Democratic media consultant Ann Liston explained that one powerful way for women to meet that burden of proof is to have tough men endorse her. She explained, “I will use police, fire, EMT, any kind of male authoritative figure, I think can be very powerful in saying she’s no wallflower...she’s a tough cookie...she’s got the bona fides and she’s up for the job” (Personal interview with Ann Liston). Liston added, “Instead of having her say, or a voiceover say, ‘She went to Yale Law School. She’s been a prosecutor for 18 years. She’s put away gangbangers and rapists.’ ... ok, that’s all great, but to have a law enforcement officer with a badge who says the same thing – you got a twofer” (Personal interview).

In 2010, New Hampshire Republican candidate for U.S. Senate – Kelly Ayotte – developed her toughness profile by drawing largely upon her time and associations as Attorney General. The profile she developed via her communications strategy began in her first advertisement, “Tough Decisions,” where she introduced her experience making tough decisions. In the ad, she says:

As Attorney General, I made tough decisions that put murderers behind bars and held corrupt public officials accountable. And I'll make tough decisions in Washington with common sense spending cuts that make government work for us again (aired 5/4/10).

An advisor for one of Ayotte’s Republican primary opponents, noted the value of this strategy. He explained, “I think people looked at her and their initial impression was an [Attorney General] is tough on law and order.” He added, “She was also an Attorney General that helped prosecute a cop killer and secured the death penalty against him” (Personal interview). That case, well-known amongst New Hampshire voters, was touted by Ayotte and her team as the dragon she slayed. In two different campaign ads and in speeches, Ayotte described the murder of Officer Briggs and highlighted her dedication to and success in securing the death penalty for his killer. The ads described Ayotte as “solid as a rock,” a “great leader,” and someone who “never shrank from tough decisions.” Moreover,

they used law enforcement – detectives and police officers involved in the case – to further make the case that Ayotte has what it takes to do the job of United States Senator. Ayotte not only benefitted from the “twofer” of experience and endorsements, but paired tough behavior with a heinous crime. In this sense, her toughness was not only effective, but also justified. Finally, some insiders argued that candidates like Ayotte were advantaged by their partisan label, with Republicans more often associated with law and order than Democrats. Ayotte’s Democratic opponent Paul Hodes’ campaign manager, Valerie Martin, perceived this advantage for Ayotte, arguing:

I think that is sort of the Republican woman phenomenon, where just having ‘Republican’ next to your name sort of automatically signals to voters that ... you’re going to be tougher on crime, you’re going to be tighter with the dollar. ... There’s just sort of general assumptions that come with being a Republican, and then you couple that with being a woman and it’s sort of like, ‘Well, she’s tough, but she cares’ (Personal interview).

Both gender and party interact in campaigns’ perceptions of voter demand for masculine credentials of toughness and their decisions on how best to address them.

While Ayotte’s “dragon” was an individual universally despised due to his crime, other candidates in 2008 and 2010 described their efforts to take on tough issues like immigration or corruption as evidence that they were not going to back down from reforms that voters badly wanted.<sup>5</sup> A top advisor for Republican Governor Jan Brewer (AZ) explained the strategic benefit of his candidates’ hard stance on immigration in her 2010 campaign for re-election. He credited the image of Brewer going toe-to-toe with the President of the United States on SB 1070 with giving the campaign the “steroid shot” it needed to be successful (Personal interview with Paul Bentz). In the Georgia Republican primary for governor, Karen Handel had three male opponents whom she opposed as the candidate of ethics, transparency, and reform (her “dragons” to slay). Handel’s pollster, Whit Ayres, described the campaign’s efforts to communicate toughness, “We wanted to be sure

that people understood that she was tough enough to do the things she said she was going to do. And so we cut some ads with her looking fairly resolute and saying, ‘Bring it on’” (Personal interview). Whether by taking on individuals or issues, these women candidates used their public actions to establish their toughness credentials among a constituency that might have otherwise doubted them.

In examples from 2008 and 2010, some women candidates offered alternative sites for communicating toughness, moving from public successes to displays of personal strength through struggle. In *Notes from a Cracked Glass Ceiling*, journalist Anne Kornblut details how women use personal trials and tribulations to demonstrate their preparedness for the challenges of political office. Describing women’s “heroic stories” combating disease, she writes, “Breast cancer survival is perceived as proof of resilience in politics as in life” (Kornblut 2009, 150). In 2010, Carly Fiorina provided this proof to voters. While she rarely emphasized her recent bout with breast cancer in campaign communications, her illness was well-known and the gradual growth of her hair signified another day in which her battle against the disease was won.

Private credentials of toughness are also often tied to motherhood, according to insiders. Interview subjects credited maternal imagery with not only reassuring voters of women’s “softer side,” but also justifying women’s tough behavior (“protecting our children,” “fighting for the future”). Not only did Senate candidate Kelly Ayotte use imagery of her two young children – aged two and five – in campaign communications, but she also described how they motivated her to take on Washington for reform. In an August television spot titled “Conservative,” Ayotte is shown playing with her children on a tire swing while describing how wasteful spending in Washington is stealing from today’s children (aired 8/17/10). As a mother, prosecutor, and fighter for reform, Ayotte presented



a gender-balanced image coveted by many of the political strategists with whom I spoke – one that demonstrates the masculine credential of toughness while upholding the feminine likeability viewed as important to women candidates' electoral success.

*Feminine Advantages: Honesty, Authenticity, and Change*

The traits outlined most frequently by candidates and campaign practitioners I interviewed as advantageous to women include honesty, authenticity, and a propensity for change. Unlike the near universality of interview subjects' valuation of toughness and strength in candidate presentation, insiders' identification of feminine trait advantages for candidates were much more tied to the political context, especially in the campaign periods I analyzed. In 2008 and 2010, voters' level of frustration was high and demand for something new, fresh, and trustworthy was evident. A *Gallup* poll in late September 2010 reported a record-low of 36% of Americans had a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in the legislative branch. The trend toward distrust was evident in 2008, when only 17% of Americans in a *CBS/New York Times* poll said they trusted government always or most of the time. Voter frustration and demand for change is best measured in polling via voter responses to the question of whether or not the country is headed in the right direction. In October 2008, only 17% of voters told the *Associated Press* that the United States was headed in the right direction. While that number was 38% in an October 2010 *Associated Press* poll, the majority of voters still felt that the country was headed in the wrong direction, indicating that the progress they had hoped for since 2008 was still largely stunted. Asked in a different way by *Pew* if they were satisfied with the ways things are going in the country, 11% of voters in October 2008 and 23% of voters in November 2011 responded affirmatively. In a political climate where voters rejected the status quo, women – especially those who were relatively unknown - could capitalize on this political moment by drawing upon perceptions

that they bring honesty, integrity, authenticity, and change to an entrenched political system. Candidates and their teams noted the benefit of these traits across offices (Senate or gubernatorial) and party, though they described how candidates' capacity to embody change was tied to whether or not they were a member of the party in power and/or of the incumbent. These advantages were also tempered by other aspects of political context and the strategies of female candidates' opponents. Despite the political scandals in recent years that have had a disproportionately male face across party lines, interview subjects explained to me that the demand for honesty and integrity in 2008 and 2010 was still inferior to the demand for candidates who could get the economy back on track. Finally, even where women can capitalize on perceptions of honesty and change, some practitioners noted that male opponents have increasingly undermined these presentation strategies by learning to discredit their opponents on these very traits.

In 2010, women's honesty paired with their ability to convey authenticity helped to win the trust of voters, said the insiders I interviewed.<sup>6</sup> Democratic consultant Rich Davis, working for gubernatorial candidate Alex Sink (D-FL) in 2010, described women's perceived "virtue advantage," saying, "There is a presumption that women are less likely to get into trouble, women are less likely to mislead us, women are more likely to tell the truth" (Personal interview). Insiders credited using empathetic appeals like those associated with motherhood with enhancing voter perceptions of female authenticity. Another strategy they offered for amplifying that advantage was for women candidates to draw clear contrasts with their male counterparts on an ethical dimension, particularly focusing on opponents' precedent for corruption or scandal compared to their promise of integrity. In Missouri's 2010 campaign for the U.S. Senate, Secretary of State Robin Carnahan and her team made a decision early on to emphasize then-Congressman Roy Blunt's associations with corruption

by repeating the message in advertising and on the stump that Blunt represented “the worst of Washington.” A top advisor to Carnahan’s 2010 campaign told me:

[Our goal] from the very beginning until the very end was create a stark contrast between the two candidates. ... This race was going to be a choice between who you want as your Senator in Missouri – you can have a Robin Carnahan who has this track record of standing up for consumers, standing up to big banks ... or you could have this long-time incumbent member of Congress – Congressman Blunt – who, you know, had been tied to some of the worst practices in Washington (Personal interview).

She went on to outline the “corruption angle” as a strategic choice the campaign team felt would have yield great electoral benefit to their candidate (Personal interview). While they kept the focus largely on their opponent’s flaws, Carnahan’s final series of advertisements outlined the choice that voters had between Blunt - a candidate without “Missouri values” – and Carnahan, the candidate who “offers a fresh, honest approach” (aired 10/26/10). Finally, some practitioners told me that women can best communicate and affirm the honesty and authenticity that candidates expect of them by speaking directly to voters in campaign advertisements and on the campaign trail.

Male opponents are also informed by advantageous stereotypes of the women against whom they run, yielding strategies and tactics they may not otherwise use in all-male contests. Practitioners I interviewed described this contrast for men as knocking a woman off of her pedestal by exposing contrasts to voters’ stereotypical expectations of women. In Missouri, Blunt overtly called Carnahan as a liar, using a September campaign advertisement to ask, “Why is Robin Carnahan lying?” as her photo and the text of that question remained on the screen (“Wrong Way Robin,” aired 9/20/10). This type of tactic is unsurprising to pollster Celinda Lake, who cautioned women candidates who recognize their virtue advantage, “Don’t polish your halo yet” (Presentation in New Brunswick, NJ, 3/20/10). Speaking with potential candidates, she explained, “Despite the presumption voters make that women are more ethical than men, it’s a long way down off that pedestal. More and

more frequently, campaigns against a woman begin with an assault on her integrity that is designed to eliminate her virtue advantage” (Presentation in New Brunswick, NJ, 3/20/10). As male candidates adjust strategies to counter feminine advantages, women candidates are pushed to further diversify the sites on which they stake their unique contributions to politics and government.

In 2010, the campaign for governor of Florida provided a clear example of negotiating feminine advantage on honesty and authenticity. Consultant Rich Davis said of his gubernatorial candidate Alex Sink (D-FL), “She reaped all of the advantages of being a woman that many women candidates get going in. People assumed that she was more in-touch with everyday families, she understood people like them” (Personal interview). According to her staff, the campaign worked to confirm these assumptions in Sink’s campaign ads, having the candidate speak directly to the camera to (1) show voters that Sink was a woman and cue these beneficial expectations, and to (2) establish greater trust by speaking authentically to voters.<sup>7</sup> Alex Sink’s team drew upon a 30-point advantage she held throughout the race on traits of honesty and integrity by contrasting general election opponent Rick Scott with a theme of “Leading with honesty and integrity” (Personal interview with Dave Beattie). While Sink’s advantages in these domains did not land her in the governor’s mansion, they clearly influenced her campaign strategy.

Sink was doubly advantaged by Rick Scott’s tarnished record in the private sector, where his medical company was fined nearly \$2 billion for fraudulent activity while he was at the helm. Therefore, not only could Sink draw upon a perceived virtue advantage for women, but she could draw a concrete contrast between her professional past and Scott’s record. In a September 2010 advertisement titled “Integrity,” Sink speaks directly to voters (to the camera):

I know Floridians have a lot of questions about Rick Scott. The company he ran was fined \$1.7 billion for Medicare fraud against seniors and taxpayers. On the other hand the Florida bank I led [made] \$1.7 billion in loans to small businesses. Newspapers say I ran my company with honesty and integrity.

Sink concludes by assuring Floridians that she will be “nobody’s governor but yours,” affirming their beliefs that she is not only honest, but also empathetic to the experiences and demands of her constituents. To further cement voters’ trust in her, Sink and her strategists relied upon law enforcement endorsements – demonstrating how women candidates especially can benefit from both the toughness and trust that men (in this case) in uniform convey. In a series of October 2010 ads, Florida cops told voters “Florida can’t trust Rick Scott as governor,” and, “Florida law enforcement knows about Rick Scott’s shady past” (“Law Enforcement” and “Refuses”). As Sink’s strategists – Rich Davis and Dave Beattie – confirmed with me, these messages were developed to reinforce Sink’s natural advantage on traits of honesty and authenticity while defining Scott as dishonest and, ultimately, unworthy of Floridians’ trust. The strategy would have been similar for a male candidate, they argue, but the expectations of extraordinary benefit on these trait dimensions guided the degree to which they emphasized a message centered on honesty and integrity and the ways in which they communicated that message – from Alex Sink directly to voters.

In an electoral contest where Sink was far outspent by her Republican opponent, it appeared that her approach was somewhat effective. At least in polling, Sink maintained an edge on favorability among voters until the final days of the campaign, though respondents’ likely vote choice remained within the margin of error.<sup>8</sup> Attempting to explain her one percentage point loss, Sink’s strategists cited the financial differential first and then pointed me to internal polling that told them that, in this political climate, Sink’s connection to Obama – one emphasized in Scott’s strategy and messaging – was more sinful to voters than Scott’s connection to corruption. When they asked Independents what concerned them

more – somebody who was convicted of the largest fine in US history and admitted to 14 counts of defrauding taxpayers, or someone who is a “Barack Obama liberal,” Independents were 15 points more likely to express concern for an Obama liberal (Personal interview with Dave Beattie). Therefore, Sink’s “virtue advantage” was undermined by an environment that was sufficiently anti-Obama. Rick Scott effectively stoked voters’ fears by referring to his opponent as an Obama liberal, and worked to knock Sink off of her perceived pedestal by accusing her of mishandling state funds while Chief Financial Officer and taking advantage of her violation of the rules at an October debate.<sup>9</sup> Finally, challenging Sink’s advantage on another typically feminine trait, Scott and his team developed an outsider image and message early and stuck with it throughout the campaign. From the start, his campaign branded him “a conservative outsider to hold government accountable,” and contrasted him with the “Tallahassee insider,” Alex Sink. In a year when outsiders promised a challenge to the system, Scott’s strategy and persona resonated with voters and helped to defuse another site for women’s advantage: representing change.

Interview subjects largely shared a belief that women maintain a natural advantage in representing change to voters. Democratic consultant and former DSCC Political Director Martha McKenna told me, “Voters want change. And I think that credible women who make a strong case for themselves and run smart campaigns do have a benefit [in being viewed as a change candidate].” Maine gubernatorial candidate Rosa Scarcelli (D) stated, “Women just – without ever saying it – represent change” (Personal interview). As deviations from the white male norm in political campaigns and offices, women embody change by simply entering the campaign arena. This advantage for women candidates was of particular importance in 2008, when change became the political code word for electoral success at all levels, especially national races for governor and U.S. Senate. In 2008 races I

examined, candidates' ability to embody change played an important role in winning or losing. To do so, candidates – male and female – drafted images and messaging that emphasized their capacity to challenge the status quo. For women, practitioners noted, communicating that message to voters often requires a lighter lift. However, my interviews highlight how female incumbents are less often advantaged by this perception of newness or innovation, and that candidates' capacity to communicate change is also strongly tied to the status of their political party. In the campaigns I analyzed, Democrats were most successful in touting change from Republican leadership in 2008 and Republican candidates claimed, rather successfully, they best represented change in 2010 as a backlash to the Democratic tide of the previous election cycle.

In 2008, the demand for change became the cornerstone of President Barack Obama's campaign, and its success encouraged statewide candidates to adopt a shared thematic. This was particularly helpful to some women candidates I studied, as they could contest ties to the establishment and communicate change without much effort by their campaign.<sup>10</sup> In North Carolina's 2008 gubernatorial race, for example, Democratic candidate Bev Perdue's advisor described her gender as the armor that deflected attacks waged against her that she represented insider politics in the state as a long-time state legislator and sitting Lieutenant Governor. He said, "Among voters, the elemental fact that she was a woman made her the change." Most importantly, he noted, "We were *enough change* to face the establishment 'good 'ol boys' critique that was leveled against her" (Personal interview with Mac McCorkle). Strategically, he explained that little overt action was needed by the team to communicate this aspect of change to voters, as it was more often assumed. In this way, he identified a way in which an internal consideration of gender advantage is exemplified by

external omission in output, evidencing the value of probing campaign insiders directly about gender perceptions, strategic considerations, and decisions.

Change looked different in 2010, when Obama's brand of change came under great scrutiny and Democrats took a collective hit in being painted as "part of the problem" instead of agents of change.<sup>11</sup> In Missouri, for example, seven-term Congressman Roy Blunt branded himself as a "strong voice for change," defining change as opposition to President Obama's agenda ("Strong Leader," aired 10/26/10). Despite crafting an image of a true Missourian on the ranch and outside of Washington, Robin Carnahan's partisan label seemed to contrast any change advantage she would receive – whether due to her gender or Missouri-centered résumé. Gender and party interact on this dimension, and neither identity acts as a single predictor of voter perceptions or support.

In 2010, candidates emphasized ideology over demographics in taking on the political establishment. Tea Party candidates throughout the country surprised pundits and partisans by appealing strongly to voters' discontent with the status quo. In this context, conservative women garnered much national attention and significant voter support.<sup>12</sup> Not only did they present an ideological shift from the Democrats in power, but they also maintained the demographic advantage of difference that Democratic women largely lost in this political year. In New Hampshire, a state with a precedent of women's leadership at the statewide level, U.S. Senate candidate Kelly Ayotte focused on her professional past as "a prosecutor, not a politician" to out-change her opponent, Congressman Paul Hodes ("Conservative," aired 8/17/10). However, her team made subtle references to both her youth and gender throughout the campaign, beginning with her introduction to voters as a prosecutor, mother, and wife, and as someone who would bring a "breath of fresh air" and represent the "future of New Hampshire" ("Meet Kelly Ayotte" web video, posted 4/6/10).



A Republican consultant from New Hampshire described her appeal in the 2010 U.S. Senate contest: “She was a fresh face. She’s never run for office ... which makes her kind of new and exciting. She was a woman – and this was really nationally kind of the year of the woman – you had a lot of prominent Republican women running around the country and so that got a lot of media attention” (Personal interview).

Few candidates in 2010 embodied change more than South Carolina Republican gubernatorial candidate Nikki Haley. As a woman, Indian-American, and staunch conservative, Haley presented an image in fairly stark contrast to her major Republican primary opponents. Haley’s top advisor, Jon Lerner, described to me the motivation behind his team’s messaging throughout the primary season, noting the importance of presenting Haley as an alternative to “three boring white guys” while assuring South Carolinians that she shared their values. In the final ad before the Republican primary, Haley’s team crafted a message to do just this. In “Better,” Haley tells voters, “I am a woman who understands that through the grace of God all things are possible. We need fresh faces, fresh voices, and fresh ideas working for the people of this state, not the power of the legislature” (aired 5/18/10). The ad then moves to a clip from Governor Sarah Palin’s public endorsement of Haley, where she characterized Haley as “a strong pro-family, pro-life, pro-Second Amendment, pro-development, conservative reformer” (“Better,” aired 5/18/10). In this ad alone, Haley appealed to a potential gender advantage, dispelled doubts that her ethnicity informed her religion, and offered a fresh face over career politician to South Carolina conservatives. Lerner noted that these messages capitalized upon the advantages Haley held in 2010. He told me, “What was attractive in the year 2010 to Republican primary voters ended up playing very well to [Haley’s] strengths; being an outsider, being different, being someone

with a record of challenging the status quo, and being willing to take political punishment for having done so” (Personal interview).

This image, and gender especially, was helpful as rumors spread late in the campaign that Haley was involved in extra-marital affairs. Whether tied directly to her male opponents or not, the accusations were unsuccessful in knocking her off of the pedestal often ceded to female candidates on traits of honesty and integrity. Moreover, while some insiders thought that the charges might brand her as “more of the same” after departing Governor Sanford’s affair made national news, Haley’s image as new and different held strong amidst the talk of scandal. Practitioners involved in the South Carolina contest cited how dynamics would have differed had a male candidate faced the same accusations; while voters overwhelmingly felt Haley was being unfairly attacked and viewed the accusations as highly unlikely, insiders in the state argued that the same reports would have easily sunk their male candidates’ campaigns. Reflecting on the set of allegations made against Haley, South Carolina Republican consultant Terry Sullivan commented, “I certainly do not believe a male candidate could have survived that” (Personal interview). Therefore, Nikki Haley did not only draw upon a competitive advantage on the dimension of change, but seemed to benefit from the voters’ presumption of women’s honesty and integrity, especially amidst a primary contest filled with male insiders. Finally, Lerner credited Haley’s steadfast refusal to respond to what she cited as malicious allegations with reinforcing this presumption of innocence. Thus, strategy and expectations in this case were mutually reinforced.

### Issues

Traits like strength, honesty, authenticity, and the ability to bring change are very important in voter appeals, as candidates seek to introduce themselves and attract voters. However, in candidate presentation and messaging, campaigns must appeal to voters’ hearts

and minds, demonstrating that candidates not only meet their trait expectations, but can also effectively address the most important issues of the day. Shea and Burton (2001) remind us, “Campaigns are about strategy, but they are also about the terrain on which the strategy operates. ... Strategists who cannot accept ‘the things that cannot be changed’ find themselves at a disadvantage” (39). In an immediate sense, those “things that cannot be changed” are the most salient issues or crises facing a municipality, district, state, or nation; and those issues shape the terrain being navigated by strategists and candidates in any electoral season. Whereas trait attribution and emphasis in candidate presentation is partly influenced by prevailing political climate, issue emphasis in candidate messaging is even more determined by salient events and issues of the day. Therefore, strategic decisions are more focused in this section on *how* (versus *if*) issues are framed and prioritized in candidates’ messages and profiles.<sup>13</sup> Public opinion research demonstrates that voters’ assumptions of issue expertise are informed by perceptions of gender (Banwart 2010; Dolan 2010; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Kahn 1996; Koch 1999; Leeper 1991; Lawless 2004; Matland 1994). Both Democratic and Republican consultants I surveyed and practitioners I interviewed reported these gendered dimensions of issue expertise attribution, though Democratic practitioners were *more likely* than their Republican counterparts to say that any single issue is a site for gendered advantage. These perceptions combine with practitioners’ calculations of issue climates to influence the messages recommended, drafted, and adopted by male and female candidates. Unfortunately for women, the issues deemed most important in recent statewide races – like the economy or national security – are often those that advantage men.

Candidates and campaign practitioners I interviewed from 2008 and 2010 statewide contests noted little ability to shape the issue agenda in their race, but explained how they

sought to frame the salient issues to their candidates' advantage and, moreover, assure voters that their candidates were prepared to address them. The issue terrain in both 2008 and 2010 was dominated by the nation's economic instability and voter demand for recovery. And while surveys and insider perspectives reflect women gaining ground on economic credentials, their strategies reveal extra effort on their part. Interview subjects told me that – across issues – women face different perceptions of expertise and/or experience, especially on issues assumed as the purview of men. Most often, they explained, women candidates need to prove themselves while their male colleagues face fewer questions of credibility. They were more likely to cite this burden as greater for gubernatorial candidates than Senate candidates, and some insiders argued that Republican women were credited with more economic credentials because they more often have a business background. On the economy, practitioners across party lines described presentation and messaging strategies by which women candidates meet that higher burden. Therefore, while stereotypes of issue, and especially economic, expertise may not deter women's electoral success, the strategies that interview subjects outlined to credential women demonstrate - and adapt to - the higher standards by which their qualifications for office are measured. Moreover, they provide evidence of how candidates and their teams address – and thus mask – gender differences via image and message strategies. At the same time, women's ability to present *different* credentials instead of *more* credentials in some cases reflect some institutional change whereby men and women are held to similar standards to which multiple types of qualifications and experiences apply.

Democratic media consultant Ann Liston told me, “there is a standard that is different between male and female candidates, and more is expected of the female candidates,” adding, “this is just sort of the world we live in” (Personal interview). Liston's

claim paints an institutional reality where masculinity and men are attributed greater gender power than women in campaigns, and are deemed more appropriate for political posts. Deb Markowitz (D-VT) launched her gubernatorial bid after six terms as Vermont's Secretary of State and expressed her surprise at the "extra litmus test" she faced in running for governor (Personal interview). Markowitz and others I interviewed in 2010 added that this higher bar was not only set by voters, but also often reinforced by media, from whom women candidates faced greater scrutiny or questioning on policy substance. An advisor for 2010 U.S. Senate candidate Robin Carnahan (D-MO) provided an example:

I couldn't help but think that that was something gender-related when the majority of the press in Missouri are men and, you know, there were occasionally qualifiers in the way that they were reporting [on Carnahan's policy responses]. Things like, 'you know, she chose her words carefully' (Personal interview).

She added:

I felt like Robin was held to a different standard - with some reporters, certainly - than Congressman Blunt was. For example, if they would ask her about a policy issue, she would need to go into 87 layers of depth on explaining, you know, why she felt this way about a policy issue or, you know, the ins and outs of it, to have the credibility from them to report on her position. Whereas you would see Congressman Blunt just sort of filibustering an answer on something that is very topical, and he'd get a free ride (Personal interview).

More systematic analysis of media coverage is necessary to determine whether these perceived differences were evident in Missouri's Senate race, but whether they are evident in reality does not change the fact that Carnahan's team perceived gender disparities and addressed them in strategy by working to prove her policy expertise in media and on the trail. Gubernatorial candidate Jari Askins concluded that women candidates face a different "performance measure" than men, saying, "People will vote for men because of the expectation of their potential. People vote for women based on their past performance" (Personal interview).

Campaign messages – including the issues and themes communicated to voters – are important sites through which women can and do demonstrate their experience and credentials on the issues most important in a given political climate. In my interviews with candidates and practitioners from 2008 and 2010 statewide contests, subjects described their strategies for drafting these compensatory campaign messages, focusing on ways in which they can best “credential” their female candidates. Most often, they described efforts to provide greater detail on platforms and policies, whether to challenge doubts of candidate preparedness, respond to a higher degree of scrutiny, or because of the perceived height of the bar set for women candidates. Practitioners also offered another strategy for communicating issue credentials via endorsements, citing the use of law enforcement as beneficial for women on crime, law, and order, and the benefit of using financial experts (often men) to assure voters that women are prepared to lead on economic decision-making.

The practitioners I interviewed in 2008 and 2010 identified the particular need for women candidates to demonstrate their credentials on economic issues in these cycles. Democratic pollster Celinda Lake described the higher threshold that women face on economic issues, recommending that female candidates in any political climate establish a strong economic profile to communicate to voters. For governors especially, she said, that means having an economic plan for the state and having it endorsed. Lake explained, “Men have an [economic] plan and it’s like, ‘Yahoo! They have an economic plan for the state.’ Women have a plan and it’s like, ‘Well, who else supports the plan? Who endorses the plan?’” (Personal interview). Campaign practitioners I interviewed explained that talking about public sector economic experience, like leading budget negotiations, or private sector credentials in job creation and/or financial planning are particularly helpful strategies to place women candidates on equal footing with their male counterparts on economic issues.<sup>14</sup>

Democratic polling firm Garin, Hart, and Yang issued a 2010 memo to women candidates that emphasized the specific challenges they would face in the 2010 electoral season on demonstrating a commitment and plan for job creation. Drawing on voter polls and focus groups, they write, “In this area, women candidates have a somewhat higher burden of proof in demonstrating their fluency and advocacy of favorable and effective small business policies that will spur needed job creation” (“Guidelines for Preparing for the 2010 Cycle,” 4). To meet that burden of proof, they recommended women credential themselves by stressing their experiences related to small businesses – either working with or managing them (“Guidelines for Preparing for the 2010 Cycle,” 4). While few would argue that male candidates in either 2008 or 2010 were automatically viewed as economic experts, the higher burden of proof for women and strategies adopted to meet it evidence how gender power along the economic dimension remains at least partly imbalanced to favor men in political campaigns.

In 2010, Maine gubernatorial candidate Rosa Scarcelli focused her entire primary bid on providing a detailed economic plan and communicating it to voters in messaging and strategy. In talking about her plan-turned-book, *Maine Rising*, Scarcelli told me that she faced a higher standard than her male counterparts: “the assumption was this is just a vanity exercise or she’s a pretty face, but doesn’t have any substance.” She added, “[Voters] needed to see it for themselves,” and she showed “it” through an extensive economic plan endorsed by leaders throughout the state (Personal interview with Rosa Scarcelli). Florida gubernatorial contender Alex Sink provided another highly detailed economic plan, detailing on the stump and providing it on her campaign website.<sup>15</sup> While her opponent, Republican Rick Scott, emphasized jobs in the forefront of his campaign messaging – using the slogan “Let’s get to work!” – much less detail was readily available for voters on how those jobs

would be created in the state. Sink seemed to benefit from both her strategy and background on this dimension, emphasizing her executive leadership as Florida's Chief Financial Officer and as the former head of Florida's largest bank. Her strategists explained to me the importance of establishing an economic profile that not only gave her credibility to address the financial health of a state, but also took advantage of her edge on trust among Florida's voters. Sink put forth an image as the "people's watchdog" on the economy, while highlighting the monetary fraud at Rick Scott's former corporation. Combining her perceived virtue advantage with over 30 years of work in the financial sector, Sink maintained a 17-point advantage against Scott as someone you can trust with your money (Personal interview with Rich Davis). In a political climate where trust of government was at an ultimate low and economic tension extremely high, Sink's profile seemed to meet or exceed the higher bar often faced by women candidates for executive office. Moreover, in messaging, she was able to chip away at the economic credibility of her opponent based on his past struggles as CEO of a hospital company.

In the 2010 California Senate race, Democratic incumbent Barbara Boxer and her team strategized early to define opponent Carly Fiorina as the cause of the country's economic decline. Boxer's campaign manager, Rose Kopolczynski, told me, "Every campaign wants to define its opponent ... and we actually started defining Fiorina in February of 2009" (Personal interview). Through messaging, they defined Fiorina as a failed CEO who sent jobs abroad. As Kopolczynski explained, "In the midst of a recession when job creation is the top concern of voters, they did not want to elect someone whose hallmark as CEO was laying off and shipping jobs overseas" (Personal interview). Boxer touted public-sector successes in bringing jobs and industry to the state of California.<sup>16</sup> While Fiorina's team told me that they expected to use her experience in the private sector to her



advantage in establishing economic credentials, Boxer's team effectively flipped Fiorina's credentials into crimes against American workers, particularly the ones needed to elect her to the U.S. Senate.

In 2010, multiple statewide candidates used their business backgrounds as evidence that they were accustomed to making decisions that favor fiscal responsibility. Like Fiorina's tenure as CEO of one of the nation's top technology companies and Sink's post as President of NationsBank and Bank of America - Florida, California gubernatorial candidate Meg Whitman served as CEO of eBay and Connecticut Senate candidate Linda McMahon's personal wealth was derived from her executive role at World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE). Commentators questioned whether the resumes of these women candidates represented an "alternate model for women" to enter and succeed in electoral politics.<sup>17</sup> That alternative path of translating private sector success into public sector leadership presents potential for challenging gendered expectations of economic expertise. However, as Fiorina's case makes evident, this type of credentialing can also leave candidates – male and female – vulnerable to attack based on business records, practices, and decisions. When I asked them whether the businesswomen contenders in 2010 at the statewide level predict success for this path toward political leadership, insiders were quick to note the rarities of many of these cases. Others noted that this model might also meet greater skepticism in more culturally traditional states, especially in the South, where gender role expectations do not easily align with images of female business executives. Mac McCorkle, a Democratic advisor to Governor Bev Perdue (D-NC) in 2008, considered how California's Republican CEO contenders from 2010 would have fared in a state like North Carolina, arguing voters in the south were likely "not ready for that." He explained, "It would be hard for a woman in North Carolina to be a maverick candidate. To say I want to come shake things up in

Raleigh. ... I think there would be a lot of skepticism about that” (Personal interview with Mac McCorkle). Therefore, while women running statewide in 2010 offered paths to leadership that differed from the women who came before them, their alternate images as businesswomen were not without challenges associated with business records and gender role expectations.

Some practitioners offered another alternative approach to establishing women’s economic credentials while aligning candidate imagery with gender expectations. Pollsters Garin, Hart, and Yang (2010) recommended women candidates in 2010 races emphasize a common-sense approach to managing money in tough financial times. They wrote:

Women can make a credible case to voters that as managers of the family budget and sometimes with a role in a family business or other entrepreneurial effort, they possess a sensibility and understanding of the importance of discipline, sacrifice, and living within one’s means rather than deferring the impact of current shortfalls to the future (“Guidelines for Preparing for the 2010 Cycle,” 4).

The visualization of women sitting at the kitchen table to count coins or draft a family budget better aligns with voters’ gendered expectations than the image of women at the helm of corporate conference tables. This image was not used widely in the statewide races I analyzed, where candidates and their teams told me that they focused most on emphasizing candidates’ professional credentials, presenting a plan for economic success, and – when necessary – securing the endorsement of experts.

Recent scholarship and evidence from my interviews with campaign insiders may demonstrate the slight redefinition of economic credentials from strictly private-sector experience or public-sector decision-making to the day-to-day decisions men and women make on family budgets and personal financing. Moreover, practitioners argue that women are being taken more seriously as political actors on all dimensions, including being viewed as experts across issue areas. Progress is tempered, however, and the evidence provided from

interviews and surveys of campaign insiders exposes sites wherein female candidates might face greater scrutiny than their male opponents in ways that increase the temporal and substantive demands on both the candidate and their team to *prove* their credentials for office. In meeting the masculine demands they are faced with, women are electorally successful, but do little to challenge institutional gender norms.

### Appearance

Interview subjects cited candidates' physical appearance as an additional site where female candidates face more scrutiny than men and must expend greater strategic effort. In drafting campaign imagery, candidates and campaign practitioners described appearance as a necessary consideration for male and female candidates, though one requiring extra attention for women candidates running in high-level races. This sentiment was expressed across party lines and types of office, though multiple candidates and campaign practitioners noted the additional demands on executive-level candidates to appear gubernatorial, an image most often associated with men. Existing analyses of campaign advertisements provide evidence of women, in particular, conforming to masculine images of officeholders, as scholars report that women candidates more often appear in formal dress than their male counterparts (Bystrom et al. 2004; Kahn 1996; Schneider 2008). This dissertation contributes to these findings by explaining *why* this occurs and providing additional insight into alternative sites and strategies to address appearance in campaigning for men and women candidates. These move beyond attire alone, to consider hairstyles, accessories, age, and attractiveness.

Overall, interview subjects cited three inter-related reasons for why female candidates most often adopt professional dress and, more generally, conservative appearances. First, they referred to campaign practitioners' attempts to neutralize gender and, thus, avoid a potential distraction that is more often felt by women. However, in

“neutralizing gender,” campaign insiders actually describe a process by which female candidates are encouraged to adopt the masculine image of the office they seek. Democratic media consultant Ann Liston agreed that while she wishes it was unimportant, candidates’ appearance matters, male or female. She describes, “I actually spend a lot of time on [appearance], not because it’s frivolous, [but] because I’m trying to neutralize the issue” (Personal interview with Ann Liston). In doing so, she explained women “have to look professional. They have to look nice. They have to have make-up that looks appropriate, jewelry that is not distracting.” That “neutralization” is more important for women candidates and is often a “tougher conversation” with them, said Democratic pollster Celinda Lake. She recommends that women adopt a campaign uniform to defer attention paid to their wardrobes. Republican strategist Jon Lerner explained why that deferral is necessary: “Women candidates absolutely... always have much more scrutiny of their appearance, of their clothing, than male candidates. No question about that” (Personal interview).

Second, women candidates told me that they knew their appearance mattered among voters and observers and relied on recommendations of practitioners to best address it on the campaign trail. Vermont gubernatorial candidate and Secretary of State Deb Markowitz (D-VT) described her makeover to “look more gubernatorial,” including a haircut, wearing more button-down shirts, and wearing make-up (Personal interview). Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Jennifer Brunner, also a sitting Secretary of State in Ohio, admitted, “I actually read a book on style” before the campaign (Personal interview). Expecting words of wisdom from one of her female political mentors in Nevada, U.S. Senate primary candidate Sue Lowden was instead told by a former Congresswoman to cut her hair. Without much question she did it, worrying that she might not look “serious enough” with her hair below

her shoulders (Personal interview with Sue Lowden). Her campaign manager, Robert Uithoven, described his surprise at the attention to Lowden's appearance, telling me, "I've worked for a number of male candidates. Nobody ever calls to talk about their hair or what color tie they're wearing or anything like that. It's just something I wasn't used to" (Personal interview).

Finally, among candidates and practitioners alike, interview subjects explained that appearances often act as proxies for more influential candidate traits or overall measures of fitness for office. California Republican Senate candidate Carly Fiorina's campaign manager, Marty Wilson, described the questions raised inside of the campaign about her hairstyle. Recuperating from her recent bout with breast cancer and chemotherapy, Fiorina had lost her hair and launched her campaign with a very short pixie style. While hairstyle was something of little concern to Wilson on its own, he noted that insiders considered what it could communicate to voters. He said, "It was more the appearance where people who hadn't seen her before see her with this very, very short hair and maybe thought she was some kind of a feminist radical" (Personal interview with Marty Wilson). The campaign continued to use her new style, however, noting that it also communicated her authenticity: "We made a strategic decision that this is who she is and what she is" (Personal interview with Marty Wilson). They reported little scrutiny from voters on the campaign trail, but the attention paid inside of the campaign highlights practitioners' perceptions that women's appearance holds greater weight with voters than it does for male candidates.

Most significantly, practitioners report that appearance is one of voters' most basic measures of candidates' suitability for office, as voters ask, "Does this person *look* like a governor or member of the U.S. Senate?" Democratic pollster Celinda Lake told me that women have to appear "suited for office" to dispel any doubts of their credentials: "I think

that men can have more variability in their appearance in ads. Women have to look up to the job” (Personal interview). And it is not only “hair and hemlines” that inform their response and perceptions. Referring to her 4 foot 10 inch stature, Vermont gubernatorial candidate Deb Markowitz (D-VT) explained, “I’m not the picture of governor that people have in their heads. ... I’m definitely other” (Personal interview). Minnesota gubernatorial candidate Matt Entenza repeatedly touted his height on the campaign trail, claiming that the tallest candidate for governor always wins. His claim more than highlighted a physical attribute of men. It reminded voters that height communicates the “gravitas” needed for executive office, a trait that is also less likely to be attributed to women – including the woman who he was running against (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Eagly and Carli 2007).

While most of the strategists and candidates I interviewed would not argue that poor wardrobe choices or a bad hair day would alone derail a campaign, they indicated that these aspects of appearance do affect press coverage, interfere with messaging, and act as both internal and external distractions in the campaign, most often for women candidates. The strategies they offer to avoid distraction – attempting to “neutralize gender” having women “suit up” for office – demonstrate the ways in which gender influences campaign strategy on the most blatant dimension of candidates’ image creation.

Appearance-based strategies are not isolated to women candidates, however. Candidates and campaign strategists I interviewed in 2008 and 2010 described how male candidates and their teams take advantage of the scrutiny women candidates face. They cited two particular dimensions on which male candidates can and do capitalize on voters’ expectations of gender and appearance: age and attractiveness. In 2008, advertisements for Republican Senate candidate John Sununu worked to paint a contrast between himself as “youthful and exuberant” and his opponent, Jeanne Shaheen, as “old and tired” (Personal

interview with Bill Kenyon). His media team purposefully slowed down images of Shaheen and removed color to reinforce this “old and tired” imagery. While they argued that doing so was a tactic of “comparative advertising” and not a “gender thing,” the differences in gender perceptions of aging influence how those images are interpreted by voters to greater detriment of female candidates (Personal interview with Bill Kenyon). Another consultant went off the record to describe the strategic use of unflattering photos for female opponents in general, arguing that women candidates are more easily caricatured than men, and highlighting aspects of appearance is the easiest way to communicate these caricatures to voters; using images of women that appear old, tired, overweight, or unattractive contributes to voters’ distraction from substance and doubts about whether that woman fits their preconceived image of officeholders. Senate candidate Robin Carnahan’s (D-MO) advisors provided an example of this approach from 2010, as pro-Blunt advertisements repeatedly used an image of Carnahan from her time in chemotherapy. While they had no proof that strategists behind these ads knew the image showed Carnahan ill and wearing a wig, the basic idea that her opponents chose an unflattering image of her is consistent with practitioners’ reports that attention to appearance not only matters for female candidates, but can also shape male candidates’ electoral strategies.

While painting female candidates in an unattractive light is not a new tactic employed by opponents or media, some respondents described another double bind for women in being viewed as *too* attractive or *too* feminine, and thus not serious enough, by voters. Democratic media consultant Ann Liston was quick to dispel this as a significant challenge for women on the campaign trail, noting:

I think that’s a luxury that few media consultants have – that their female candidates are too attractive to be whatever they are. And, quite frankly, I would say as I’m seeing this next generation of female candidates, they’re more and more attractive and I think, you know, you don’t want to read too much into [it] (Personal interview).

Liston emphasized two important points. First, that this perceived challenge is neither widespread nor highly influential in drafting campaign imagery; and, second, that the traditional imagery associated with female candidates is shifting to permit women greater embrace of the femininity often stifled purposefully by campaign strategists. However, I include it here as evidence of how gender dynamics of campaign institutions can influence the most basic aspects of candidate presentation with implications for gender replication or institutional change.

Some consultants identified examples where a candidate's perceived attractiveness distracted voter attention and, as a result, influenced campaigns' presentation tactics. Discussing a previous female client running for governor in the Midwest, a consultant told me, "the initial reaction to the focus groups was that this woman is far too pretty to be governor... 'Our governor could never look like that'" (Personal interview). As a result, the campaign made subtle changes in the ads: "We only show them her in black and white and in still photographs in order to kind of take off some of that luster" (Personal interview). In 2010, another female U.S. Senate candidate noted the challenge of her youth in voters' scrutiny of her preparedness for office. To appear more "suited for office," her team used an image of her smiling large enough to show "all of [her] wrinkles." The candidate said, "We intentionally put a very wrinkled-looking picture of me and interestingly enough, we got great feedback" (Personal interview). In this way, attractiveness, like professional dress, can influence voters' ability to see female candidates as officeholders. Much attention was paid to the number of younger, attractive women running for office in 2010, especially from the Republican Party – a development identified by Democratic consultant Liston as evidence that the collective imagery of candidates is changing to allow for greater variety. Sue Lowden, who ran in Nevada's Republican primary for the U.S. Senate in 2010, described her



approach to appearance most succinctly:

I went with looking as good as I could look. I did not try to downplay the fact that I might be a little more glamorous than your normal person. In fact, when I was with the other [Republican] gals [running this year], they said, 'We give you a lot of credit for not trying to downplay the fact that you are an attractive female candidate.' And I didn't try to downplay that. That may have been negative, I don't know. But, you know what? I was keeping it real. Because that is how I am. And I did not want to be something I wasn't (Personal interview).

Lowden attributed her ability to "keep it real" partly to Sarah Palin, who she argued helped to redefine the image of a female candidate, especially among Republican insiders and voters. She said, "Palin is a mentor in that regard - that you can look terrific, juggle it all - and she's not trying to look dowdy" (Personal interview). Democratic consultant Rich Davis agreed that Palin had at least some influence on Republicans' perceptions of feminine imagery on the campaign trail, citing the popularity of South Dakota congressional candidate Kristi Noem in 2010 not only in spite of her youth and attractiveness, but also partly because of it (Personal interview).

Whether this alteration of accepted imagery for women candidates is evidence of institutional progress can be debated depending upon interpretation of whether it is female-driven – as Lowden puts forth – or based on masculine expectations of femininity that replicate gender power dynamics and expectations of sexuality. Additionally, further research is necessary to investigate partisan differences in appearance considerations and strategies. At least among statewide interviews from 2008 and 2010, candidates and practitioners across parties indicate that appearance matters more to voters for women candidates, that those voter perceptions shape strategic attention to "hair and hemlines" for women over men, and that those strategies are more often focused on electoral outcomes than institutional change.

### Family

Writing in 1972, Jeanne Kirkpatrick outlined the challenges facing women

candidates:

A woman is confronted with special requirements and problems: a special need to demonstrate her seriousness and qualifications; a special problem of establishing competence; a special need to be assertive without being aggressive; perhaps a special need to convince voters that service in the legislature will not entail neglecting her family. Women candidates and partisans may find these specific requirements objectionable and onerous, but they are real; they must be dealt with in the course of a successful campaign (99).

As I have described in the first three sections of this chapter, many of the same “special requirements and problems” that Kirkpatrick outlines remain for women candidates nearly 40 years later. Moreover, as she advises, they are dealt with over the course of campaigns – most notably via campaigns’ strategic development of candidate image and message.

Kirkpatrick references balancing masculine traits with feminine expectations, credentialing on issues, and, finally, addressing questions surrounding women’s ability to balance private and public responsibilities. This final dimension of family has long provided a site for gender analysis in campaigns. In this section, I move the site for analysis of campaigns’ images and messages to the private sphere, asking how male and female candidates in today’s campaigns address and utilize their family roles and relationships. As one of the most explicitly gendered private institutions in social life, family generates questions of gender roles and expectations in public life as well. While conventional wisdom to date in campaigns has emphasized the challenges that family present to female candidates working to bridge this public-private divide, this section provides evidence of some institutional progress whereby family roles and responsibilities are valued as political assets. At the same time, the criticism that candidates – male and female – who do not fit within traditional norms of family life face shows the replication of gender norms in both the private sphere of family and public sphere of political campaigns. I analyze candidates’ and practitioners’ perspectives and

behaviors to determine how campaigns address family in strategic development and what their decisions mean for electoral success and institutional outcomes.

Interview subjects explained that questions of and attention to family are typically more prominent for women candidates, and that was evident in the 2008 and 2010 races they described. Asked about the role of family in campaigns' development of strategy, Democratic pollster Celinda Lake agreed that the "family stuff comes up right away [for women], and it comes up in two ways" (Personal interview). First, women candidates are more likely to face greater demands and responsibilities at home that must be addressed in the day-to-day scheduling and operations of a campaign. Second, and directly related to candidate image and presentation, voters are more curious about family situations of female candidates (Personal interview with Kate Coyne-McCoy). As a result, interview subjects told me, family considerations are part of campaign calculations – logistic and strategic, though they vary in importance depending on candidates' individual familial situation, regional mores, and the degree to which candidate biographies matter in the political climate. Whereas prevailing literature on candidate presentation analyzes the presence (or absence) of family members in campaign images as a proxy for strategy on this issue, speaking directly with campaign insiders better explains when, why, and how family dynamics shape campaign imaging and messaging, at least in the races I analyzed. In my interviews, candidates and campaign practitioners described how familial imagery communicates values for men and women candidates, while male candidates are much more likely to benefit from spousal reflection and family surrogates who "soften" their public personas. They explained that women, on the other hand, are more likely to use family roles and experiences in messaging to evoke empathy and provide alternative credentials for political leadership. Insiders described family as a lesser burden to women than in elections past, though it continues to

present them greater complexities than men. As I explain at the conclusion of this section, the advantages of family that they identified are largely constrained to heteronormative models that present challenges to candidates, especially women, in less traditional roles and circumstances.

More specifically, interview subjects outlined the complexity of family influence in campaigns, arguing that the saliency of family imagery alone is shaped by political context and cultural dynamics of parties, regions, or states. For example, Democratic media consultant Ann Liston explained that the political climate significantly influences the degree to which families are used in candidate presentation; in 2010, for example, she argued “we didn’t have the luxury” of putting family images out there because campaigns were “too busy going hard against the other guy” (Personal interview). Also, they described how families play a more prominent role and family imagery a more significant influence in candidate-centered elections versus those campaigns that are determined most by political climates or dominant contests. Practitioners involved in Republican contests and campaigning in culturally conservative regions or states were more likely than Democratic insiders, and those in more progressive areas, to tell me that introducing candidates’ families or communicating family values was important in their campaigns’ image and message strategies. Moreover, unlike some of the other aspects of these strategies described above, decisions regarding family were not tied to type of office (legislative or executive), but were described as more clearly influenced by voters’ familiarity with a particular candidate and/or their ability to contrast the familial situation of their opponent in a way that works to their electoral advantage.

*Using Family in Campaign Images and Messaging*

Among all of my interviews in the 2008 and 2010 cycles, no respondent cited family among the top determinants of electoral outcomes. However, the ways in which family is discussed and dealt with in campaigns offer one of the clearest glimpses to the relationship between gender roles and candidate expectations, and the private-public debates long waged in gender analyses and necessary for feminist institutional analysis. By probing candidates and campaign practitioners directly about families and campaigning, I can offer a more detailed discussion of why and how families are used in campaign images and messaging, in addition to when and where family play a stronger or weaker role.

### *Communicate Values*

First, while Liston's claim that the political climate overshadowed individual biographies was addressed in multiple interviews, family imagery was perceived as essential in some races, particularly those in more socially traditional states like Oklahoma and South Carolina where family acts as a proxy for values more often than in less conservative regions. For both male and female candidates in those races, using family in imaging and messaging helped to communicate family values consistent with the majority of voters. Oklahoma gubernatorial candidate Drew Edmondson (D) described what he expected to be his values advantage in both the Democratic primary and general election:

Linda, my wife, was very active on the campaign trail. ... Our literature had pictures of the family, including our twin grandbabies. ... And you know, going into it, we felt that was an advantage that I had that the major candidates, Jari Askins and Mary Fallin, did not have (Personal interview).

Edmondson noted the contrast between himself and Fallin – who was divorced and re-married only just before announcing her bid for governor – and Askins, who was never married. Some observers even argued that the timing of Fallin's marriage was at least partly a political calculus to assure voters of her own values amidst past challenges with divorce and rumors of an affair.<sup>18</sup>

The same type of assurance was evident in South Carolina gubernatorial candidate Nikki Haley's messaging in late May and early June, amidst claims that she was guilty of infidelity. In three advertisements released after the allegations were made and before the Republican primary, Haley's team used images of her family together and happy. Haley's top strategist Jon Lerner confirmed that this was no coincidence and that these images were "probably helpful" in dispelling doubts and confirming Haley's southern values. And while most strategists told me that using husbands is much less common and/or beneficial than the use of wives, Haley's team included her husband Michael in one of the final primary ads to both show solidarity and jointly oppose the allegations of immorality. In the advertisement "Vision," Haley outlines her plan for South Carolina and then the camera cuts to a shot of her and husband Michael. Candidate Haley concludes the advertisement speaking directly to the camera, "I'm Nikki Haley, and this is my husband Michael. I would be deeply honored to serve as your governor. Together we can take back our government" ("Vision," aired 6/1/10). Lerner detailed the creation and effectiveness of this advertisement, in addition to its need for subtlety. Noting how this ad would have been different with a female spouse, he described internal debates about whether or not Michael should speak either in this ad or on the stump about his wife's fidelity. The campaign decided against a vocal role for Haley's husband, noting, "We didn't need to have him come out and sort of play the chivalrous card," one that might overshadow the image of Nikki Haley as a strong executive herself (Personal interview with Jon Lerner).

Haley's references to her husband in messaging were not limited to affirming their strong marriage, but also provided some traditionally masculine credentials to her that may not be naturally attributed to women. In her first television ad, Haley introduced herself as "the wife of a man who puts on a military uniform everyday" ("Better," aired 5/18/10).

Lerner explained, “That means, A., she’s married, [and], B., not only is she married, but she’s married to a military guy – that speaks to conservative values” (Personal interview). New Hampshire Senate candidate Kelly Ayotte also introduced her husband to voters as an Iraq War veteran, communicating both her understanding of the experiences and struggles of military families and a baseline of conservative values. Neither husband played a vocal role in campaign communications, however, consistent with practitioners’ reports that they are less likely to use husbands as part of candidates’ image and presentation strategies (see Chapter 3). Therefore, while these women used their husbands to provide masculine credentials expected of officeholders, they were aware of the dangers of being viewed as “the wife of” instead of the independent political players. The assumptions of masculine dominance rarely present this danger to male candidates, for whom female spouses often affirm – instead of challenge – perceptions of their power.

#### *Provide Surrogacy*

Among all of the interviews from 2008 and 2010 cases, practitioners offered multiple reasons for the use of family in candidate presentation. Aside from communicating candidate values, the most common responses identified the role for family for providing surrogacy and evoking empathy. First, family members, especially wives, are used as personal surrogates for the candidate. Robby Mook, Democratic campaign manager for Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) in 2008, described how wives (and family) are often used to “soften” men’s image while husbands are either rarely displayed or used to validate women’s candidacies (Personal interview). Husbands, practitioners argued, can undermine messaging for female candidates working to fit masculine expectations of political office, especially those expectations for a singular masculine executive (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Dittmar 2012). Democratic consultant Mary Hughes said, “If you’re a married woman candidate,

your opponent will look to the weaknesses or the vulnerabilities of your spouse” (Personal interview). This was a consideration early on in Alex Sink’s campaign for governor of Florida, as her husband was once a candidate for executive office himself. *Miami Herald* columnist Michael C. Bender wrote, “Long before Republican Rick Scott unveiled his campaign for governor, there was another man Democrat Alex Sink had to figure out how to handle” – her husband (“Sink’s Husband Plays a Subtle Role,” 10/30/10). He cited the challenge often framed as unique for male political spouses, noting that Bill McBride would have to be “careful not to delve into issues or steal the spotlight” from Sink. Sink’s pollster, Dave Beattie, described McBride as “an active surrogate” for Sink and someone “who had her back,” but added that the political context tempered the campaign’s use of family overall. He explained, “For Alex [family] was much less [central] [and] part of that is just this election year of needing to get the business of kind of who she is and what she’s going to do” (Personal interview with Dave Beattie).

While strategists avoid the danger of masculine dominance in developing images and messages for female candidates, female spouses of male candidates are often used as surrogates because they affirm the masculinity of their candidate husbands. More specifically, male candidates can effectively use their female spouses as surrogates to appeal to female constituencies, tout their husband’s advocacy for women’s issues, and reflect the masculinity deemed most appropriate for political roles (Campbell 1996; Dittmar 2012; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; also see Chapter 6). The same capacity for spousal reflection is not evident for male spouses acting as surrogates for their wife candidates (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995).

### *Soften Candidate Images*

Beyond spousal surrogates, male and female candidates can use other family members to communicate their personal strengths and credentials for office to the public.



For male candidates, practitioners note the particular benefit of using family to “soften” their image, something often perceived as unnecessary to women running for office. In 2010 contests, examples of family member surrogates ranged from young to old for male candidates. In Missouri’s race for the U.S. Senate, Congressman Roy Blunt’s campaign posted an endorsement video from the candidate’s four year-old granddaughter, where she reiterated the campaign’s message against Carnahan (“He does not support the Obama agenda. Robin Carnahan does”) in a way that could not help but to evoke a smile among any viewer (“Granddaughters for Blunt” web video, posted 10/26/10). In Florida, gubernatorial candidate Rick Scott’s mother took to the airwaves to assure voters that Scott was not only prepared to be governor, but worthy of voters’ trust. In more than one ad, she told Floridians of her son, “He’s a good boy. ... He’ll get Florida back to work” (“Esther Scott,” aired 9/20/10). Without interviews with insiders in these two campaigns, I cannot say definitively that these videos were developed to soften their candidates’ images. However, if their motivation is as clear as it appears based on other insiders’ commentary on family use and candidate gender, these examples demonstrate the utility of using very personal endorsement of character and ability to enhance candidates’ appeal.

### *Evoke Empathy*

Though women candidates sometimes use family endorsements or surrogacy for the same purpose, especially coming from parents or grown children, their strategic use of family appears more targeted to evoking a sense of empathy for voters’ everyday lives. This is most evident among the female candidates I studied, for whom motherhood in particular was an important piece of their image and message. Candidates and practitioners with whom I spoke described the authenticity ascribed to mothers, and the enhanced ability for mother candidates to “warm to,” relate to, and empathize with voters – especially other mothers. A

Democratic strategist described the cue that maternal identity provided for California Senator Barbara Boxer in her re-election campaign: “People like the fact that she’s a mother and now a grandmother that understands those kinds of problems and those kinds of concerns that families have” (Personal interview). Republican consultant Fred Davis, working for Boxer’s opponent – Carly Fiorina, added that Boxer’s maternal image was also a deterrent to attacks; he said, “Carly ended up perceived as the pushy witch and Barbara Boxer the sweet grandmother who you don’t want to see getting hurt” (Personal interview). Calling the maximization of this image a “master stroke” by the Boxer campaign, Davis highlighted the strategic benefit of contrasting candidates’ tough politics with personal empathy. This balance is viewed as particularly important for female candidates, for whom maternal expectations do not often align with political power.

In 2008 and 2010, when political terrain was particularly tough, the imagery of the “mamma grizzly” resonated with voters and combined the warmth of maternal identity with the toughness most often desired in political leaders (Kahn 1996; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989). In contrast to previous questions of women’s capacity to combine leadership with motherhood, the “mamma grizzly” image touted by Sarah Palin in 2008 and spreading across contests in 2010 challenges institutional norms and expectations of both gender and officeholding. “Mamma grizzlies” are not only able to combine public and private roles, but perceive them as highly intertwined whereby women’s experiences in the family motivate and credential them for public office. This institutional change is limited, however, in that the “mamma grizzly” imagery replicates expectations of gender and candidates, but argues that women can meet them all. In other words, candidates are still expected to be tough and women expected to portray feminine roles, but “mamma grizzlies” embody both of those standards at the same time. Redefining institutional norms necessitates more substantial

questioning of gender roles and candidate expectations so that women need not meet multiple ideals, but instead offer new ones as women, candidates, and officeholders.

*Balancing Expectations of Private and Public Roles*

Despite the potential benefits of maternal empathy, even the nation's most prominent "mamma grizzly," Sarah Palin, was not immune to the traditional hurdles that family imagery creates for female candidates. Palin, like many women, was subjected to what Democratic consultant Rich Davis cited as "the most interesting sort of insurmountable thing" that faces female candidates with young children. He explained that his firm – where about 40% of clients are female – has "used the children of male candidates more often than children of female candidates... because often there is just a difference voters perceive generally; 'Oh, he's a good family man,' 'Oh, she's neglecting those kids to run for Congress'" (Personal interview with Rich Davis). Democratic pollster Celinda Lake agreed that for moms with young children "we're still very, very careful" about bringing the children into the candidate's images because it can raise questions in voters' minds (Personal interview). Republican pollster Glen Bolger argued that voters expect "a regular woman with a husband and kids," but – on the other hand – ask if by going to Washington or the state capitol she can handle both roles without neglecting her kids (Personal interview). These comments provide more direct explanation for existing findings on gender and campaign advertisements, with women often less likely to include their own children in campaign communications. Long-time officeholder and Ohio Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate in 2010, Lee Fisher, explained that even in his first campaign 30 years ago, deciding whether or to present his young children "was never an issue" (Personal interview). The same cannot be said for women candidates running at the same time, or even today.

However, some statewide contests in 2008 and 2010 provide evidence that this stereotypical ground might be slowly shifting, especially in more socially progressive areas. This progress is not only spurred by shifting expectations of public and private roles and responsibilities for men and women in society writ large, but also results from the willingness of candidates and their teams to take risks in challenging long-held strategic “rules” for women candidates’ use of family. Evidence of the shifting societal expectations emerged in the 2010 Vermont gubernatorial contest, where Democratic primary candidate Matt Dunne told me about the challenges of having a baby while running for office. Beyond the struggle to meet conflicting demands of personal and campaign responsibilities, Dunne and his chief of staff described their surprise at voters’ skepticism and scrutiny of his decision to stay in the race. Voters not only questioned whether Dunne was neglecting his family upon returning to the campaign trail a week after his daughter’s birth, but they also accused the campaign of “using” the child’s birth as a campaign ploy.<sup>19</sup> While the perceived constraints of family are not desirable (and are often unfair) for any candidates – male and female alike, voters’ questioning of Dunne demonstrates shifts in gender role expectations for mothers and fathers. Candidates’ behavior has the capacity to challenge those expectations as well. Maine gubernatorial primary candidate Rosa Scarcelli (D) was fearless in challenging the supposed constraints of motherhood - talking about her children alongside her professional credentials and emphasizing her husband’s ability to share in childcare responsibilities. She explained to me that a shift in private role expectations will bleed into candidates’ perceived familial identities as well, permitting women candidates to be truer to their multiple and overlapping identities in campaigning.

A New Hampshire consultant active in the 2010 Republican primary explained how overlapping identities worked to Ayotte’s electoral advantage. He described her as coming

from “central casting” as a “law and order Attorney General, a young mother of two, [with a] husband who’s a veteran that owns a small business” (Personal interview). In addition to being given the title of “Granite Grizzly” by Sarah Palin and others, Ayotte touted all of these aspects of her identity, including motherhood, as qualifications for office. Her young children were displayed prominently on all pages of her campaign website, where an image of her family made up the top banner on all pages, and were included in campaigns’ advertisements and video introductions from the start of the campaign. Asked if Ayotte faced any criticism about running for federal office with two small children at home, the New Hampshire Republican consultant I interviewed responded:

I think frankly you’ve seen voters and the media and the electorate kind of evolve and kind of take a more enlightened view, which is, look, you know, men and women are partners as parents. And so there’s not the – I didn’t see the criticism or saying, well, Kelly, you shouldn’t be doing this. Not at all (Personal interview).

While he provided only one perspective on Ayotte’s treatment in the state, analysis of media and interviews with other New Hampshire insiders reveal a similar lack of criticism of Ayotte’s family balance, contrary to established expectations of many practitioners and scholars. Noting the unique Northeastern culture of a state like New Hampshire, I asked the same question of southern Republican strategist Jon Lerner in regard to Nikki Haley’s campaign for governor of South Carolina. Lerner saw no negative reaction to Haley’s candidacy as a mother of two young children and, again, noted the benefit of familial imagery to contend claims of infidelity weighed against her in the primary contest. Some insiders attributed this shift to Sarah Palin herself, arguing that her ability to disrupt the public-private divide at the presidential level opened the door to young mothers, especially in the Republican Party, going forward.<sup>20</sup> Others argued that a more general realigning of public and private roles for men and women has made its way to the political sphere, releasing female candidates from the perceived constraints that motherhood has long placed on them.

In all of these examples, women candidates spent more time using their motherhood as a credential for office than assuring voters that it would not be a hindrance to their success. However, sometimes that meant adapting feminine roles to masculine demands of office, like touting mothers' primitive tendencies to protect their young by any means necessary.<sup>21</sup> For example, one of Kelly Ayotte's campaign advertisements explained how Washington's wasteful spending is "stealing" from her children's futures ("Conservative," aired 8/17/10). While her rhetoric is tough in the ad, Ayotte is shown playing in the park with her children – aged two and five, combining maternal images of warmth and strength. In an interesting way, strategies like these shift the masculine role of protector to a feminine image of mother. Instead of using their maternal roles to display only warmth and tradition, they associate motherhood with strength and security. In doing so, they both challenge and maintain gender dynamics at play within the institution of political campaigns. The balance between nurturer and protector is one that maps closely to women's juggling of strength and likability in their campaign image. Different standards remain for women, many insiders told me in 2010, but there are signs of change not only in voter perceptions of men's familial responsibilities, but in the decisions of candidates like Scarcelli, Haley, or Ayotte who did not shy from making the duality of their roles part of their candidate image.

#### *Negotiating Less Traditional Familial Situations*

As this discussion of interview evidence and campaign output reveals, candidate gender tempers the ways in which family images are used due to insider perceptions of voter expectations and their attempts to best address them. The goals of campaign strategists are to reduce voter doubts about candidates' gender-role compatibility, deter questions about their suitability for office, and ensure that candidates' identities will only make it easier to best represent those voting for them. While female candidates are viewed as benefitting

more than their male counterparts from adopting an empathetic familial image, for example, many insiders describe spousal surrogacy as uniquely beneficial for male candidates. Moreover, voters' doubts emerge more often about women's private choices and priorities than they are about men's roles as husbands or fathers. Though women in recent campaigns worked to quell doubts and alter expectations by using their private roles to their public advantage, their strategies can also maintain (and further entrench) traditional norms of family, motherhood, and sexuality instead of disrupting them. As a result, unmarried and childless candidates – male or female – continue to evoke doubts of their fit for office, bucking the most basic expectations of both ideal candidates and traditional gender expression. However, combined with the greater attention paid to women candidates' personal lives, candidates and campaign practitioners I interviewed identified how these doubts are amplified for women running for office, and added that they are most often centered on questions of candidates' sexuality.

Single male candidates are not unknown or unquestioned in today's politics. Among the 2010 statewide races I analyzed, for example, South Carolina Lieutenant Governor André Bauer entered the Republican primary as a bachelor in a strongly conservative state. His campaign manager, Matt Robinson, reported that his single status seemed to play very little role in his electoral outcome, but noted, "there's just something that didn't sit well" among voters looking to candidates for ideal images of gender and family (Personal interview). Another insider argued that families often communicate stability, a trait valued for male and female candidates (Personal interview). However, the number and type of questions asked of single men are different than those posed to single women, argues Democratic Governors Association (DGA) Deputy Political Director Zach Wineburg. He explained:

There will be more questions asked of a single woman without a family than a single man. A single man's been career-focused, has made his money and maybe he has or has not had a reputation of dating around. That plays a lot better for a man than it does a woman (Personal interview).

While male candidates may be given greater leeway in straying from traditional expectations of family roles, a single woman candidate I interviewed noted voters' perception that women candidates without a husband and children are flawed. She described a "double hurdle" for single women, commenting, "It is harder when you're single because not only do they not get a female in the political arena, they don't 'get' a single female" (Personal interview). An advisor for Oklahoma gubernatorial candidate Mary Fallin described the particular challenges for single women in her conservative state, "We still have that middle Bible belt, that deep-seated belief that women just aren't complete unless they are married and have children," (Personal interview with Rita Aragon).<sup>22</sup> Finally, one male campaign manager bluntly talked about the importance of addressing these expectations in campaign strategy to best ensure electoral success. He told me, "I think you have to definitely cross the bar in most states that this isn't just some power-hungry, man-eating lesbian" (Personal interview). Referencing the distinction between institutional or social change and electoral victory, he added that this requirement "sucks," but "I'm about winning candidates," and winning – by this measure – means reassuring voters that your candidate does not stray from heterosexual gender norms (Personal interview).

In my interviews with them, political practitioners offered effective strategies to promote electoral victory and abate the unique challenges that unmarried or childless women might face in campaigning. Democratic pollster Celinda Lake explained that one approach is to emphasize the "maiden aunt" image, where the candidate's involvement and dedication to public service precluded marriage; in essence, a female candidate can communicate that "she was *too busy* to get married" (Personal interview). In the 2010 gubernatorial contest in



Oklahoma, Jari Askins, both single and childless, pointed to her long history of public service in multiple sectors and often explained, “Oklahoma’s children are my children” in messaging. Like the maternal protectionism cited by mother candidates, Askins addressed children’s well-being in advertising and on the trail. In “Jari Askins Standing Up for Children,” she told Oklahomans:

As a judge, and then head of the Parole Board I was tough on anyone that harmed a child. More kids die here from abuse per capita than any other state. That angers me. As Governor, I’ll fight to end the statute of limitations on crimes against children and demand lifetime monitoring of child molesters. Our government can do better and your family deserve it (aired 6/14/10).

In another rejoinder, Askins reminded voters, “As governor, we’ll do what’s right for your family and mine,” reminding voters that family does not only mean husband and children, but also parents, siblings, and extended family (“Jari Askins: Your Family – and Mine,” aired 6/2/10).<sup>23</sup> Askins and her team told me that this emphasis on her record on children’s issues was not only central to her political credentials, but also abated doubts or critique that she was less equipped to address or attuned to family issues or values. In detailing her work to protect Oklahoma’s children and advance issues like education, Askins also executed Lake’s second approach for women without families of their own: “You look for ways to present women with people around them” (Personal interview with Celinda Lake). While men might benefit from being perceived as the “lone man at the top” – strong, independent, and protecting the rest – this lone imagery is often incompatible with traditional perceptions of femininity and women’s relational power (Duerst-Lahti 1997, 2006). In an advertisement titled “When I Grow Up,” young children surrounded Askins and talked about their dreams. After detailing their plans, Askins notes that she will help to make their dreams a reality (aired 6/18/10). The image of Askins surrounded by children and her message touting a child-centered record met both of Lake’s recommendations for women to assure voters that

her priorities match those of candidates with “traditional” family ties. Democratic pollster Celinda Lake explained that these strategies are “part message, but also part reassurance,” and part of that reassurance is directly related to sexuality (Personal interview).<sup>24</sup>

While practitioners recommended single women candidates like Askins dispel doubts about their fitness for office, they also recognized the ways in which opponents might work to raise these doubts via strategy. In 2010, Mary Fallin made national news when she emphasized her motherhood in a public debate on October 23, 2010 against opponent Jari Askins. When asked at the debate what defines her as a candidate and distinguishes her from opponent, Fallin responded: “I think my experience is one of the things that sets me apart as a candidate for governor. First of all, being a mother, having children, raising a family.”

While some argued she was simply using motherhood as a credential for office, critics claimed that not only was Fallin painting Askins as abnormal and ill-fit for office because of her lack of this credential, but she also fed into rumors about Askins’ sexuality. In interviews with insiders to both campaigns, these contrary explanations held. While a Fallin advisor argued that Fallin’s comments were not meant to “insinuate anything derogatory about the fact that Askins had no children or had not married,” Askins told me, “I don’t think it had anything to do with motherhood. I think it had to do with trying to point out that I was single and not married, and oh there must be some subversive reason as to why I’m not. ... I mean they were trying to imply I was gay” (Personal interview with Rita Aragon; Personal interview with Jari Askins). Regardless of her intent, Fallin’s commentary and campaign communications with family and husband mined a vein among voters and political observers, and evidenced how these distinctions by motherhood might be amplified and attributed greater importance in races where both candidates are women.

Lieutenant Governor Askins was not the only candidate in 2010 to be subject to doubts of her sexuality. In Missouri, whisper campaigns against Senate candidate Robin Carnahan lingered, despite her recent marriage and because she was married later in life and had no children. Georgia Republican primary candidate for governor Karen Handel was called “barren” by pro-life advocates and faced a “subtle, veiled push” that she was gay, despite being married, because she did not have children (Personal interview with Fred Davis). Both Carnahan and Handel’s experiences demonstrate that marriage alone does not deter criticism of less traditional images of female candidates, especially in climates where “family values” are paramount and voters are most comfortable with conventional roles of men and women. As this section makes clear, basic measures of output can overlook the complexities of gender in campaign thinking and behavior, not only for women candidates, but also for their opponents, who may present contrasting images of family to mine veins of gender-role disjuncture and/or questions of sexuality for women.

## **Discussion**

Analyzing gender dynamics within particular electoral cycles and settings demonstrates the myriad ways and degrees to which gender shapes campaign strategy and decision-making at the earliest stages of image development and message creation. Reflecting on interviews from 2008 and 2010 races, I find support for the expectations I outlined at the start of this chapter. First, candidates and campaign practitioners identified gender stereotypical perceptions among voters on trait attribution and issue expertise, and offered strategies or approaches they adopted to best address those perceptions. They identified family and appearance as often most influenced by candidate gender and gender stereotypical beliefs among voters. The influence of gender stereotypical perceptions is not limited to female candidates, as interview and campaign evidence showed how male

candidates in these mixed-gender contests sought to abate women's potential advantages on traits and recognized the strategic benefit of capitalizing on caricatures of female candidates in presenting images of their opponents. Most evident in this data, however, is the ease in which men adopt masculine traits and expertise of officeholders, while women candidates and their strategic teams negotiate a disjuncture between feminine gender expectations and masculine imagery of candidates and officeholders, often seeking a balance between them.

I expected that candidates and campaign practitioners would describe strategy approaches that, for the most part, focused more on women meeting the demands of masculinity than capitalizing on feminine expectations or advantages. While this proved largely to be true across all of my interviews and through analysis of campaign evidence, there was also evidence that some stereotypes and/or expressions of femininity can advantage women candidates in modern campaigns. For example, I found that women candidates and their teams exerted additional effort to prove their credentials on masculine traits like toughness and issues like the economy and often "suited up" for office to fit the most blatant masculine ideals of what it looks like to be Senator or Governor. However, some candidates and practitioners reported strategies to utilize feminine trait advantages or capitalize on perceived maternal roles instead of minimizing them. In 2008 and 2010, when voter distrust and discontent was high, appealing to voter expectations of women's honesty, integrity, authenticity, and propensity for bringing change was strategically smart. As practitioners explained, however, these advantages are not lost on male candidates. Many men confront the gender dimensions unique to mixed-gender contests by working to defuse feminine advantages by offering alternative change imagery and drafting messages to challenge perceptions of their female opponents' purity. In concluding, I discuss the institutional implications of these choices for re-imagining candidacy and disrupting the

gender power dynamics of campaign institutions.

Across each of these areas, and consistent with my initial expectations, my interviews evidence the significant influence of political context and other intervening factors in both tempering gender effects and shaping campaigns' strategic decisions. For example, while change in 2008 meant reimagining the literal face of power in the White House *and* the approach of its inhabitant, change in 2010 was focused on challenging an ideology and an individual – President Obama. Tea Party candidates and anti-establishment campaigns across the country dampened some of women's historic outsider advantage, and contests that centered on the environment over the individual – like in Florida and Missouri – made much of campaigns' imaging and messaging moot. Still, a benefit remained for Republican women over Democratic men and women, and Democratic women over Democratic men, on the dimensions of change and integrity in 2010, and these voter perceptions seem unlikely to change amidst men's persistent political scandal and corruption.<sup>25</sup>

In both years, the dominance of voters' economic concerns meant that gender differences were more likely to emerge in *how* candidates presented their economic bona fides instead of in *which* issues that emphasized in campaign messaging. Though the saliency of economic issues did not preclude women's electoral success in either year, candidates and practitioners alike explained how gender altered the ways in and degrees to which they communicated economic credentials to the public. Female candidates worked to establish their economic profiles, whether those include professional expertise in finance, as high-powered women in business, or more personal experiences working with small businesses or even family budgets. As consultants recommend, women also sought and advertised endorsements of their economic plans in proving their preparedness for office. And, finally,

women candidates emphasized the economic failures of their opponents, contrasting their own records of success with opponents' financial flaws in business or government.

Political context is not limited to political year and/or national context, however. Campaign practitioners, in particular, described how voter familiarity with a candidate reduces their use of gender as a heuristic (and, thus, campaigns' attention to it). Interview findings and campaign evidence also revealed the influence of regional or state culture in shaping expectations of candidates and their strategies to either meet or challenge those via candidate presentation. Interview subjects also outlined some unique advantages and disadvantages that Republican and Democratic women face when establishing a campaign persona and plan, resulting from cultural differences across party lines. Consistent with prevailing research on voter perceptions, insiders outlined Republican women's advantages on economic and law and order credentials compared to Democratic women, but identified fewer partisan differences in candidates' negotiation of physical appearance and family imagery. Moreover, candidates and practitioners' own partisan identities seemed to shape their perceptions and approach in some areas, with Republican insiders less likely than Democrats to identify gender differences in perceptions of voter trait and issue expertise and to propose credentialing strategies for their female candidates. However, both Republican and Democratic insiders identified gender differences in voter expectations and candidate strategies regarding appearance and family, though the diversity of their responses demonstrate how gender and party of candidates often interact in these areas of candidate presentation. Interview subjects also explained the interaction of gender with type of office (legislative or executive) in trait expectations, credentialing, and demonstrating fitness for offices – with demands of masculinity stronger in executive environments.

I also expected that interviewing candidates and their campaign teams would reveal

nuances of gender that are otherwise masked or overlooked in analyses of campaign output. While the contribution of some of my interview evidence is to confirm assumptions made in output analyses about strategic motivations, I present findings in this chapter that offer more cumulative explanations for when, why, and how candidates and practitioners negotiate gender in strategic development. For example, insiders explained *why* analyses of campaign output have long-found women more likely to be in professional dress, *how* they meet masculine demands of office-holding and, thus, reduce stereotype impact in vote choice, and *when* or *where* gender considerations are given greater strategic attention – challenging studies that seek generalizable conclusions of gender differences in strategy across electoral contexts and contests. By combining evidence of campaign output with insight into campaigns' motivations and considerations in this chapter, I am able to better expose the influential role of insider perceptions of gender on campaign strategy. With additional interviews from each campaign, these contributions would be even greater.

## Conclusion

Campaigns are communication events to demonstrate that a candidate can meet the demands of the office sought (traits) and the demands of political time (issue expertise and experience). Female candidates often face more substantial challenges than their male counterparts in meeting the demands of office and political context that remain dominated by men and masculinity. Democratic media consultant Ann Liston contrasted desires for equality with realistic evaluations of institutional gender dimensions:

I wish that we were all judged equally, but you know, you have the bald guy with the ponchy beer gut who's running around and kinda looks the part of a politician, and both on the way women carry themselves, the way that they articulate their message and their issues, the way that their experience and background...I think all are sort of judged differently than men (Personal interview).

Liston poignantly added, “I think part of our challenge is just to be conscious of it, but not to overcompensate...right?” (Personal interview). This reflection on how practitioners can best address gender dynamics in campaigns, particularly in drafting candidate images and messages, offers an important route toward institutional change. Like policymakers who must define a problem before determining a policy solution, campaign practitioners negotiating campaign terrain must identify the gendered dimensions of the political landscape before determining best practices in navigating it. In concluding this chapter, I review the institutional implications of campaigns’ imaging and messaging strategies for redefining campaign institutions instead of replicating their prevailing notions and balance of gender power.

Redefining traits and attributes of ideal leaders, and the ways in which they wield power, necessitates reimagining candidates, campaigns and political institutions in newly gendered ways so that the demands of office are neither universally masculine or feminine and candidate advantages can draw upon multiple expressions of gender and leadership. That redefinition is not evident in much of the interview commentary and/or strategic practices offered by candidates and practitioners in this chapter, wherein they alluded to the incompatibility between the conventional masculine imagery of politics and the societal expectations of femininity from female actors and described strategies to strike a delicate balance in meeting the demands of both.

In establishing toughness profiles, for example, female candidates and their teams adapt to the masculine world of politics by providing their toughness credentials. However, according to my interviews, they are careful to display women’s toughness in ways that voters are comfortable with – “slaying dragons” and watching their tone so as to avoid characterizations as bitchy or strident and to uphold feminine ideals of niceness and



likeability. While these strategies may yield electoral success for women, they replicate norms of gender in campaigns by encouraging women to adapt to, instead of challenging, voter demands for tough candidates and nice women. Even in capitalizing upon traits that insiders identify as advantageous to women candidates – like honesty, authenticity, and change, the gender regime within campaign institutions is reinforced. Not only should strategists be careful to base messaging on these traits in women’s proven differences over stereotypical expectations that have often held them back, but they should also be cautious of the harder fall that women may face if knocked off a pedestal of honesty and ethics on which they are often placed. Moreover, while women do often bring a new voice to the political scene, emphasizing women’s outsider status or embodiment of change as rooted in gender risks maintaining women as “other” in masculine political institutions. In all of these efforts to meet stereotypical demands, men and women candidates do little to challenge their roots and, instead, maintain institutional norms of behavior along gendered lines.

In my interviews, candidates and campaign practitioners also outlined the higher bar that women candidates continue to face in proving their credentials and fitness for statewide office. The strategies they utilize to address those demands evidence both institutional replication and change. First, while effective in winning women votes, credentialing also replicates prevailing institutional gender dynamics whereby women are outsiders working to fit within masculine norms and expectations of officeholders. Though demands for expertise and experience are fair for male and female candidates seeking political posts, altering institutional dynamics requires men and women to face a similar scale of scrutiny and demand. Moreover, shifting expectations necessitates diversifying the evidence of expertise and experience that is valued in the political realm. In 2010, women like Alex Sink built upon their ability to gain voters’ trust in facing tough economic times, and still others offered

personal over professional experiences with balancing the budget of a household. Shifting the sites wherein both men and women can gain policy credentials, revaluing policies within issue agendas, and challenging assumptions of male expertise across issue areas are multiple routes toward more systemic institutional change on campaigns' issue dimensions.

Like in business, where fresh qualities of leadership and credentials – often those attributed more often to women – are in greater demand,<sup>26</sup> recent campaigns do provide some evidence of institutional change with strategic and electoral implications. As voters express frustration with business as usual in Washington or statewide, insiders and candidates are given the opportunity to redefine conceptions of political leadership to yield greater inclusivity and diversity. As my discussion of interview findings on family use and presentation reveal, motherhood may be one of these fresh credentials for leadership that women bring to campaigning and holding public office. Democratic consultant Mary Hughes elaborated on this point by encouraging candidates and practitioners to re-imagine electoral advantages so that women's experiences as mothers are used as a site for competitive advantage. She explained:

We all believe in getting the best people for the job, and the question is, for a very long time, best did not include women. We have to go through a process so that we redefine 'best' so that women who took time out to raise a family that that's a plus. They bring a different point of view. They understand things about pre-school, the importance of having confidence in day care - what that allows a family to do and how that plays in the economy. Those are really important things that if those women never participate in policy-making we don't get the benefit of. But that quality of being a mom really hasn't been considered a quality that would be a plus as a candidate. So I think that's changing which I think is terrific (Personal interview).

Hughes added that this revaluing of women's experiences as mothers does not only effect women, but also opens dialogues for male candidates who will be invited to talk about the qualities that they developed as dads that are relevant to political leadership (Personal interview). Valuing the experiences that women have in the home as caregivers and

managers of households offers new routes toward electoral success, according to insiders. However, these experiences are still based in a heteronormative institution of family, whereby marriage and child-rearing communicate an image of normalcy and stability while alternate familial situations and statuses raise doubts of fitness for office and expectations of gender and sexuality. A feminist institutionalist analysis of candidate strategy pushes scholars and insiders to consider more inclusive images of leadership and more diverse expectations of gender so that men and women candidates can not only enter and navigate campaign institutions on their own terms, but so that the decisions they make regarding image and messaging might alter prevailing institutional norms to redefine instead of replicate how family is used, perceived, and valued by men and women in campaigns.

Finally, in the most basic discussions of candidate image – on physical appearance – I argue that asking women to “suit up” for battle, actually works to replicate masculine imagery in campaigns. In order for voters to re-imagine political leaders, candidates and insiders might do better to not only offer a new face of power, but new images that fit candidates’ personalities over campaigns’ institutional demands. No candidate – male or female – will be immune to voter skepticism of their appearance, but the hyper-criticism of women’s exterior is only avoided, not challenged, by many of the strategies offered to neutralize gender instead of revalue it to better balance feminine and masculine power in politics.

Overall, practitioners’ recognition of voters’ shifting demands and their willingness to challenge prevailing institutional norms of masculinity are vital to redefining gender in campaigns so that men and women can offer unique styles and images of leadership that are deemed equally appropriate for political office. This re-imagining, on multiple dimensions of traits, issue expertise, and appearance, may already be happening. The 2011 report *Turning*

*Point* by the Barbara Lee Family Foundation refers to women as “360 degree candidates” in today’s elections, citing women’s ability to emphasize gender advantages, challenge long-held stereotypes and expectations that hindered women’s success in elections past, and present new sites and strategies for electoral success. However, despite presenting evidence of voters’ shifting gender perceptions, the researchers report a potential lag in practitioners’ acceptance and application of these perceptions in strategic development. These findings confirm the importance of studying campaigns from the perspective of practitioners, as their decisions reflect the degree to which they consider gender in strategy, the implications of those considerations for strategy, and the ways in which insider strategizing influences institutional maintenance or change, including the disruption or confirmation of voters’ stereotypical beliefs of male and female candidates. In their conclusion, the 2011 *Turning Point* researchers recommend that strategists “stay current” with public opinion on gender and campaigns, a recommendation made as well in this volume. They add that practitioners should also “diversify,” consistent with my proposition that the uniformity of gender and race amongst campaign consultants, managers, and party leaders stunts political knowledge, strategic advancement, and institutional change to benefit non-traditional actors like women candidates.

From strategic development to execution, candidates and their teams have the capacity to make lasting social change, despite their focus on immediate electoral victory. This chapter has emphasized gender dynamics throughout the earliest stages of campaigns’ strategic development, investigating how gender influences campaigns’ image and message creation. In Chapter 6, I discuss the tactics by which these strategic plans and personas are communicated to voters, highlighting areas of gender difference and their electoral and institutional implications.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> No all-male races are included in this analysis. I focus on mixed-gender or all-female races to evaluate the shift in gender influence in campaigns when long-held gender dynamics (based in masculinity and a male monopoly among actors) are disrupted by the presence of women. More research to contrast strategic decision-making in all-male versus mixed-gender or all-female races would further enrich analyses of gender and campaigning.

<sup>2</sup> Attorney General Edmondson is the son of former Representative Ed Edmondson (D-OK) and the nephew of former Governor and Senator J. Howard Edmondson (D-OK). James E. Edmondson, his brother, is a Justice on the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

<sup>3</sup> Since 2008, Oklahoma has ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in the United States in terms of the percentage of women in its state legislature. Currently, only 12.8% of state legislators are women and the greatest ever percentage of female legislative representation was 14.8% (from 2005-2006) (CAWP 2011). Only two women have ever been sent to Congress from Oklahoma, with a gap between their tenures from 1923 to 2007 (CAWP 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Ayotte's prosecutorial successes included convictions for two defendants charged with killing two Dartmouth professors, securing the first capital murder convictions in the state in over 60 years, and fighting to pass new laws cracking down on sexual and Internet predators.

<sup>5</sup> In Arizona's 2010 gubernatorial contest, Governor Jan Brewer achieved a nationwide persona as a "tough lady" by taking on President Obama directly on SB1070, an highly controversial immigration bill passed in her state. One of her top advisers described the image of Brewer going toe-to-toe with the President of the United States gave the campaign the "steroid shot" it needed to be successful. In the Georgia Republican primary for governor, Karen Handel had three male opponents whom she opposed as the candidate of ethics, transparency, and reform (her "dragons" to slay). Handel's pollster, Whit Ayres, described an additional media strategy to communicate toughness, "We wanted to be sure that people understood that she was tough enough to do the things she said she was going to do. And so we cut some ads with her looking fairly resolute and saying, 'Bring it on'" (Personal interview).

<sup>6</sup> Pollsters Garin, Hart, and Yang recommended women in the 2010 cycle draw upon this authenticity by demonstrating that they are "close to the ground" through genuine interaction with people and "rolling up their sleeves" in communications and imaging. In a memo to candidates, they argued that winning over voters in this way would be easier for women, who voters view as results-oriented as opposed to their ego-driven male counterparts ("Guidelines for Preparing for the 2010 Cycle").

<sup>7</sup> Because Alex Sink's name could be perceived as male or female, her strategists looked for ways to ensure that voters knew she was a woman.

<sup>8</sup> A poll by *Public Policy Polling* included a 48-44 favorability difference to the advantage of Alex Sink 2 days before the election, but Sink was only leading in vote choice by 1%.

<sup>9</sup> In a campaign debate on October 27, 2010 between candidates Alex Sink and Rick Scott, Alex Sink broke debate rules by viewing a message on her iPhone during a television break. Scott repeatedly described his "shock" at Sink's violation of the rules as part of his final days of campaign messaging.

<sup>10</sup> Male candidates in 2008, particularly those challenging women, made an effort to seize a successful change mantra. North Carolina gubernatorial contender Pat McCrory (R) used the tag line “It’s time for a change,” to end most campaign advertisements and Washington gubernatorial candidate Dino Rossi (R) even adopted Barack Obama’s campaign graphics to try to wrestle the change advantage from Governor Christine Gregoire (D), who aligned herself early on with the Obama campaign. In an ad entitled “Across Party Lines,” Rossi celebrated Obama’s convention speech and said, “I agree with him on this: change is needed” (aired 9/2/2008). A change theme was not as effective for these men as it was for Barack Obama or their female counterparts, each of whom represented change by bringing an under-represented identity and perspective to state and federal politics.

<sup>11</sup> From Garin, Hart, Yang’s April 2010 memo titled “Guidelines for Preparing for the 2010 Cycle”: “These swing voters aren’t approaching Congressional candidates in 2010 in particularly partisan terms as either Republicans or Democrats, nor do they see an especially critical distinction between candidates who define themselves as being ‘pro’ or supportive of President Obama and his agenda or ‘anti’/against this platform. Instead, these voters evaluate Congressional candidates and elected officials more in terms of whether they’re ‘part of the problem’ or ‘part of the solution,’ with the ‘problem’ deeply rooted and embedded ‘inside’ the ways of Washington and the ‘solution’ lying largely ‘outside’ of Washington, in a mentality revolving around change, reform, and challenging the system” (2).

<sup>12</sup> While record numbers of Republican women did file for Congressional seats in 2010, many did not make it to the general election. For example, the Republican women win rate in primaries for the House of Representatives was only 28% (versus 46% for Democratic women) (CAWP 2010). Republican women remained only 9% of their caucus in Congress (no change from 2009) and only 16% of all Republican state legislators (no change from 2009) entering 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Some scholars and practitioners discuss strategies for framing the issues at hand in a way beneficial to their campaign (Baer 1995; Popkin 1991). Moreover, additional research notes the importance of identifying candidates’ comparative advantages over their opponents on a handful of the most salient issues they identify through research and polling (Bradshaw 1995; Dulio 2004).

<sup>14</sup> See Barbara Lee Family Foundation 2011, *Turning Point*

<sup>15</sup> Sink’s economic plan had three major tenets: (1) Revive our economy in short term; (2) Remake economy for long term; (3) Reform government to create climate of confidence and prosperity.

<sup>16</sup> Boxer used a refrain in campaign messaging that touted her efforts to bolster jobs and goods “Made in America” while Fiorina valued business that was “Made in China.”

<sup>17</sup> See Emily Cadei, “Women Carry Corporate Success to Campaigns,” *CQ/Roll Call*, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34465035/ns/politics-cq\\_politics/t/women-carry-corporate-success-campaigns/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34465035/ns/politics-cq_politics/t/women-carry-corporate-success-campaigns/) (accessed 7/25/11)

<sup>18</sup> In 1998, allegations were waged against then-Lieutenant Governor Fallin that she was engaged in “unprofessional conduct,” or an affair, with her bodyguard. The allegations

spread when the bodyguard resigned his post one week after Fallin filed for divorce from her first husband. Fallin denied the allegations.

<sup>19</sup> This sentiment was described in personal interviews with Matt Dunne and his campaign manager, Kevin O'Holleran.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Senate Republican primary candidate, Sue Lowden (R-NV), explained: "And I felt – and I still feel – she was a mentor and sparkplug, because I saw our Republican women and other women, especially because she was so young, carrying a baby, doing all these things that women were accepting of the fact that here's a woman who has these young children and, for the first time, I saw Republican women thinking of a woman outside the box of the normal, traditional Republican woman" (Personal interview).

<sup>21</sup> In 2008, both gubernatorial candidates Bev Perdue (D-NC) and Christine Gregoire (D-WA) described how their maternal roles translate into policy priorities, challenging gendered expectations by painting themselves as "protectors of children." In an ad that aired in April 2008, Perdue narrated, "When you become a mom, the world feels a little more dangerous. I've raised two kids of my own. And now, I'm a grandmother. I'm always thinking of ways to keep our children safe." In Washington, Gregoire used a similar approach in an ad airing in the weeks before the state's contentious top-two primary, "As a mother, I've always worried about my kids. As Governor, I've done some worrying about your kids, too."

<sup>22</sup> She added, "Which is as far as I'm concerned a bunch of hogwash" (Personal interview with Rita Aragon).

<sup>23</sup> Askins also described how she has used her mother and siblings in ads for previous races as an alternative way to demonstrate family values (Personal interview).

<sup>24</sup> Askins told me, "[sexuality] has come up every time I've run," but added that voters knew her well enough to dispel rumors that she was gay. In reassuring voters and me, "I always wanted kids, but it just didn't happen" (Personal interview).

<sup>25</sup> From 2008 to 2011, for example, multiple prominent political men were involved in personal and political scandals. Some examples include Governor Mark Sanford (R-SC), Senator John Ensign (R-NV), and 2008 presidential candidate John Edwards (D-NC), who were found to be involved in extra-marital affairs. Both Ensign and Edwards faced ethics violations and legal trouble for payments made to hide the scandals. In 2011, Congressman Anthony Weiner (D-NY) stepped down after it was revealed that he had multiple inappropriate relationships with women via the Internet and phone.

<sup>26</sup> Eagly and Carli (2003) surveyed business journals and publications at the time they were writing and noted: "Articles in newspapers and business magazines reveal a cultural realignment in the United States that proclaims a new era for female leaders. As *Business Week* announces that women have the 'Right Stuff' (Sharpe, 2000), *Fast Company* concurs that 'The future of business depends on women' (Hefferman, 2002, p. 9). Even more startling is *Business Week's* subsequent cover story on the 'New Gender Gap,' maintaining that 'Men could become losers in a global economy that values mental power over might' (Conlin, 2003, p. 78)" (808).

## CHAPTER 6: GENDER DYNAMICS IN CAMPAIGN TACTICS – TARGETING WOMEN VOTERS AND CONTRASTING OPPONENTS

Campaigns are the forum through which candidates communicate their image and message to potential voters. At their earliest phases, candidates and their campaign teams develop strategies for candidate presentation, devising images and messages that will resonate most with voters in the unique political context. Once campaign practitioners develop a communications strategy, they must determine the tactics they will use to execute that strategy and best meet their communications goals. The menu of campaign communication tactics is long, from determining the medium of communication (web, television, radio, print, grassroots) and communicators (candidate, surrogates, external groups) to identifying target audiences and balancing how much a candidate will be focused on self-promotion versus opponent contrast or definition. For men, insiders cite, running against other men offers little incentive to alter tactics that conform to and benefit from the masculine environment and modes of modern campaigning. Running against women, however, presents an impetus for men to alter their campaign approach (Fox 1997). For women, both strategy and tactics are influenced by campaigns' efforts to maximize competitive advantages and abate voter concerns about gender-office incompatibilities.

In this chapter, I analyze the gender dynamics of a select pair of campaign communication tactics, focusing on those that candidates and campaign practitioners identified as most explicitly influenced by candidate gender in 2008 and 2010 statewide contests: direct appeals to women voters and negative campaigning. I ask multiple questions: How are these communication tactics influenced by candidate gender, especially in mixed-gender electoral contests or races where both general election candidates are women? Do insiders alter their approach to account for differences in voter perceptions of men and women candidates or expectations of different gender effects? And, finally, what are the



implications of these decisions for electoral and institutional outcomes? To answer these questions, I continue to draw upon interviews with candidates and practitioners active in 2008 and 2010 statewide contests (see Appendix C and Appendix D) and evidence from campaign materials and analyses (see methodology in Chapter 1).<sup>1</sup> Throughout the chapter, I highlight distinctions between campaign professionals and candidates in interpreting and grappling with gender as they draft and execute campaign strategy.

Consistent with the findings in my national survey of campaign consultants, I expected that interview findings from 2008 and 2010 statewide races would evidence the influence of candidates and campaign practitioners' perceptions of voters' gendered expectations on their tactical decisions. By limiting this chapter to the tactics that insiders described as most influenced by gender, I have already identified that gender matters in their approaches to targeting women voters and negative campaigning. However, in probing insiders directly and within a unique campaign context, I investigate these sites of gender difference in greater depth. I expected that candidates and campaign practitioners would report different motivations and/or precautions for men and women candidates when targeting women voters and engaging in negative campaigning, and that those differences would align with stereotypic perceptions of gender and behavior – both of candidates and of voters.

In her analysis of U.S. House elections, Dolan (1998) argues, “The presence of women candidates definitively changes the nature of voting behavior” (285). Numerous scholars have asked whether that shift in behavior is exemplary of a “gender affinity effect,” whereby women voters are more likely to support women candidates (King and Matland 2003; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Research findings on affinity effects are mixed. Sanbonmatsu (2002) finds an asymmetric gender affinity effect where “women are more likely than men to

have a baseline preference and they are more likely than men to prefer the female candidate” (32). Other studies reveal gender as a significant factor influencing vote choice, with women voters more likely to support women candidates, even where partisanship holds an independently strong influence (Cook 1994; Dolan 1998; King and Matland 2003; Plutzer and Zipp 1996; Selzter, Newman, and Leighton 1997). However, other analyses have emphasized partisan influences as interfering with (Brians 2005) or overriding gender affinity effects in support and votes for women candidates (Dolan 2008; McDermott 1997; Paolino 1995).<sup>2</sup> These findings present a conundrum to political strategists, for whom voter affinities provide sites for strategic decision-making. Moreover, they inform my expectations for campaigns’ tactical calculations in regard to targeted appeals to women voters.

Scholars analyzing campaign effects have argued that targeting women voters acts, for women candidates, as an effective strategy to capitalize on candidate strengths. For example, drawing upon surveys of candidate strategies and measures of their electoral success, Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes (2003) conclude, “One of the keys to success for female candidates is to wage campaigns that use voters’ dispositions toward gender as an asset rather than a liability” (244). Fewer analyses have investigated the electoral effects of gender-based appeals for male candidates, particularly those running against women candidates. However, based on my survey evidence of consultants’ universal valuation of targeting female voters, I expected that male and female candidates and their campaign teams would report adopting this tactic, but that women would do so to amplify a supposed natural affinity and men would do so to try to counter that perceived benefit. Guided by these disparate motivations, I expected insiders in the mixed-gender contests I analyzed to identify unique communication styles whereby women candidates would draw more often upon personal experiences, empathy, and their potential to make history, and male candidates

would focus on women's issues and employ female surrogates and supporters on their behalf to defer the potential gender-based assets of their female opponents. I also expected that appeals to women voters would be less infused into campaign communications for male candidates than female candidates.

Longstanding research on the gender gap in voting demonstrates that women voters are more likely to vote for Democratic candidates and the research cited above notes the interaction of partisanship with gender-based affinities among women voters.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, while I expected that all of the candidates and practitioners I interviewed would describe some effort to appeal to women directly, I expected that Republican and Democratic women's appeals to women voters would differ in style and magnitude, with Republican men and their teams least likely to report concerted efforts to appeal to women voters. Moreover, I expected Republican candidates and practitioners would be more likely to try to disrupt (or diminish) Democrats' advantage among women, instead of presuming they could amplify a natural advantage, even with Republican women candidates. I investigate these potential differences below, asking how men and women candidates appeal to women voters and what their decisions illuminate about gender perceptions and prognoses in campaigning.

One of the most debated, yet most-utilized, tactics of modern campaigning is drawing a contrast with your opponent (see Bystrom et al. 2004; Fridkin, Kenney and Woodall 2009; Kahn and Kenney 1998; Lau et al. 1999). Francia and Herrnson (2007) define negative campaigning as "claims that discredit, criticize, or publicize the deficiencies of the opponent" (248). Some scholars argue that negative campaigning is bad for democracy, depressing voter engagement and increasing political cynicism (Ansolabehere 1994; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995; Maisel 2002; Rourke, Saucier, and Krumme 2001). Others find evidence to the contrary, arguing that the negative impact of negative campaigning on

voters is overstated (Brooks and Geer 2007; Jackson, Mondak, and Huckfeldt 2009). Moreover, despite arguments against negativity by candidates and voters, political scholars and practitioners are quick to note that contrast is the basis of any good campaign that seeks to offer voters a choice between two or more candidates for office. Citing Jamieson (1992), Francia and Herrnson (2007) argue, “Comparative appeals typically foster a vigorous public debate about both policy issues and candidates’ abilities to perform the duties of the office sought” (247). Therefore, negative advertising or contrast may actually mobilize voters (Bartels 1996; Finkel and Geer 1998; Kahn and Kenney 1999; Lau et al. 1999; Lau and Pomper 2001), helping them to draw distinctions between candidates (Garrazone et al. 1990), providing them with important information (Kaid 2006), and making that information easier to recall (Brians and Wattenberg 1996; Newhagen and Reeves 1991). In analyzing statewide contests in 2008 and 2010, I expected that candidates and practitioners would view negative campaigning in elections as, at the least, a necessary tactic for candidate contrast, and at the most, a vital tactic for electoral mobilization and success. Moreover, I expected candidates and their teams to highlight the utility of negative campaigning as greatest in competitive contests.

Political science literature has, more specifically, debated the gender dynamics of negative campaigning, probing the likelihood and electoral impact of going negative for men and women candidates. Analyses of campaign output – primarily television advertisements – have shown relatively few differences between men and women candidates’ likelihood of going negative (Bystrom and Kaid 2002; Kahn 1996). Kaid (2006) finds that, by the 1990s, women were using negative ads as frequently as their male counterparts. Moreover, as more women enter competitive campaign contests, they are also more likely to be targets of negative campaigning (Fridkin, Kenney, and Wooddall 2009). While the proliferation of

negativity appears across genders, scholars debate whether its impact is different among male and female attackers and targets. Fridkin, Kenney, and Wooddall (2009) argue, “the gender of the candidate conditions people’s reactions to negative messages about political candidates” (69).<sup>4</sup> Consistent with this literature, I did not expect to find significant gender differences in insiders’ perceptions and decisions regarding *if* men and women candidates should go negative, but expected them to offer unique responses and evidence on *how* men and women did or should do so. In other words, I did expect that insider perceptions of gender expectations among voters would inform the negative or contrast tactics they advocated and espoused for men and women candidates. I thought that male candidates and their teams would note caution in going negative against female contenders. Prevailing findings and evidence paint a less clear picture for female candidates, however, where stereotypic perceptions of femininity would predict a similar degree of caution in being too aggressive and stereotypic expectations of masculinity in political offices would urge women candidates to prove their toughness through hard-hitting tactics. Because of the universality of this brand of tactics, I did not expect to find partisan differences in interview findings on negative campaigning, whether among candidates or campaign practitioners. I did, however, think that candidates would speak differently about going negative than would their teams. Based on their electoral roles and professional aims, I expected candidates to advocate less negativity and practitioners to emphasize its necessity for winning elections.

Finally, I do not lay out expectations for all-female races due to the dearth of precedent or examples, but do examine some dimensions of difference in behavior and insider perceptions for both targeting women voters and utilizing negative tactics in this chapter.

The tactics I investigate in this chapter are informed by candidates and campaign practitioners' primary goal of winning elections. Motivated by victory, insiders gather information about what should be communicated to voters about their candidates – and how – to best address constituent demand and the preexisting beliefs and expectations in voters' psyches. After reporting the ways in which gender influences campaigns' approaches toward direct appeals to women voters and negative campaigning, I discuss what these practices mean for gender dynamics in campaign institutions and upholding (or upending) masculine imagery of political candidates and masculine rhetoric of political campaigns. Burton and Shea (2010) write, "Consultants who use the same tricks of the trade over and over again might have a homogenizing effect on American politics" (214). I ask whether candidates and practitioners in today's statewide contests negotiate campaign terrain using tactics that maintain this homogeneity or present alternative routes toward electoral success.

## **Findings**

### **Direct Appeals to Women**

The professionalization of campaigns has yielded sophisticated strategies to target particular subsets of voters at the most intricate levels. Some have compared efforts to "micro-target" potential voters to taking a scalpel to an electorate. These efforts have been successful from presidential contests to lower-level races and have led to much debate amongst campaign professionals, especially pollsters and strategists. However, in discussing appeals to women voters, professionals rarely described this level of precision, only reporting that appealing to women voters is integral to all campaigns – across office type, party, and candidate gender. Men and women, Republicans and Democrats, alike court women voters because, unlike women's lack of representation among candidates and officeholders, women are the majority of voters in the United States and have played an influential role in deciding

elections since the 1980s (Carroll 1996; 2006; CAWP 2005; Kenski 1988; Whitaker 2008).

Consistent with these data and my hypotheses, I find that most interview subjects – across gender and party – identified targeting women voters as important to any campaign.

Republican pollster Glen Bolger argued that it is always important to target women voters in campaigns. For Republicans, winning women voters – who traditionally lean Democratic – can decide an election. Bolger argued, “If you play it right, you get the best of both worlds” (Personal interview). Targeting women voters often means employing gender-based marketing strategies whereby politicians send gendered cues to voters (Schneider 2007).

These strategies often include an emphasis on families and children - including connecting to voters on a more personal level, support for women’s issues, touting endorsements from prominent women and women’s organizations, and highlighting the historic nature of women’s candidacies in the state and nation.

In this section, I outline tactics employed by male and female candidates to appeal to women voters. First, I analyze male candidates’ attempts to compensate for what they perceived to be women’s natural advantage with women voters. I find that male candidates, moreso than their campaign teams, perceived an additional incentive to appeal to women voters when their opponents were women, and this incentive was significantly greater for Democratic men who already benefited from a persistent gender gap in vote choice. Male candidates highlighted tactics they employed to compensate for a perceived female advantage – including endorsements by women, using spousal surrogates, and reclaiming policy territory - though campaign practitioners described skepticism of both the need and utility of these tactics in enhancing men’s likelihood of victory. Next, I analyze women candidates’ appeals to women voters – including appeals on “women’s issues,” evoking empathy, employing female messengers, and highlighting the potential to make history -

noting that these appeals are often viewed as amplifying support of which they already benefit. Both Republican and Democratic women candidates and their campaign teams described and/or demonstrated efforts to appeal to women voters in my analyses. While the particular tactics they employed to amplify women's support were largely consistent with my expectations, the evidence provided in my interviews demonstrates the complexities of gender and party interactions and the importance of electoral context in diminishing identity-based appeals of candidates.

*Men: Compensation Strategies*

Some candidates, practitioners, and observers call women's efforts to amplify voters' gender-based affinities as "playing the gender card," attributing a negative connotation to what they perceive as opportunistic identity politics. However, Witt, Paget, and Matthews (1994) note that men can play a "gender card" of their own by targeting women in campaigns. Some of the most direct appeals to women described in my interviews come from male Democratic candidates seeking to minimize the perceived benefit that women candidates have with female voters without much effort on their part. Democratic pollster Celinda Lake told me, "A lot of men – particularly in a certain generation – feel quite worried about how to run against a woman candidate" (Personal interview). Consistent with Fox's (1997) claim that mixed-gender contests force men to confront gender dynamics in ways they would not with male opponents, interview responses highlighted three strategies that emerged for male candidates to, in their view, compensate for women's advantage among women voters. While each of these strategies may have had some influence on overall outcomes, the practitioners I interviewed often noted they were not as important as the men who engaged in them perceived them to be. As Lake observed, "The candidates usually believe in these strategies much more than they actually work" (Personal interview).



While an outcomes-based measure would likely find minimal impact of these tactical decisions, I argue that they are more important in highlighting how the entry of women in political campaigns alters considerations and behaviors of the players therein.

These compensation strategies include: endorsements by women's group and prominent women leaders, using spousal surrogates, and reclaiming policy territory viewed as better navigated by female candidates and officeholders. Regarding endorsements, Democratic pollster Lake said, "a man running against a man is not particularly worried about who's going to get the NOW endorsement" (Personal interview). However, with a female opponent, the male candidates I interviewed described the importance of endorsements from prominent women's groups and activists. Ohio Senate candidate Lee Fisher talked about how his campaign strategy was influenced by Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner's presence in the Democratic primary race. He said, "We felt it was important to show strength among women activists because there would be a natural assumption that most woman activists would go with a capable woman" (Personal interview with Lee Fisher). He concluded that his ability to garner female endorsements was an important factor in his primary success, claiming it "sort of took the legs out from under Jennifer" (Personal interview with Lee Fisher). Fisher was not alone in his approach, as male candidates across the country established "Women for [candidate]" groups that targeted women voters in races of all types.

Some male candidates argued that relying on their wives in outreach to women voters was vital to their campaigns, providing another site wherein female messengers provide legitimacy to male candidates. In Oklahoma, Democratic gubernatorial candidate Drew Edmondson described his wife's active role as a surrogate for him, drawing upon her reputation in the community as an advocate for women's rights. Linda Edmondson blogged

about her experiences on the campaign trail on Edmondson's campaign site, under the heading "Linda on the Road." As mentioned in Chapter 5, Edmondson's campaign literature also featured pictures of his family because he felt that his strong family ties would advantage his candidacy against Askins' and Fallin's less traditional family structures.

In addition to presenting an image of family values, both Edmondson and his wife tried to reclaim policy territory from primary opponent Jari Askins by emphasizing women's issues on the trail. Edmondson himself discussed education throughout the primary campaign in an effort to demonstrate that he would fight for issues important to women voters. Askins took to the airwaves in July 2010 with a direct appeal of her own when she aired an ad focused on fair and equal pay for women. In the ad, Askins promises women, "I'll make certain Oklahoma women are paid as fairly as men. You can bank on it" ("Not About Ego, it's About Eating," aired 7/2/10). Asked if he considered a more direct appeal to women on the same issues, Edmondson noted his deferral to strategists who argued, "those kinds of blatant outreaches to women tend to backfire; they think they are being pandered to" (Personal interview). Instead, Edmondson talked about the "subtle approaches" recommended to him, including, "[talking] about the issues that women were interested in, not just saying, 'I'm going to be strong for women'" (Personal interview). Despite some of his own doubts about how directly he should appeal to women in a mixed-gender contest, Edmondson relied on the expertise of strategists that he hired based on their gender identities and experiences. For example, Edmondson noted that pollster Celinda Lake was his first hire, not only because of her stellar reputation, but also because she brought an important perspective as a woman and as a consultant who had worked for many woman candidates. In running against a woman candidate, Edmondson noted that he sought someone like her who he felt would best answer questions like, "What kinds of issues are

untouchable? What kinds of attacks are fair? What kind of attacks do you want to stay away from?” (Personal interview). Not only did he describe a shift in approach when running against a woman, but Edmondson’s decisions offer an additional recommendation for male candidates, especially in mixed-gender contests: bring women professionals – and their vital perspectives – to the strategic table.

Interview subjects explained that policy-based appeals to women voters were also important in general election contests, especially among Democratic men who faced female opponents. In the 2010 New Hampshire Senate race, Paul Hodes spent the last two weeks of his campaign touting his record on women’s issues, with an emphasis on choice, to denounce any beliefs that Kelly Ayotte was moderate and deter any cross-over voting among women. At an October 29, 2010 press conference with women leaders from NARAL Pro-Choice New Hampshire and Women for Hodes, Hodes claimed:

Kelly Ayotte would repeal Roe v. Wade and take us back to a time when states could prosecute women and their doctors for exercising a right that our Supreme Court has said is a Constitutional right of individual privacy. Kelly Ayotte believes that equality only belongs to a few, and not to all women. As a U.S. Senator, I will be 100% pro-choice because it's a matter of civil rights.

His campaign manager, Valerie Martin, conceded that these efforts had little impact on the electoral outcome, as voters – men and women alike – were much more concerned about the economy than social issues like abortion. She told me, “In the heat of the campaign and with all the money and the focusing on the economic issues, it just didn’t matter” (Personal interview with Valerie Martin). Attorney General Terry Goddard (D), running against incumbent Governor Jan Brewer (R) in Arizona, had an equally dismal level of success in puncturing Brewer’s support by touting her ultra-conservative social agendas. Using her positions on education and preventative health services, he described Brewer as “anti-woman.” He told me:

Here's somebody throughout her career who has been anti-choice, throughout her career has done nothing in terms of sexual equality in the workplace, and whose budgets were devastating for women in our community. So the fact she did as well among women as she did, I think, is a tribute to the fact that people aren't paying attention (Personal interview with Terry Goddard).

Whether due to voters' inattention or simply because these issues did not resonate in the 2010 political context, many interview subjects perceived that men's appeals to women on social issues did little to change the expected vote counts among men and women voters. In 2010 statewide contests, the women's vote fell expectedly along partisan lines and electoral outcomes were decided by other factors inclusive of the anti-Democratic sentiment across the country. However, candidate perceptions of gender advantage did influence strategic decisions and the attention paid to women voters in these contests, demonstrating that men's approach to navigating campaign terrain is at least altered when women enter it.

As I expected, this attention to gender or appeal to women voters did not emerge as often among Republican men running against women in the primary or general election contests I analyzed. While Drew Edmondson made a concerted effort to target women voters in the Oklahoma Democratic primary, Oklahoma Republican primary candidate Randy Brogdon said of gender in his primary race against Mary Fallin, "You'll hear some people say gender matters. I don't think it played any role" (Personal interview). Even in general election contests, conservative male candidates and their teams were much quicker to argue that their approach was not altered by having a female opponent. Another male Republican candidate said of his campaign against a woman, "We did not run a campaign directing any one gender message to either side," and – noting his success among women voters, "Maybe [women] appreciated that" (Personal interview with Pat McCrory). In a political climate where women voters are consistently more likely to vote for Democratic

candidates, less attention to women among Republican candidates is not particularly surprising.

However, some Republican men in mixed-gender contests adopted tactics in campaign communications that sought to appeal to certain subsets of women more likely to vote Republican. In the Missouri Senate race, for example, Congressman Roy Blunt's digital media consultant, Pete Snyder, told journalist Kate Kaye from *ClickZ* in November 2010, "We focused like a laser beam on women over 40 years old" ("Blunt Campaign Used Web Video Ads to Win Women's Votes"). They targeted women for a two-week period in using in-stream video ads of "everyday women" discussing "everyday issues," accompanied by display ads linking viewers to [WomenWinWithRoy.com](http://WomenWinWithRoy.com), a site dedicated to Blunt's female supporters. In Florida's race for governor, some observers argued that Republican candidate Rick Scott's selection of then-Representative Jennifer Carroll as his running mate was a tactical choice to enhance his appeal to women and African-American voters. Journalist Steve Bousquet, of *The Miami Herald*, wrote of Scott's selection:

In choosing Carroll, a US Navy veteran and mother of three, Scott gets a woman with a distinctive personal story who could neutralize the gender appeal of his Democratic opponent, Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink ("Rick Scott Picks Jennifer Carroll as Running Mate," 9/2/10).

While Scott did not refer to this advantage directly and I was unable to secure an interview with him or his team, he did cite Carroll's role as a "barrier-breaker" when introducing her to voters. Though both Scott and Blunt still faced a nine-point gender gap to the advantage of their Democratic (and female) opponents, their appeals to women may reflect what Republican consultant Glen Bolger cited as an "always important" focus on women voters for Republicans – able to provide marginal votes that could swing elections (Personal interview).

*Women: Amplification Strategies*

While male candidates, particularly on the Democratic side, demonstrate shifting strategies when opposed by women, women candidates and their teams described efforts to appeal to women as an area of natural advantage. In essence, these strategies work to amplify the advantage already assumed for women candidates among women voters. Below, I outline four amplification tactics described in my interviews: direct appeals on “women’s issues,” evoking empathy, employing female messengers, and highlighting the potential for making history with their victory.<sup>5</sup> Both Democratic and Republican women candidates and their teams utilized these tactics in 2008 and 2010, evidencing both parties’ identification of women voters as a potentially vital constituency. For some Republican insiders, the hope that Republican women candidates might bring cross-over votes from moderate women voters or mobilize a new constituency of conservative women voters influenced recruitment and candidate endorsement within their own party. Candidates like Carly Fiorina in California and Susana Martinez in New Mexico were supported early by party insiders for, among many reasons, their potential capacity to defer some of the Democratic advantage among women voters. Republican and Democratic women candidates for statewide office made efforts to appeal to women voters on issues and shared experiences, though the dominance of economic crises in the political climate made more overt appeals both less common and less effective. Moreover, in 2010, strong ideological differences between Republican and Democratic women candidates demonstrated the limits of gender affinities between women voters and women candidates.

Like their male counterparts, some women candidates made direct appeals to women by emphasizing policy issues of greatest concern to women voters, often using female messengers. Jari Askins’ appeal to women’s financial status is one example of this approach, as she took directly to the camera to describe how she would fight for women’s rights and

financial security as governor. In California, Barbara Boxer used one campaign advertisement to characterize her opponent – Carly Fiorina – as “too extreme for California” by outlining her “reckless” social policy positions, including those that would affect women’s rights and equality (“Out of Touch,” aired 10/15/10). In the remainder of Boxer’s ads, however, she focused on the economic issues so important to men *and* women voters in 2010. Not only did the saliency of these issues lessen the focus on issues typically used in direct appeals to women voters, but they demonstrated that appealing to women in 2010 meant addressing issues most important to all voters, as women’s policy concerns mirrored those of men in a tough economic year.<sup>6</sup>

Even when issue focus is the same for men and women candidates, insiders I interviewed explained that women’s appeals to female voters often draw upon their experiences as mothers and wives, creating a personal connection with women via their day-to-day lives and utilizing the empathetic advantages for women described in Chapter 5. Vermont gubernatorial candidate in 2010, Secretary of State Deb Markowitz, told me that referencing her family and children was an effective tactic to communicate her issue priorities and empathy with voters. She added that her approach also influenced her male primary opponents, “It was actually helpful to me in making the personal [appeal] and the others started copying me, trying to talk about their families more because it did work” (Personal interview with Deb Markowitz). As Chapter 5 detailed, candidates like Mary Fallin in Oklahoma, Kelly Ayotte in New Hampshire, Nikki Haley in South Carolina, and Barbara Boxer in California highlighted their maternal roles in imaging and messaging to amplify this personal appeal. While referencing family experiences appears to have fewer challenges for women candidates than in elections past, candidates and practitioners noted the diversity of women voters and their ideological beliefs as complicating the degree to which these tactics

yield electoral support or success for women candidates. Nevada Senate primary candidate Sue Lowden (R) – a business owner and former news anchor - described the double-edged sword of these appeals for GOP women due to the conservatism among women likely to vote for Republican candidates. She spoke of her own experiences on the campaign trail, “I think I had a harder time with Republican, conservative women, because I was outside the box – being a working mom. ... I actually was out in the business world, you know, doing things that perhaps they weren’t doing. I think some women had a hard time identifying with that” (Personal interview with Sue Lowden). Republican practitioners agreed that empathetic appeals to conservative women voters are sometimes tricky, as women candidates often represent a break with the traditional values they deem important in personal life.

Moreover, interview subjects noted that the increased polarization of partisan candidates and officeholders, evident in 2008 and 2010, makes it especially difficult for women of either party to appeal to women voters across party lines. Practitioners described how women’s votes are more often influenced by issues over gender, especially in contests where Republican women veer from moderate positions they have often held in the past. A top advisor for 2010 Connecticut Senate candidate Richard Blumenthal, made this distinction in emphasizing women’s weariness of Republican candidate Linda McMahon. The advisor contrasted McMahon’s direct appeals to women in advertising with women’s discomfort with her policy positions and professional background as the co-owner of World Wrestling Entertainment. The advisor noted that McMahon was unable to move women voters away from Blumenthal and, even more, women were often her strongest opponents, “I mean, I gotta tell you, our women supporters were some of the most anxious to take her on and to, you know, go negative against her. ... I think a lot of that came back to how she made her money. And you know, some people who felt very strongly about that” (Personal



interview). While many practitioners and women candidates I interviewed pointed to women voters' sometimes hyper-criticism of women candidates, this practitioner cautioned that ideological criticism should not be confused with biased or sexist sentiment:

I worry... that the natural default is to support this notion that women are harder on other women, when in actuality I think it's that women voters are hard on men and women, but they want people who are going to support what they believe in and what they think is good for their families and everything else. And that's some of what sort of led to this rejection of the women candidates [in 2010], as opposed to sort of sexism on behalf of the women voters (Personal interview).

This commentary reflects the importance of paying attention to women voters as a complex subset of voters. Despite evidence that they are more likely to vote Democratic and might – in general – have an affinity toward women candidates, the ideological differences between women as voters and candidates reflects increasingly complicated gender dynamics in campaigns and a need for more nuanced understandings of gender in campaign strategy and tactics.<sup>7</sup>

Both Democratic and Republican women both used another tactic to appeal to women voters in 2008 and 2010: using female messengers, whether the candidates themselves or women advocating on their behalf. However, deployment of female messengers on behalf of women candidates in these cycles reflects the ideological distinctions cited above. In 2010, former Governor Sarah Palin (R-AK) urged her “mamma grizzly” supporters from the 2008 presidential race to support Republican candidates, especially women. After creating her own political action committee, Sarah PAC, Palin spoke at campaign rallies across the country on behalf of her endorsed candidates, utilizing the gender-based imagery of a mamma grizzly protecting her cubs. She describes how mamma grizzlies embody both fierceness and femininity in her book, *America by Heart*. She writes, “When you come upon one, you don't give her a hug. You tread lightly. Because when the ones she loves are threatened, she rises up” (Palin 2010, 127). Palin's female supporters

adopted this message of maternal strength, and some attributed it to the women candidates they supported. While Palin and her PAC endorsed men and women candidates nationwide, nearly half of her endorsements were of women candidates.<sup>8</sup> In South Carolina's race for governor, Palin endorsed the lesser-known Nikki Haley, calling her a "kindred spirit" at a May 14, 2010 rally in Columbia and telling voters Haley was a "brave and strong conservative woman" in recorded phone calls ahead of the primary vote. Observers and members of Haley's team cite Palin's endorsement as decidedly influential in attracting attention and support to her campaign in the vital month before the Republican primary. A South Carolina Republican consultant described Haley's "Palin boost" in an interview with me:

[Palin's] got this cult of personality. Showing up and putting her arm around Nikki Haley gave [Haley] a tremendous boost of exposure. People were like, 'Now, wait a minute, I've only heard about these three guys. Who's this lady up there? I'm not familiar with her.' So it made people take a second look at her (Personal interview).

Both he and Haley strategist Jon Lerner argued that Palin's endorsement was not a deciding factor in Haley's primary victory, but noted that her influence in amplifying Haley's exposure was undeniable. Moreover, practitioners across the country added that Palin's endorsements in 2010 were often more about proving candidates' conservatism than appealing to women voters, though in many cases she was able to do both.

EMILY's List has long-used a tactic of women standing for other women in assisting women's campaigns. Launched in 1995, the group's WOMEN VOTE! is a nationwide voter mobilization program to turn out women voters for pro-choice Democratic women candidates and the entire Democratic ticket. Despite their particular efforts on behalf of women candidates, EMILY's List's program clarifies the moniker "When women vote, women win," to note the gender gap and ideological differences cited above. Instead, they advertise, "When women vote, Democrats win," and 2008 and 2010 votes by gender support

this notion (see CAWP 2011). Therefore, while Palin's efforts to mobilize "mamma grizzlies" throughout the country exemplify a strategy for conservative candidates' success, mobilizing pro-choice Democratic women has electoral implications for progressive men and women candidates. Traditionally, targeting women voters has meant mobilizing a vital portion of the Democratic base, while gender-based appeals among conservative candidates have been a tactic meant to win marginal, swing, or cross-over votes. In 2010, Palin's voter mobilization campaign may have represented a shift in strategy to consider women voters at the base instead of on the borders of Republican candidates' support.

Finally, and unlike their male colleagues or opponents, women candidates across party lines have the potential to capitalize on the history-making nature of their candidacies to energize a female electorate. Republican consultant Robert Uithoven argued that, had his candidate Sue Lowden won her primary contest for the U.S. Senate in Nevada, "It would have been our message plan was to talk about the historic possibility of Nevada electing its first female U.S. Senator - you know, targeting Independent women voters with that message" (Personal interview). Two candidates in 2010 – one Republican and one Democrat – went so far as to use "Rosie the Riveter" imagery in campaign materials to, according to their teams, evoke the historical advancement and fights of women (see Appendix F). While these candidates made overt appeals to women voters on a historic dimension, candidates and insiders also told me that they felt this message is often implicit among women voters and requires less explicit tactics by the campaign itself. One female gubernatorial candidate from the Midwest described energy amongst women supporters on her path toward becoming the first female governor of her state, despite her efforts to deemphasize gender in messaging. She noted that her gender and voters' desire to see a woman governor "motivated people to work really hard on my behalf" (Personal interview). And, while she

did not overtly appeal to women on this dimension, she observed, “Even if I tried not to talk about [gender], everyone else did” (Personal interview). In this way, appeals to women voters on the basis of making history can often be implicit and/or made indirectly by media, advocates, or other supporters.<sup>9</sup> While these examples evidence the potential for history-making appeals, most women candidates at the statewide level in 2010 did little to emphasize the historic nature of their candidacies even though their victories would be milestones for women’s political power in their state.<sup>10</sup> This fact is evident in analyzing campaign output or messaging, but my research goes further to explain why few women’s campaigns in this cycle sought an advantage on this dimension. Insiders told me that this deferral was less due to assumptions that voters would respond to a more implicit appeal and more due to changes in the electoral landscape whereby a history-making message had little resonance.

Campaign practitioners noted the ineffectiveness of history-making appeals in 2010 - an election year so focused on present crises over historical advancement. Moreover, in all of the interviews I did, only 19 respondents talked about women’s capacity to draw upon history-making appeal, with 8 of those respondents, split evenly across parties, arguing it was not a beneficial tactic or message in the current political climate.<sup>11</sup> They explain that the dominance of messaging around jobs and the economy for all 2010 candidates not only removed the relevance of many issues to which voters attributed female expertise, but it also created a climate where messaging around women’s political advancement appeared moot – despite the media chatter of the “year of the (Republican) woman.” Unlike elections past, even as recently as 2008 where breaking political glass ceilings was a theme from the presidential level down, the premise of making history seemed little utilized in 2010. And, according to the professionals, this was because it proved to be an ineffective message in this climate.

This was most evident in the Florida gubernatorial contest, where political insiders questioned Democrat Alex Sink's strategy after her loss and argued she could have made stronger appeals to women voters. In my interviews with them, her strategists explained the ineffectiveness these appeals would have had, particularly those focused on her role as the potential first women governor of Florida. Sink's pollster, Dave Beattie, polled Floridians in the 2010 cycle, asking, "Do you want to make history electing the first woman governor of Florida?" Voters, especially the senior women so supportive of Hillary Clinton for this reason, responded, "I voted for history in 2008. I just want things to work. I'm not voting to make history [in 2010]" (Personal interview with Dave Beattie). Ann Liston added of the current political climate, "The idea that some woman candidate would be the first of something isn't really enough anymore to garner the kind of support that they used to from female voters" (Personal interview). Instead, voters – male and female alike – said of candidates' history-making potential, "That's great, but tell me more" (Personal interview with Ann Liston). While this emphasis on policy-based credentials evidences the demand for policy solutions in 2010, it may also reflect shifting institutional gender dynamics whereby perceptions of women candidates' electoral successes make women voters less likely to prioritize gender equality in office-holding when choosing candidates to support.<sup>12</sup>

The political landscape facing women candidates in 2008 and 2010 was markedly different than that of 1992, when appeals to women voters were often based in arguments for institutional equality and women candidates benefited from women voters' willingness to vote across party lines (see Brians 2005). Instead, in the political climates of these recent elections, women candidates' attempts to amplify their natural advantage among women voters were focused more on issues, ideology, and empathy with women's daily lives. Republican and Democratic women candidates I analyzed adopted presentation strategies

that emphasized shared experiences as mothers, grandmothers, and wives, offering identity-based appeals that focused less on making history and more on valuing women's experiences in elected office. Moreover, in a polarized political climate where moderate candidates are few and the likelihood of cross-over voting among women is low, women candidates and their teams worked to mobilize women voters *within* their party instead of *across* party lines. These tactical decisions reflect partisan dynamics present in today's campaigns and shifting perceptions of gender parity in politics. At the same time, placing greater value on women's private-life credentials and recognizing potential for a uniquely conservative women's base of support together present sites for institutional change – wherein practitioners' strategic decisions both influence and take advantage of voters' shifting gendered expectations of candidates and officeholders.

### Negative Campaigning

Contrast is a critical component in campaign communications. At their root, campaigns offer voters a choice between multiple candidates and work to outline the strengths of one candidate and weaknesses of the other(s). Negative campaigning represents one half of this equation, as it highlights the reasons why a candidate should *not* be chosen to hold the office they seek. Consistent with prevailing research and my expectations, campaign insiders I interviewed cited the overall importance of critical comparison and defining an opponent in ways that reduce their appeal to voters. Whether described as drawing contrast, defining your opponent, or “critical campaigning,” few insiders said that pro-candidate messages alone can win an election, especially at the statewide level. Moreover, citing the importance of electoral context, practitioners for incumbent candidates in 2008 and 2010 described the importance of making their races choices between two candidates, not referendums on their candidates. To do so, their teams had to define their opponent early

and often as the wrong choice between two contenders.

The determinants identified by insiders of when, if, or how to “go negative” include a candidates’ position in the polls, tactics of an opponent, overall political climate, and an individual candidate’s psychology. Moreover, according to my interviews, the necessity for campaigns to draw contrasts can be tempered when external actors or organizations go negative on an opponent for them, allowing them to stay focused on a candidate-centered message while the contrast is still drawn (Kaid 2006). Financial constraints, too, play into candidates’ communication calculations, including the balance of positive and negative messages.

In this section, I focus on gender as an additional determinant of *if* or *how* candidates wage attacks on their opponents in mixed-gender or all-female contests at the statewide level. As I hypothesized, interviews with candidates and practitioners reveal differences in both the recommendations to and behaviors of male and female candidates in adopting negative tactics. More specifically, I find that women candidates face conflicting recommendations on how to best meet the character demands of their gender or of the office they seek. Male candidates, on the other hand, are nearly universally cautioned to tread carefully in attacking female opponents, though perceptions vary significantly on just how much caution is needed. In many of the cases I analyzed, the highest degrees of prudence were self-imposed by the male candidates themselves. Finally, consistent with my expectations, I find few differences in perceptions or execution of negative tactics by Republican and Democratic candidates and practitioners, and no significant differences across office type are evident from my analyses.

Unlike the scholarship that investigates the effectiveness of negative campaigning for electoral outcomes or its impact on voter engagement or perceptions, my findings highlight

an otherwise understudied intervening factor in campaigns' decision-making on negative tactics: candidates and campaign practitioners' perceptions of these tactics' effectiveness and appropriateness. These perceptions may conflict with scholarly findings or recommendations and, in some cases, may even differ between candidates and practitioners from the same campaign team. Therefore, while scholarship on negative campaigning has spent a great deal of time investigating best practices for men and women candidates, I offer insight into the factors most influential in determining actual practices by campaigns and demonstrate the important role of gender stereotypic perceptions on the tactical behavior and decisions of insiders. These decisions have obvious electoral implications, even if prevailing research offers few robust findings. Moreover, the utilization or tempering of negative tactics based upon gendered rules of engagement have implications for the gendering of campaign institutions.

*Women: Negotiating Gender and Office Expectations*

Republican media consultant Bill Kenyon told me, "From a woman's point of view, there's still the feeling that you want to be careful about the woman coming off as too harsh. And the male candidate's got to still be considered a gentleman, even more so when you have a female opponent" (Personal interview). Therefore, while they may face less of a blow from attacks against them, women may face greater criticism for going negative themselves. Hypotheses are multi-directional; while women may counter expectations of "niceness" by attacking their opponents, doing so may also develop their toughness credentials. Insiders I spoke with talked about the caution needed for women candidates in going on the attack. Addressing the balance between toughness and likeability discussed in Chapter 5, some practitioners noted that women must be cautious of tone and temperament in taking on their opponents. Oklahoma political analyst Sheryl Lovelady, also Director of the Women's



Leadership Initiative at the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center (University of Oklahoma), argued, “I think there’s a lower tolerance among the electorate for rough and tumble politics among women” (Personal interview). A Southern Republican consultant explained how his strategic approach toward negative campaigning would change with a female candidate: “You wouldn’t be so hard-edged as you probably [would with] a male... because there’s just an intrinsic... you want to like women and you kind of want to be scared of men” (Personal interview). Democratic consultant Sam Swartz described the fine line that women candidates walk in determining “how you deliver lines and how you talk in debates and how you can be confrontational and point out contrasts without coming across as bitchy” (Personal interview). Referring to her earlier campaigns with Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), campaign manager Rose Kapolcynzski cited the caution that her team used in talking about Boxer’s opponents: “We knew that some voters could see a feisty, aggressive woman elected official as shrill” (Personal interview). Even in 2010, Boxer’s media strategist, Jim Margolis, added he still offered one unique suggestion to Boxer before taking on her opponent in her first public debate, telling her, “Just be thoughtful of tone” (Personal interview). The interview subjects that identified a need for female caution were more likely to represent more conservative regions in the country, especially the South, though more data would be needed to establish this tie between regional cultures and tactical caution for women who run.

While women candidates may be at a disadvantage on the important dimension of likability if they attack their opponents, other scholars and practitioners note the importance of proving toughness and strength by engaging in critical campaigning. Across the cases I analyzed and interviews I completed, there is little evidence of women holding back an attack to maintain a feminine image and avoid the pitfalls of female aggression. And, while

Bystrom and Brown (2009) find that women candidates for statewide offices in 2008 were slightly more positive overall in advertising than their male counterparts, they were also more likely to wage personal (versus policy-based) attacks on their opponents when they did go negative. Democratic consultant and former DSCC Political Director Martha McKenna explained that, for women, taking on campaign opponents is *even more* necessary than it is for male candidates. She told me, “I actually think that for women candidates, voters need to see that they are willing to fight. ... Why would I think you’re going to fight for my family to make life better for us, if you’re not even willing to fight your opponent?” (Personal interview with Martha McKenna). Being “willing to fight” is particularly useful when women run against men, according to Gordon, Shafie, and Crigler (2003). They find that women candidates close perceived issue competency deficits when they attack male candidates on issues on which men are assumed to have greater expertise (Gordon, Shafie, and Crigler 2003). Finally, McKenna believes that women need to demonstrate they are not going to back down from a fight if they are the target of an attack: “If somebody punches you, you have to have swift and decisive punch-back action because it’s sending a signal to people that you’re not gonna get walked on” (Personal interview). In 2008, Governor Christine Gregoire (D-WA) prepared for a contentious re-match of the 2004 gubernatorial race with Republican Dino Rossi. Her campaign manager, Kelly Evans, noted, “We weren’t going to sit there and just be a punching bag” in 2008. She added that there was not much of a decision in whether or not the campaign would go negative, “We made a strategic decision early on that we were not going to take it. ... We hired people who weren’t afraid to get in a fight” (Personal interview with Kelly Evans). While insiders point to the need for women to fight back as a demonstration of strength that may not be otherwise assumed due to their gender, they also

feed into masculine conceptions of campaigning – as wars to wage and battles to fight – in framing women as contenders in the boxing rings of political campaigns.

This masculine rhetoric was upheld by women candidates themselves in some of their attacks against male opponents in 2010. Nevada Senate candidate Sharron Angle (R) and Missouri Senate candidate Robin Carnahan (D) participated in debates on October 14, 2010 in their respective states, and both called on their male opponents to “man up” on policy issues.<sup>13</sup> In Delaware, Republican Senate candidate Christine O’Donnell accused her primary campaign opponent of “unmanly tactics” and added on the Mark Levin Show, “Mike [Castle], this is not a bake-off. Get your man-pants on” (9/9/10). Attempts to emasculate male candidates are not new to political campaigns, as opponents and critics have long used these tactics to demonstrate candidates are not only ill-fit for office, but do not meet the demands/expectations of their gender (see Kimmel 1996). In 2010, these comments were particularly unique because they came from women candidates. Political communications scholar Kathleen Hall Jamieson commented on political demands for manliness in 2010 by saying, “The danger is it will be heard as being glib and unaccountable, a sly means of trying to accomplish something without providing evidence you meet the same standard.”<sup>14</sup> For women candidates, meeting that “manly” standard is particularly problematic.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, while this rhetoric was not widespread, it upholds a gender power imbalance where candidates’ credentials for office are based on their ability to meet expectations of masculinity. These examples, while potentially being viewed as positive signs of women’s entry into a man’s world, demonstrate women’s adaptation to a masculine arena instead of their challenge to it via campaign strategy, rhetoric, and tactics.

Some insiders I spoke with argued that this demand for masculine behavior would be removed in races with only female contenders. However, evidence from the all-female

statewide contests in 2008 and 2010 shows that the underlying institutional demands of gender are not removed when women traverse campaign terrain. Instead, women candidates continue to face conflicts between gender role expectations and tactics deemed necessary for campaign competition. In the 2010 U.S. Senate race in California, Boxer (D) and Fiorina (R) did little to temper negative tactics and, moreover, did not avoid gender-tinged attacks. While both women focused primarily on each other's professional records and flaws, neither side was hesitant to hit hard. In painting Boxer as a Washington insider, for example, Fiorina's campaign also sought to challenge her likeability in an advertisement where Boxer is shown asking a military officer testifying before her to address her as "Senator," not "ma'am." Fiorina's media consultant, Bill Kenyon, admitted of the ad, "One of the best things you can do in politics is try not to create a wave, but ride a wave that's already out there. ... There is a sentiment out there that [Boxer] is a bit overbearing and strident in her approach to political life. [So] that one wasn't as hard to imagine" (Personal interview). Even as another woman susceptible to a similar caricature, Fiorina did not hold back in mining that gendered vein of attack. This case – along with other examples in 2008 and 2010 – demonstrates that woman-woman races are not void of negative tactics, especially where competition is strong and the demand for contrast is high.<sup>16</sup>

While the demand for contrast in the 2010 gubernatorial contest in Oklahoma may have been high among some insiders, the woman-woman race for governor was never very competitive and, as a result, rarely contentious. Some practitioners on either side pointed to the lack of negativity as evidence of the difference women make in campaigning. Fallin advisor and appointee Major General Rita Aragon noted, "Both women said from the outset, 'We will be ladies about it. We will not get into any mudslinging. We will not fall off that integrity piece'" (Personal interview). Askins advisor Michelle Tilley Johnson added that

the two women candidates were always very cordial with each other and “less combative than the guys” (Personal interview). Though this may be evidence of challenging the way political business is typically done to accommodate feminine models of campaigning, it may also demonstrate gender-based demands that constrain women to “appropriately-feminine” behaviors, especially in settings where they are not taking on men. Democratic candidate Jari Askins described her own fear of fueling perceptions of a “catfight” among two female candidates: “[I] had seen... the really adversarial debates that were going on with some women-on-women and some just women candidates. All I could think of [was] I did not want it to look like we were in some kind of catfight” (Personal interview). Her campaign manager added, “I think there’s a gender concern with two women being in the race. You cannot have something turn into - for lack of a better term - a ‘catfight’” (Personal interview with Sid Hudson).

The ease in which a woman-woman race can fall into that trap was evident in Oklahoma, despite efforts to stay “above the fray” on both sides, when Mary Fallin’s comments regarding motherhood started a national debate over using motherhood and/or sexuality as a site for contrast in political campaigns (see Chapter 5).<sup>17</sup> While the Askins campaign worked to use this attention to their advantage by painting Fallin’s comments as unfair and even discriminatory, it distracted attention away from the substance of the campaign. Finally, while Askins noted her hope to keep the campaign positive amongst contenders, she added that her team had always expected assistance in highlighting Fallin’s flawed record from external groups like the Democratic Governor’s Association. Though she never received that help, Fallin’s lead was largely locked in by the early and steady negative advertising by the Republican Governor’s Association on her behalf. Therefore, even in a case where negativity among two women was low, the deciding factors of the race

may have still been based upon hard contrasts drawn by outside forces.

These cases demonstrate that aggressive approaches or tactics are not lost in woman-woman races, but women candidates and their teams are still cognizant of how their behaviors might be differently interpreted or received by voters and political observers. Whether expected to act “like ladies” or perceived as being engaged in a “catfight” once any contrast is drawn, the expectations of femininity for women candidates are not lost, and may even be amplified, when two women dominate the political scene. Moreover, the institutional demands for contrast and competition still present a disjuncture with feminine expectations where two women compete.

*Men: Treading Carefully?*

Consistent with my expectations, interview subjects noted that norms of appropriate behavior are particularly gendered in mixed-gender contests where male candidates seek to contrast their female opponents. While some insiders or candidates may call on male candidates to prove their manliness in campaigns, practitioners I interviewed were much more likely to argue male candidates need to appear as gentlemen when campaigning against female opponents. Though some analyses of campaign output demonstrate that “chivalry is not the order of the day” for male candidates (Bystrom and Brown 2009; Sapiro and Walsh 2002), other studies have found that male candidates are more reluctant to campaign negatively – at least directly – against women, recognizing the interaction between expectations of gender roles and candidates’ likeability (Fox 1997; Kahn 1993). In my survey analysis and interviews, practitioners and candidates reported that male candidates are not unable to attack female opponents, but they should at least adapt their negative tactics when running against women. In other words, gender does not determine *if* male candidates can or cannot go negative against their opponent, but it influences *how and where* they draw contrasts

with caution to stereotypical gender expectations. This finding evidences the utility of investigating internal campaign decision-making versus output alone. In doing so, I am able to identify the strategic influence of gender stereotypes, even where few gender differences are evident in output or impact.

While few insiders argued that male candidates cannot attack female opponents, they offered multiple sites for caution and tactical advice for men to adapt attacks to differently gendered terrain. First, practitioners emphasized the need for male attackers to watch for overly masculine rhetoric and tone in drawing contrasts. Secondly, they described the increased danger of attacking women on personal over professional issues. Finally, insiders noted that dangers of direct attacks against women are amplified most in interpersonal settings where voters are most attune to how gendered images fit with candidates' behaviors, or in primary contests where a woman candidate is the sole woman amidst multiple men. Their responses also reflect the self-imposed hesitancy of some male candidates, for whom gender ideals of chivalry and fears of appearing sexist yield overly cautious tactics of contrast, according to strategists. To avoid backlash to their attacks, practitioners instead referred to many of the rules they use in all comparative advertising and strategy: base attacks in truths, target attacks on professional actions and positions, and let your opponent speak for themselves – crafting attacks directly from their comments wherever possible. With male versus female contests, they claimed employing surrogate attackers is also beneficial, and male candidates should be particularly careful of comments or behaviors that may be perceived as sexist by female constituents.

Finally, some practitioners argued that this caution or constraint is removed once female opponents demonstrate their toughness on the trail. National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) Executive Director Rob Jesmer explained, “I think if the woman runs

an equally aggressive campaign then you don't have to really think [it through] as much" (Personal interview). He referred to the 2010 Missouri Senate race as an example: "[Robin Carnahan] ran a very, very tough negative campaign. And so that makes it easier for us [to] get the gloves off" (Personal interview with Rob Jesmer). One Democratic consultant described a contest in which his candidate's female opponent was well-recognized as being "tough-as-nails," allowing his male candidate to "[run] over her with a tank" (Personal interview). The pre-requisite of female toughness for male aggression both reflects upon and influences the gender dynamics within political campaigns as it demonstrates the maintenance of institutional constructs of gender regarding male strength and feminine vulnerability. In a masculine arena where men are presumed to be protectors of women, they must be careful in appearing to attack them (Duerst-Lahti 1997; Young 2003).

Democratic media consultant Ann Liston identified the contrast between the violent language used in political campaigns and perceptions of femininity, advising, "When you are attacking or contrasting with a female candidate, I do think you need to be very careful about the language you use and the tone in which you do it" (Personal interview). That sensitivity to rhetoric goes beyond violent language, as Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard (D) learned in 2010 after he referred to his opponent, Governor Jan Brewer (R), by calling her "poor lady" in responding to her complaints about the Arizona state budget. Goddard described being "blasted" by voters, especially Brewer's female supporters, for making a supposed sexist comment. As a result, he noted, "a significant part of debate prep was sort of what not to say so that you didn't appear to be bullying or over-reaching" (Personal interview with Terry Goddard). Overall, he concluded, "I didn't pursue the attack," even if that led to his electoral demise (Personal interview). While some practitioners would argue that Goddard's approach was too cautious, they identified the importance of



“thinking it through” when being aggressive toward female opponents. Republican pollster Glen Bolger believes that the “worst thing a man can do is appear condescending” when running against a woman (Personal interview).<sup>18</sup> While humor can often fall into this trap of appearing condescending, some practitioners argue that male candidates are best advised to attack female opponents in “cheeky” ways to defuse perceptions of masculine aggression while still outlining contrasts critical to their campaigns.

Attacking a female candidate is also particularly challenging in primary contests where there are multiple men and only one woman. Republican consultant Whit Ayres advised, “You don’t want to be seen as ganging up on a woman, particularly if there’s several other male candidates in the race” (Personal interview). In no 2010 case was this more apparent than in the South Carolina gubernatorial primary. When two different men made allegations of adultery against the only woman in the race – Nikki Haley, the practitioners involved were unsure of what to expect. While they knew that male candidates in her situation would have likely been forced to drop out of the race, the terrain was uncharted with a female candidate. Due to both the unequivocation of her response and the reactions of voters, Haley emerged as not only unscathed, but even bolstered by the supposed scandal. South Carolinians were not only skeptical of the allegations against Haley, but perceived them as tactics by the “good ‘ol boys” against the sole woman. A Republican consultant in South Carolina commented that this perception “played right into [Haley’s] narrative” (Personal interview). Moreover, it paralyzed the campaigns of her male opponents, whose strategists described their belief that attacking Haley in any way post-allegations would be viewed as bullying by a group of men.

Haley’s top political advisor, Jon Lerner, noted that the difficulty for her opponents to go on the offensive was enhanced significantly by the personal nature of the allegations

against her. Maisel (2002) describes personal attacks as entering a “zone of privacy” perceived as off-limits by many voters. Similarly, Kaid (2006) finds that negative ads are more effective if they stick to issues rather than personal aspects or images of an opponent (90). Kahn and Kenney (1999) point out that “[t]he experts who produce negative ads are well aware of the fine line between legitimate criticism and harsh and shrill information that is only tangentially related to governing” (878). This fine line often divides public and private lives of candidates. Describing the propensity for backlash to personal attacks, Democratic campaign manager and consultant Rose Kopolczynski explained, “There are several ways that a personal attack can backfire. One is if you are so over-the-top you create sympathy for the person being attacked; if it’s overtly personal some voters can feel it is inappropriate [and] not really relevant to their proponents in office” (Personal interview). Another former consultant said that personal attacks are rarely viewed as credible and usually backfire, but also added, “if you do it to a woman, it can really blow up in your face” (Personal interview with Sheryl Lovelady). In Oklahoma’s 2010 Republican gubernatorial primary, candidate Randy Brogdon described his attacks on Congresswoman Mary Fallin as focused only on her policies and political record, adding that gender was “always a thought on my mind” in deciding which attacks were off limits (Personal interview).

Even those skeptical that going negative is risky against women cited one other site where attacks of any type are perceived differently for male and female candidates: in interpersonal settings like debates, interviews, and forums. Though he argued that going negative against women is “a much exaggerated issue or concern,” a Democratic strategist provided one exception in debates, where he felt “the line may be generically in a slightly different place” for men and women candidates (Personal interview). Pat McCrory, 2008 North Carolina Republican gubernatorial opponent to Democrat Bev Perdue, called this the

“fine line” in debates, adding, “I think the only time you thought about gender was at the debates – if you went on the attack at all that it could be seen as mean-spirited” (Personal interview). Multiple candidates and practitioners from 2008 and 2010 contests provided examples of this type of sensitivity, from Roy Blunt’s restraint in the 2010 senatorial debates in Missouri to Terry Goddard’s admission of holding back in the 2010 Arizona gubernatorial race against Jan Brewer. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Goddard described sitting across from Brewer and added, “It really looked like you were beating up on a woman, and I tried to be very conscious of that in the debate and was significantly restrained” (Personal interview). Whether they would advocate this degree of restraint or not, the practitioners with whom I interviewed at least recognized the need to consider gender in taking on female opponents, especially in face-to-face settings and on issues deemed personal.

Their own beliefs aside, candidates and campaign practitioners also noted the role of male candidates’ personal discomfort with attacking a woman. Goddard’s description of his caution against Jan Brewer demonstrated some of this discomfort. He elaborated, “I certainly felt that the kind of aggressive follow-up and questioning that would have been normal in a give and take among men probably was not seen as appropriate when it was an older woman and I was on the other side of the table” (Personal interview). Republican consultant Terry Sullivan described an even clearer example of candidates’ personal preference in the case of Gresham Barrett, opponent to gubernatorial candidate Nikki Haley and resistant to any negative attack against her. Sullivan explains that as a citadel cadet, “that’s just not how [Barrett] was taught to treat a lady” (Personal interview). In New Hampshire’s 2010 Republican primary for the U.S. Senate, Ovide Lamontagne avoided much of the negativity of which Kelly Ayotte and Bill Binnie were engaged. One of his top advisors did not cite gender as a factor in this choice, but said, “You know, we made a

conscious decision that we were going to be above the fray and be the guy that everyone knew Ovide to be, which is a gentleman” (Personal interview). Whether regional or generational, these perceptions amongst candidates themselves inform the ways in which gender influences their campaign tactics and decision-making – whether determinative to electoral outcomes or not. Moreover, they demonstrate a site for gender-role conflict for male candidates in campaigning against women, one that evidences the gendered dimensions of campaign institutions and challenges candidates to decide if they will behave in ways consistent with campaign norms or replicate gendered ideals of chivalry and masculine protection. Finally, these interview findings demonstrate the value of probing campaign insiders directly about strategy and tactics, as they reveal the influence of internal thinking and perceptions of gender on campaign decisions. In studying output alone or testing the utility of negative messages in similar situations, scholars disregard the important intermediary of insider beliefs and preferences on whether or not and how campaigns address their opponents.

#### *Universal Rules of Engagement*

Finally, practitioners and candidates I interviewed outlined four major guidelines for avoiding backlash in running against men *or* women candidates. First, base all attacks in truth. Democratic consultant Mary Hughes described her firm’s criteria as based upon three questions, “Is [the attack] factually accurate? Is it relevant to this race? And, is it fair?” (Personal interview). A Republican consultant added, “I think there’s some [gender] sensitivity [in going negative], but I think it more revolves around what the issue is and whether it’s justified” (Personal interview). Second, practitioners note the benefit of sticking to professional critiques over personal attacks, noting the high propensity for backlash when politicians invade opponents’ private lives. Third, candidates contrast best when they let

their opponents speak for themselves. Democratic strategist Jim Margolis described how using opponents' own words and actions in negative advertisements or communications gives them greater credibility and believability to voters. And, finally, many practitioners cited the utility of using surrogates to wage attacks for men or women. By deterring direct attacks, candidates can protect their likeability among voters. The most common surrogates in modern negative campaigning are outside groups and independent expenditures that are nearly entirely used to oppose a candidate instead of supporting another. While they may be interpreted differently when waged on behalf or against male or female candidates, the direct use of men and women messengers to be the face or voice of an attack brings additional gendered dimensions to waging an attack. Though both men and women candidates can maintain greater likeability by allowing others to deliver the attack, women risk succumbing to perceptions that they are weak and may actually receive some greater benefit than men in attacking directly, especially if in response to an opponent's hit.

Overall, candidates and practitioners make clear that highlighting contrasts between candidates is a vital service of political campaigns. It is *how* you do it that matters most, especially in mixed-gender contests. Democratic consultant Mary Hughes concluded, "It's possible to [wage a negative campaign] in a respectful way that is not an attack on someone's family, persona, character. You can be critical or factual without being disrespectful. ... It's just that doing it well is often a challenge" (Personal interview). As this analysis makes clear, "doing it well" is a particular challenge when the gender dynamics of campaign terrain are altered so that the prevailing masculinity of waging attacks is disrupted by the entry and engagement of female actors.

## **Discussion**

In Chapter 5, I examined the gender dimensions of strategic development of candidates' campaign image and message. In this chapter, I investigate when, how, and to what degree gender informs two tactics by which that image and message are communicated to voters: direct appeals to women voters and negative campaigning. I begin by outlining campaigns' perceptions of women voters and tactics deployed to appeal directly to them. Consistent with my initial expectations, I find that most interview subjects identified some electoral incentive for targeting women voters. I outline the electoral motivations of men, women, Democrat, and Republican candidates in female voter mobilization. In doing so, I offer support for my initial hypotheses that these appeals would vary in type and purpose across candidates' gender and party. I define two concepts of appeals to women to best outline my findings: compensation and amplification tactics. Based on evidence and insider perceptions of gender affinities, compensation tactics reflect men's efforts to undermine women's natural advantage with women voters in mixed-gender contests by utilizing gender-based messages and messengers. These tactics are more often utilized by Democratic men in my analyses, for whom female voters are an important electoral base. Moreover, male candidates perceived these tactics as more necessary and effective in mixed-gender contests than did their campaign teams, who identified a tendency for male candidates to overcompensate for women's perceived advantage among women voters.

The partisan differences in gender-based appeals for male candidates are consistent with strategic calculations of compensation, as Democratic men face a potentially greater electoral deficit if they lose women voters' support. Male Republican candidates, on the other hand, may be more likely to concede women's votes when confronted with Democratic women opponents who receive the greatest degree of women voters' support. However, as insider perceptions and electoral examples demonstrate, the presence of female

contenders in campaigns alters the territory on which and tactics by which campaigns are waged for male candidates. More specifically, male candidates' decisions on whether or not to mobilize women voters and how to make gender-based appeals reflect their perceptions of gender complexity and calculations in electoral campaigns.

Amplification strategies, on the other hand, encompass women candidates' tactics to capitalize upon – or amplify – their support among women voters via empathy or identity-based appeals and assurances of issue expertise. By investigating these strategies and tactics in 2008 and 2010 and noting aspects of their utility and futility, I challenge simplistic notions that women vote for women or women vote for Democrats and offer findings that better highlight the interaction of party and gender in women's campaign appeals to women voters. Unlike their male counterparts, female candidates and their teams were more consistent in noting a potential electoral benefit for gender-based appeals across party lines. While some Republican interview subjects described their motivation or expectation for women's cross-over votes for women candidates, interviews and campaign evidence from 2010 contests showed that Republican and Democratic women candidates were identifying and working to mobilize different groups of women voters that best aligned with their ideological beliefs. Finally, contrary to my expectations, few practitioners identified history-making appeals as beneficial to women candidates. In 2010, where a Republican tide and economic turmoil dominated campaign dialogues, few insiders felt or found that a gender-based appeal on making history would yield any positive electoral impact.

In the second part of this chapter, I focus on the need for candidate contrast in campaigns, investigating the gender dynamics of “going negative” for men and women candidates. While arguments are made to the contrary, few campaign practitioners would argue for or could envision a political environment void of negative tactics. Consistent with

my initial expectations, candidates were more likely to oppose negative tactics in principal than the campaign practitioners with whom they worked, though they were rarely less likely to actually employ those tactics in practice. Moreover, candidates and their teams identified greater utility, or need, for negative tactics in competitive contests versus uncompetitive races.

Despite this persistence of negativity across races, candidates, practitioners, and scholars did point to gender-based constraints on negative behavior. Based upon my interviews and analyses of campaign evidence, women candidates' tactical decisions over "going negative" are undeniably influenced by candidates' and practitioners' perceptions of voters' stereotypical expectations of women. Those expectations, still rooted in ideals of femininity and likeability, are inconsistent with institutional expectations of candidates engaged in competitive contests that necessitate hard contrasts and tough tactics. As interview evidence provided in this section shows, practitioners and candidates are split in how they translate those perceptions into campaign tactics. While some practitioners maintained that women reduce electoral risk and unfriendly caricatures by avoiding negative attacks, others argued that leaving the fight to male contenders feeds into preconceived notions of female weakness or victimhood. Overall, the women candidates I analyzed in 2008 and 2010 engaged in negative campaigning to similar extents as their male colleagues with little backlash, and there seemed to be little difference in the negativity of races where two women competed, holding factors like competitiveness of race equal.

Gendered perceptions were similarly influential in interview subjects' perspectives and decisions on male candidates' ability to "go negative" against female opponents. While no interview subjects argued that male candidates could not attack women contenders, they universally offered caveats on when, where, and how men should engage in negative tactics



in mixed-gender races. As I expected, these sites for caution are tied to perceptions of gender stereotypes – whereby men are masculine protectors and women are most often the protected parties. Moreover, consistent with my initial expectations, male candidates’ perceptions differed, at least slightly, than their campaign teams. Both my interviews with male candidates and with campaign practitioners evidenced the influence of candidate psychology and perceptions on campaigns’ tactical decisions, with male candidates often demanding greater caution in attacking female opponents than their campaign teams advised. Whether due to ingrained ideals of appropriateness and gender relations or electoral calculations based on anticipated voter reactions, the decisions that male candidates make in engaging female opponents have implications for perpetuating or disrupting the prevailing gendered rules of engagement in today’s campaigns.

Overall, in 2008 and 2010 interviews, candidates and practitioners repeatedly cited ways in which candidate gender tempered their decisions on when, how, and why to target women voters and how to go negative, especially in mixed-gender contests. In addition to the gender of candidates and opponents, they identified the influence of other contextual factors on tactical choice and execution. These include candidate and/or practitioner party, candidate psychology, competitiveness of contest, candidate status, and state and national political climate.

Similar to prevailing scholarship on targeting and negative campaigning, these findings present no magic bullet or universal rules of the game, especially as they relate to gender dynamics. Instead, they demonstrate the importance of investigating candidate communication tactics in specific electoral contexts and from inside of campaigns. My findings confirm that campaigns’ most important players – candidates, consultants, campaign managers, and party committee leaders – make tactical recommendations and

decisions based upon perceptions of gender norms and stereotypical expectations of voters. Therefore, investigating those perceptions is vital to research on campaign practice and highlights the important role that insider beliefs and behaviors have on candidate communications and, ultimately, electoral success.

## **Conclusion**

These tactical choices also have institutional implications whereby the choices candidates and their teams make in navigating gendered terrain can either adapt to the rules of the game or offer new ones for men and women candidates. First, assumptions of gender-based affinities between women voters and women candidates are often, even in my interviews, overstated. As practitioners identified, male candidates' attempts to compensate for a perceived female advantage with women voters are often based more on stereotypical expectations than electoral precedent. Moreover, as was evident in my findings among women candidates, partisan dynamics and contextual factors interfere and interact with gender in shaping voters' preferences and selections. In analyzing these findings, I argue that institutional evolution along gendered dimensions is best advanced by recognizing the diversity among women voters and considering appeals to women voters as part of campaigns' universal appeals instead of separate strategies to compensate for or amplify women's perceived stereotypical advantage among women voters.

Instead of isolated appeals to women as a bloc, campaigns' efforts to attract women's support on multiple dimensions and ability to address the diversity among women offers promise toward revaluing gendered credentials of office and redefining women voters in ways that reflect the complexities assumed for their male counterparts. In this chapter, I presented some evidence that insiders identified differences between women in gender-based appeals, like those coming from Sarah Palin or EMILY's List, but more could be done

to better address the uniqueness in bases of women's support. As candidates and their teams calculate the electoral implications of mobilizing women voters, they might also look beyond woman-centered messaging to not only consider women voters' expansive priorities, but also the benefit of emphasizing so-called "women's issues" and "women-friendly" credentials for office in appeals to the entire electorate. Finally, while current analyses show that male candidates are more likely to appeal to women voters when facing female opponents, greater institutional change would be evidenced if and when the diversity of women voters, the issues they deem important, and the credentials they seek in officeholders, are recognized as important in all electoral contests – regardless of candidate gender. Mainstreaming the content of gender-based appeals revalues those issues and credentials most often attributed to women. Moreover, moving from compensation to revaluation has the potential to shift gender power within campaign institutions to better balance masculinity and femininity.

Gender power dynamics are also shaped by candidates' and campaigns' decisions on tactical approaches to candidate contrast. While both men and women candidates are often faced with contrary advice for if, when, and how they can wage negative attacks on their opponents, especially in mixed-gender races, these recommendations are often rooted in gender role expectations and masculine demands of competition. Interview subjects' caution against women's aggression upholds stereotypical norms of femininity, while those advocating tough tactics and rhetoric urge women to adapt to the masculine arena of campaigns instead of challenging it. Interview subjects offered more consistency in advising male candidates to take caution in attacking female opponents due gendered perceptions of appropriateness. In their analysis of gender and campaigns, Witt, Paget, and Matthews (1994) write that political men "fawning chivalry" when engaging female opponents is dangerous to women candidates and officeholders, as it perpetuates the existing imbalance of gender

power in political institutions (66). Democratic consultant Mary Hughes offered an alternative recommendation for male candidates fearful of backlash in going negative against female opponents. She explained:

I think people do their best when they adopt a sort of gender neutral sense of respect for the person they're running against. ... I think that male opponents do best when they say, 'This is a worthy opponent; this is a person for whom I have regard; a person whose integrity I respect and that's how I'll compose myself' (Personal interview with Mary Hughes).

Instead of highlighting sites for male caution, perpetuating ideals of male chivalry, or emphasizing areas where women can display either strength or softness, she points to the universal rules detailed above over gender-specific constraints on contrast tactics. These universal guidelines represent a foundation for alternative rules of engagement so that men and women are held to shared standards of competitiveness defined not by gender but by mutual respect. Observing future mixed-gender campaigns may provide greater understanding of how "ready" campaign observers are to see women not only make, but also take political punches, and how likely it is that men can and/or will trade chivalry for equitable contrast of male and female opponents. Both behaviors have implications for the potential leveling of campaigns' gendered terrain.

In considering implications of campaigns strategic and tactical decisions beyond winning or losing, I challenge scholars, practitioners, and candidates to disrupt the gendered regime in modern campaign strategy and communication tactics by adopting alternative measures for strategic development and success. To develop a campaign institution where gender power is no longer rooted in masculinity, those who navigate campaign terrain must help create and implement new rules of engagement that do not uphold gender advantages or disadvantages, but, instead, embrace gender diversity in the path to electoral success.

Heeding Burton and Shea's (2010) caution about the homogenizing effect of adopting the

same “tricks of the trade” from campaign to campaign, I argue that alternative approaches to strategy and tactics are necessary for institutional disruption. The next, and final, chapter of this project outlines what these alternative measures for strategic development and success might look like from theory to practice.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I rely upon interviews with a total of 82 candidates and practitioners from 25 U.S. Senate and gubernatorial campaign contests in 2008 and 2010, with the bulk of interviews completed between February 2010 and January 2011. In addition to these interviews, I draw upon evidence from each campaign – from advertisements and websites to news and commentary. These additional data both supplement interview findings and strengthen evidence in cases where interviews were unavailable.

<sup>2</sup> Noting the complexity within her previous findings, Dolan’s (2008) more recent analysis reveals, “Women voters do feel positively toward female candidates, but these warm feelings are often based on considerations beyond a shared sex identity. Indeed, it appears that women often evaluate female candidates through the lens of political party” (87).

<sup>3</sup> Some scholarly evidence supports these beliefs that women’s advantage among women voters sometimes transcends partisan allegiances (Fox 1997; Dolan 2004; King and Matland 2003; Sanbonmatsu 2002). However, other analyses report that the partisan cross-over of women’s votes may still benefit Democratic women more than Republican women candidates (Brians 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Using experimental data, they find that negative advertisements are less effective at depressing evaluations of woman candidates than of men (Fridkin, Kenney, and Wooddall 2009). They explain, “The presence of gender stereotypes appears to soften the blow of negative attacks, leading people to discount attacks on women candidates, compared to identical attacks on male candidates” (Fridkin, Kenney, and Wooddall 2009, 70).

<sup>5</sup> While this section outlines the way that women candidates work to augment their support, insiders also described the advantages women candidates had with little effort on their part and due to the affinities assumed among women voters.

<sup>6</sup> A 2010 Lake Research Partners survey done for the Center for Community Change and the Ms. Foundation for Women found that men and women voters were both focused on the economy in 2010. However, women’s economic hopes and/or demands were centered on economic security while men’s economic concerns centered on economic opportunity. More specifically, the survey showed that women pick security over opportunity 70 percent to 29 percent, compared with 54 percent to 43 percent among men.

<sup>7</sup> This demand may be best exemplified by Republican efforts in the 2008 presidential election to appeal to disaffected women voters who had supported Democratic primary candidate Hillary Clinton. While the McCain campaign did not overtly endorse their selection of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as McCain’s running mate as an effort to appeal to women voters, few practitioners or political observers would argue that gender was absent in

the campaigns' strategic thinking. However, reactions to Palin's selection quickly highlighted the danger of treating women voters as a uniform bloc, as many women took offense to the assumption that they would support Palin due to gender alone and regardless of her strong social conservatism. Though Sarah Palin's gender-based appeal among conservative women (and men) voters emerged over the course of the presidential campaign, that support could be clearly distinguished across party lines.

<sup>8</sup> Twenty-seven of Palin's 65 endorsements in 2010 were of women candidates. Out of 13 Senate endorsements, 4 were of women. Out of 11 gubernatorial endorsements, 5 were women.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. 2008 Democratic gubernatorial candidate Beverly Perdue's campaign advisor, Mac McCorkle, said, "We were torn about how much to play up 'making history.' Others got it. We didn't have to advertise because she was a woman." When asked about the excitement among voters on Election Day, Perdue did say: "Just thinking about being a woman is important. I haven't run simply because I'm the first woman candidate running, but I hear it everywhere I go. Little girls and little boys, just say, 'wow, is it possible?' So yeah, it's exciting, mighty exciting" (WRAL, 11/5/08).

<sup>10</sup> In 2010, 11 Senate contests had at least one woman in the general election. In 7 of those contests, the female candidate would have made history as the first woman in Congress (Iowa, Delaware), the first woman in the U.S. Senate (Nevada, Colorado, Ohio), or the first Republican woman in the U.S. Senate from their state (California, New Hampshire). There were 7 general election contests for governor with at least one woman candidate in 2010. In five of those states (South Carolina, New Mexico, Florida, Oklahoma, California, and Maine), women had the potential to be the first woman governor of their state; women did make history in this capacity in three of these states in 2010 (South Carolina, New Mexico, and Oklahoma) (CAWP 2011).

<sup>11</sup> The small number of responses regarding women's history-making appeals makes it difficult to decipher differences in effectiveness across office type or party. Future analyses might consider whether women running for governor gain greater traction on this dimension than women running for legislative posts like U.S. Senator or U.S. Representative due to the historical dearth of women in states' top executive office.

<sup>12</sup> See Sanbonmatsu 2003

<sup>13</sup> See Danny Yadron, "2010 Election Catch Phrase? 'Man Up!,'" *Wall Street Journal*, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2010/10/15/2010-catch-phrase-man-up/> (accessed 7/26/11).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> One campaign manager in a U.S. Senate contest commented on the double standard of using this rhetoric in mixed-gender campaigns: "Wait a minute for a second here. If I told you to straighten up your skirt I'd get beaten up for being anti feminist" (Personal interview).

<sup>16</sup> In 2008, two women candidates – Republican incumbent Elizabeth Dole and Democratic challenger Kay Hagan – competed in North Carolina's race for the U.S. Senate. In the final days of the campaign, Dole's campaign hit Hagan in a highly controversial ad where they characterized Kay Hagan as "godless." Hagan's response was strong, immediate, and direct –

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demonstrating that neither woman was unwilling to or incapable of waging attacks or counterattacks.

<sup>17</sup> The morning after Fallin described how her role as a mother would bolster her capacity to serve as governor, television and print commentators were quick to respond. From *The View* and *Good Morning America* to the *Huffington Post*, and *Politics Dailey*, many women and pundits were quick to editorialize the incident and what it meant for women and campaigns.

<sup>18</sup> One of the most recent examples of this occurred during a Democratic presidential primary debate in 2008, when then-Senator Barack Obama told Hillary Clinton, “You’re likeable enough, Hillary” in response to a question about her perceived “personality deficit.” Journalist Richard Cohen called it a “patronizing dismissal of Clinton” and Clinton supporters accused Obama of sexism in the tone and substance of his response.

## CHAPTER 7: ON HER OWN TERMS - SHIFTING GENDER DYNAMICS IN CAMPAIGN INSTITUTIONS

This project began with a question posed by Jeanne Kirkpatrick in her 1972 text *Political Woman*. In that piece, Kirkpatrick asked what “conventionally well-behaved ladies” could do in the masculine arena of politics. Research since then has asked “how women exist in a male-dominated system” and how they find success within it (Dolan 2008, 123). In concluding this project, I argue that campaign scholars and practitioners alike should push further to consider how women candidates can disrupt the masculinity of politics instead of adapt to it en route to electoral success. As gendered institutions within which “constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture or ‘logic’” of their function, campaigns provide a site for more in-depth analysis of how this disruption might occur, with particular attention to the role of campaigns’ most intimate players: candidates and campaign practitioners (Krook and Mackay 2011, 6).

Beckwith (2005) explains that gendered institutions have the potential to be “re-gendered,” and I focus here on the internal processes capable of such re-gendering. I ask if candidates and their campaign teams can redefine what it means to be a candidate and officeholder so that women are not simply asked to uphold a male model. Moreover, does women’s entry into and performance within campaigns re-gender the institution so that men, too, alter their performance and valuations of gender in strategies they develop and deliver? Together, my survey and interview findings help to shed light on these questions and provide examples of ways in which candidates and campaign practitioners redefine or replicate the gender order in campaigns via campaign strategy. In campaigns, redefinition and replication occur on two levels: addressing the ideal imagery and attributes of candidate and officeholder, and meeting gendered expectations prescribed by individuals’ sex. Challenging the masculinity of political offices, and the credentials required to hold them,



evidences a route toward redefining gender in campaigns so male and masculine are not the only “appropriate” traits for success. On the contrary, adapting to the masculine environment of campaigns by demonstrating women’s toughness and downplaying femininity only replicates the masculine ideals of the institution. Moreover, redefining the imagery and attributes of an ideal candidate and officeholder today means not only changing the literal face of power, but marketing traits and attributes formerly undervalued in political leaders as worthwhile, including those traits and attributes most associated with femininity and women.<sup>1</sup> Both male and female candidates and their teams have the capacity to redefine institutional gender norms and imagery of ideal candidates and officeholder through the strategic decisions they make – from the traits they emphasize as qualifications for office to their performance of gender throughout the campaign. As I described in the previous chapters, campaigns’ capacity to disrupt or maintain these ideals of gender and candidacy represent the “unintended outcomes” of campaign decision-making too often underexplored in both scholarship and political practice. However, the potential for re-gendering campaigns has significant and long-term implications for women’s inclusion into the political sphere and for disruption of the established gender order.

After reviewing the findings on campaign insiders’ perspectives and behaviors presented in this volume, I return to the theoretical arguments of feminist institutionalism and outline tenets – both theoretical and practical – of a transformative agenda for shifting gender dynamics in campaign institutions so that women (and men) can enter them on their own terms.

## **Review of Findings**

Campaign strategy is governed by perceptions; those drafting campaign strategy base their decisions on perceptions of voter beliefs and demands, and voter expectations are

rooted in conceptions of ideal candidates or officeholders and stereotypic views of gender. Not only do these perceptions confirm that campaign institutions are gendered, as I argue, but they also provide insight into whether or not and in what ways gender influences strategic development and the sites wherein gender power is held in campaigns. In the previous chapters, I presented numerous findings on insider perceptions of gender and their influence on strategy and tactics. After presenting my theoretical framework, methodological approach, and research questions in Chapters 1 and 2, I presented original research in Chapter 3 from my national survey of political campaign consultants. In that survey, I found that campaign consultants evaluate voter beliefs with recognition of their gender stereotypic perceptions of candidates. In other words, survey responses revealed sites of strong and persistent gendered expectations among voters on candidate traits, issue expertise, and behavior. These evaluations influence strategic recommendations consultants make, based on survey responses whereby those reporting gender differences in perceptions described gender variation in strategic benefits or approaches.

However, consultant perceptions are not universal; individual actors' identities and experiences shape their evaluation and negotiation of campaign terrain. In survey responses, Republican consultants were less likely to report gender differences in voter perceptions or strategic approaches and, according to a preliminary analysis, women were slightly more likely than men to identify gender-based beliefs, challenges, and beneficial behaviors in today's campaigns. Furthermore, consultants' identification of gendered dynamics weakened from their perceptions of voter beliefs to their evaluations of strategic benefits. While this at least partly reflects respondents' hesitancy to recommend strategy without knowing the unique political context, it may also reveal the degree to which practitioners translate

gendered perceptions into strategic behavior and/or the persistent belief among many practitioners that voters' gendered perceptions are not determinative of electoral outcomes.

In *Campaign Craft*, Burton and Shea (2010) write, "A discussion of political strategy is largely meaningless until the context is understood – until the things that cannot be changed are distinguished from the things that should be" (33). To better account for unique campaign settings in evaluating gender influence, I took an in-depth look at strategizing in 2008 and 2010 statewide mixed-gender or all-female races in Chapters 4 through 6. Moving beyond an analysis of campaign consultants alone, I interviewed campaigns' major strategic players – candidates, campaign managers, campaign consultants, and party committee directors – about their experiences, perspectives, and decisions throughout the campaign. These chapters are based on two general premises: (1) campaigns are dynamic phenomena whose complexities yield both scholarly and institutional opportunity; and (2) campaigns matter, and they matter for reasons beyond winning or losing.

In Chapter 4, I evaluated campaigns' dynamism by outlining the major factors influencing electoral outcomes, according to interview subjects, in 2008 and 2010 statewide races. Interview subjects from those races emphasized the important influence of political climate, campaign strategy, media, money, and political parties in shaping campaigns' strategies or success. While few interview subjects mentioned gender as a top-of-mind determinative factor in their races, I probed them directly on the ways, if any, gender mattered in their campaigns. They described gender differences in voter perceptions, beliefs, and demands on candidates, in addition to institutional hurdles that are often unique for men or women candidates. However, many of these responses only emerged after an initial rejection of gender influence, or were tempered by insiders' statements about the magnitude of gender effects in campaigns. Candidates and their campaign teams emphasized how

gender influence was mitigated by unique political environments, neutralized by candidate characteristics and strategy, or transcended by cultural progress and women's political equality in particular states. Finally, and unsurprisingly, candidates and campaign practitioners focused on a narrow definition of campaign effects – those determining victory or defeat - that rarely considered the institutional impact that campaign choices and behaviors can have, especially in maintaining or disrupting the prevailing gender order.

Krook and MacKay (2011) counter the claim that women's numerical equality in politics means gender neutrality in institutional processes. They write, "Because 'gender' is a social construction, simply attending to the status of women in politics can only describe gendered patterns of access. It [cannot] capture the gender norms and discourses that underpin institutional dynamics" (3). I am better able to capture these gendered dimensions of campaigns by probing campaign insiders more deeply throughout interviews to reveal the sites where gender does emerge as influential in campaign processes, even if it is not (directly) determinative in electoral results. In addressing gender power inequity in campaigns, claiming gender neutrality or equality – or focusing on electoral outcomes alone – masks underlying gender dynamics that encourage men and women to play to stereotypical norms of behavior. At least one campaign practitioner emphasized the need to move "beyond" gender so as not to reinforce these norms. I argue, however, that the goal is not to move beyond gender or to seek gender neutrality, but instead to disrupt the existing gender order so that valued traits, expertise, and imagery are not those most associated with men and masculinity. Additionally, I urge campaign actors to consider the institutional implications of their decisions; the images they put forth, messages they adopt, and tactics they espouse have the potential to replicate or redefine expectations of ideal candidates and officeholders, and traditional gender norms. Acker (1992) argues, "Understanding how the

appearance of gender neutrality is maintained in the face of overwhelming evidence of gendered structures is an important part of analyzing gendered institutions” (568). Beyond recognizing the tendency for insiders to focus on electoral outcomes alone, I move toward greater understanding – and contending - of perceptions of neutrality in Chapters 5 and 6.

In the final two chapters of this volume, I detailed campaign insiders’ discussions of gender when I probed them more specifically about strategic development and tactical choices in their campaigns. When asked about gender dynamics within these processes, candidates and practitioners were much more likely to identify sites for gender consideration or influence in decision-making on candidate images, messages, and tactics. Their responses reveal that general perceptions of gender are altered when campaign insiders are asked to analyze campaign dynamics at a more specific level, and at an earlier stage of strategic development instead of electoral results. This finding has methodological implications, as it should urge scholars to investigate campaigns at their earliest stages instead of focusing only on campaign output as an indicator of strategy. Moreover, this approach evidences the contributions made to campaigns and gender scholarship by analyzing the expertise and insights of campaigns’ most intimate actors – enriching literature that analyzes gender strategy from campaign output by better identifying the mechanisms and decision-making processes that move candidates and their teams from evaluating public perceptions and demand to providing campaign supply – or output – via strategic plans.

Candidates and their teams described a gendered environment in today’s campaigns that mirrors some of the dynamics Jeanne Kirkpatrick reported nearly 40 years ago. In *Political Woman*, she writes:

A woman is confronted with special requirements and problems: a special need to demonstrate her seriousness and qualifications; a special problem of establishing competence; a special need to be assertive without being aggressive; perhaps a special need to convince voters that service in the legislature will not entail neglecting her family.

Women candidates and partisans may find these specific requirements objectionable and onerous, but they are real; they must be dealt with in the course of a successful campaign (Kirkpatrick 1972, 99).

In Chapter 5, I reviewed interview responses about women's need to balance masculine and feminine traits and expectations, the challenges women face in demonstrating policy credentials and issue expertise, and gender differences in how candidates can and should, according to insiders, navigate the particularly gendered terrain of family and appearance in campaign imagery and messaging. I found that candidates and campaign practitioners identify "special requirements and problems" similar to Kirkpatrick's for women navigating these realms of candidate presentation, and they offer strategies by which women can adapt to the masculine ideals of office-holding while upholding or capitalizing on feminine expectations of their gender.

For example, candidates and their teams described the additional effort they expended to assure voters of women's preparedness for the job of officeholder. In explaining the ways in which they credential women – from using male surrogates and endorsers to dedicating greater energy to substance in campaign materials and communications, campaign insiders both evidence and reinforce the higher standards set for women within an institution where they remain "other" instead of the ideal. Even the most basic efforts to assure voters that women are "suited" for office – encouraging women to adopt a campaign uniform in order to communicate authority and diffuse attention paid to appearance – perpetuate an image of candidate that fits the male model. Instead of asking women to "suit up" for battle in campaigns, insiders should consider how women candidates could offer alternative images of politicians that are not uniformly suited by masculinity, but challenge deeper demands of masculinism with the most surface alterations of candidate images and appearance. Finally, candidates' and their teams' efforts to reassure voters of

women's suitability for office often coincide with reassurances of their femininity. Particularly in addressing candidates' personal lives, insiders outlined challenges faced by unmarried or childless candidates – particularly women – who do not meet societal norms of their gender roles. From suggesting these candidates surround themselves with children to recommending campaign messages explaining her single or childless status, practitioners' strategic recommendations reinforce heteronormative expectations of gender. Consistent with Banwart and McKinney's (2005) evaluation of women's "gendered adaptiveness" strategies, these approaches attempt to compensate for gender-specific challenges without challenging their stereotypic and institutional foundations.

Some of this stalled progress is due to gender dynamics in the broader cultural environment, persistence of gender stereotypic beliefs among voters, and slow inclusion of women into the political sphere. However, I argue that campaign insiders play a role in determining the degree of progress in public perceptions of gender and identifying and/or creating sites for disruption of entrenched gender norms and expectations. Chapter 5 outlined some of these sites for institutional change. First, while some practitioners maintain that women face a higher bar in demonstrating they are tough enough for political office, candidates in 2008 and 2010 offered alternative ways to communicate toughness that better accommodated women's experiences. Consistent with recent research that voters' concerns have shifted from displays of toughness to demonstrations of strength (*Turning Point* 2011), women offered personal stories of overcoming obstacles or fighting for families as indicators that they were ready to advocate on constituents' behalf in public life. Moreover, they highlighted unique expertise and sites for experience on today's most salient issues that could be valued in the political realm. Candidates and their teams were also less likely to consider family images as liabilities for women candidates than in elections past. While women

continue to face different questions about children and spouses, women in recent elections provide evidence of using their families as assets, even if they did so differently than their male counterparts. Whether due to a realigning of public and private roles in society at large or a revaluing of credentials in the political sphere, women candidates appear to face fewer constraints from motherhood than were previously evident in both voter expectations and candidates' comfort with applying their private roles to public life. Finally, while practitioners and candidates emphasized the persistent and disproportionate attention to women's appearance on the campaign trail, some women candidates offered alternatives to the campaign uniforms prescribed for women candidates. Instead, they described and put forth new images of candidates that have the potential to disrupt gendered perceptions instead of working to neutralize them.

Candidates or practitioners did not universally endorse these potential sites for gender disruption, nor did they describe them as void of voter criticism. However, if adopted as alternative approaches to candidate presentation, these strategies might alter voter expectations of ideal candidates, and women candidates, going forward. They also offer male candidates new sites for strategic engagement, image creation, and message development that differ from traditional masculine models of leadership and candidacy. As I describe later in this chapter, these slight changes in candidate presentation styles and substance have the potential for more significant, long-term change. Moreover, they are part, even if minor, of a transformative agenda for shifting gender dynamics and power distribution in political campaigns.

In the final substantive chapter of this volume, I noted that probing campaign insiders more deeply on gender dimensions of campaigns reveals that gender not only informs how campaign teams decide to cultivate candidate images and messages, but also



influences the tactics by which candidates communicate those images and messages to the public. In Chapter 6, I focused on two particular tactics that candidates and campaign practitioners emphasized most when asked about the influence of gender in campaigns' tactical decisions: direct appeals to women voters and negative campaigning. I find that insiders' decisions on when and how to adopt these tactics are informed by candidate gender, though in different ways for men and women. Differences in tactical execution are also evident by candidate party and ideology, especially in candidate appeals to women voters – who are more often Democratic.

First, in analyzing interview subjects' discussion of direct appeals to women voters, I assessed men's tendency toward compensation and women's efforts toward amplification. More specifically, male candidates, especially Democrats, described efforts to compensate for a perceived advantage of their female opponents with women voters: securing endorsements by women's groups and prominent women leaders, using spousal surrogates, and reclaiming policy territory voters may view as better addressed or understood by women. Beyond evidencing the importance of women voters to all candidates in today's electoral context, this attention to gender demonstrates how the landscape on which campaigns are waged shifts for all actors when women enter it.

While male candidates sought to defuse it, women candidates and their practitioners described efforts to amplify gender-based affinities with women voters, often with little effort needed by the candidate or campaign. Amplification efforts include: direct appeals on "women's issues," evoking empathy, employing female messengers, and highlighting their potential to make history. Candidates perceived these tactics as beneficial more often than campaign practitioners, who explained the overriding influence of the economic climate in universalizing voter demand across gender, the ineffectiveness of identity-based appeals in

2010, and the caution that men and women must take in approaching women voters as a singular bloc. I elaborate on this need for caution and urge scholars and practitioners to consider the ideological diversity among women voters and to incorporate the issues and attributes emphasized in gender-based messaging into campaigns' mainstream appeals, instead of separate from them.

In the second tactic addressed in Chapter 6, candidates and campaign practitioners universally emphasized the importance of drawing contrast with a political opponent in order to reduce their appeal or create doubts among voters. Though they differed in how they defined a contrast-based approach, insiders described negative campaigning as necessary in today's elections. They cited candidates' position in the polls, tactics of an opponent, overall political climate, and individual candidates' psychology as important determinants of when or if a campaign should or does "go negative." Additionally, candidates and practitioners alike identified gendered dimensions of negative campaigning, explaining how gender-based expectations of behavior influence voter reception of negative tactics. First, women candidates face conflicting recommendations on how to best meet the character demands of their gender or of the office they seek in drawing candidate contrast; while some insiders cautioned that aggressive women might be viewed poorly, others argued that women must demonstrate they are ready to fight to reassure voters they meet the demands of the offices they seek. Though some practitioners echoed Kirkpatrick's call for assertion without aggression in 2008 and 2010, women in the statewide contests I analyzed seemed to find little deficit (and actual benefit) from taking on their opponents directly – and not just when their opponents were men.

For men, however, running against women brings additional hurdles in going on the attack, according to insiders. In my survey analysis and interviews in Chapter 6, practitioners

and candidates reported that male candidates are not unable to attack female opponents, but they should at least adapt their negative tactics when running against women. In other words, gender does not determine *if* male candidates can or cannot go negative against their opponent, but it influences *how and where* they draw contrasts with caution to stereotypical gender expectations. First, practitioners emphasized the need for male attackers to watch for overly masculine rhetoric and tone in drawing contrasts. Secondly, they described the increased danger of attacking women on personal over professional issues. Finally, insiders noted that dangers of direct attacks against women are amplified most in interpersonal settings where voters are most attune to how gendered images fit with candidates' behaviors, or in primary contests where a woman candidate is the sole woman amidst multiple men. They also identified the self-imposed hesitancy of some male candidates, for whom gender ideals of chivalry and fears of appearing sexist yield overly cautious tactics of contrast, according to strategists. Regardless of the degree to which they said it mattered, candidates and practitioners alike reported that negative tactics presented a site whereby male candidates confront incongruent expectations of their gender performance.

Though insiders outlined unique considerations that male and female candidates should or do make in waging attacks, they also provided more general rules of engagement for negative campaigning: base attacks in truths, target attacks on professional actions and positions, and let your opponent speak for themselves – crafting attacks directly from their comments wherever possible. These universal rules veer from the more overtly gendered standards of appropriateness that guide, and constrain, candidate psychology and behavior. Moreover, applying universal rules instead of gender-based expectations bodes better for institutional change whereby male candidates are not constrained by expectations for chivalry and women are not viewed so swiftly as victims. Finally, I argue that it is at least

partly up to candidates and their campaign teams to provide alternative models of appropriateness in not only contrasting opponents, but also throughout the images, messages, and tactics they choose.

In the remainder of this conclusion, I return to the claims, questions, and agenda of feminist institutionalism to offer analysis of campaigns' gender regime and an agenda for disrupting its norms, expectations, and models of appropriate imagery and behavior.

### **A Feminist Institutional Approach and Agenda**

Mackay (2011) describes feminist institutionalism as “an approach with considerable potential to enhance our understanding and analyses of institutional dynamics, gender power, and the patterning of gendered inequalities in political public life” (192). Lovenduski (2011) adds, “feminists bring to the study of institutions a specific lens that makes visible constitutive, gendered power relations and the processes that support or undermine them” (xi). She adds that feminist institutionalism is a “reminder” to institutionalists to realize the importance of gender relations in the configurations of institutions (Lovenduski 2011). In this project, I provide a similar reminder to scholars and campaign practitioners alike by not only exposing the gendered dimensions of campaign strategizing, but urging analysis of how campaign actors negotiate those gendered dimensions and considering what their decisions mean for institutional replication or change. Lovenduski (2011) writes, “When feminists adopt institutionalist research strategies that include gender, they seek to illuminate and change the status of women” (vii). I argue that the change in the status of women and the distribution of gender power within campaigns is at least partly shaped by the decisions made by those navigating campaign terrain. In other words, I highlight the constitutive relationship between individual actors – candidates and campaign practitioners – and institutions, whereby the decisions of institutional actors have the potential to reinforce or

re-imagine institutional ideals of candidates, officeholders, and gender. In this way, campaigns have effects beyond winning or losing; instead, campaign decision-making has long-term implications for creating campaign institutions in which men and women candidates can enter, engage, and succeed on their own terms, instead of on the gendered terms defined by masculinity and established by men.

In this dissertation, I argue campaigns are gendered institutions characterized by gendered relations of power, gendered culture and symbolism, and a pattern of gender arrangements that inform behaviors of male and female actors (Connell 2002). The prevailing gender order “consists of collectively constructed values and principles that are protected and maintained by accepted rules of the game” (Lovenduski 2011, viii). As institutionalists note, this order relies on a logic of appropriateness whereby the accepted rules of the game and norms of behavior provide institutional stability. In 1972, Kirkpatrick wrote, “Simply by virtue of announcing their political candidacies, women have been challenging the traditional [masculine] image of who is appropriate to govern” (34). Women continue to challenge images of appropriateness in politics by their presence alone, but my analyses demonstrate that more work needs to be done to understand and develop alternative models of appropriateness in campaigns. As Thomas (1997) notes, it is only through redefinition – of gender norms and the norms of officeholding – that women can cease to be “apart from the norm” (49). This redefinition includes “alternative role development” for women candidates that neither replicates the male model nor relies on traditionally female roles.

Below, I outline a preliminary agenda for fostering alternative roles and challenging the status quo in campaign institutions to encourage revaluation along gendered lines and uncover sites for redefining instead of replicating gender norms and expectations in today’s

elections. I also note the limitations of research presented in this volume and offer sites for future research that takes a feminist approach to studying political campaigns.

### Institutional Redefinition: Toward a Transformative Agenda

According to Grossman (2009c), “[Campaign consultants] have legitimated their role in campaigns by advancing a simple service ethic: they help candidates win elections” (101).<sup>2</sup> This emphasis on winning or losing is inherent in the competitive institution of campaigns. However, I argue that campaign insiders – consultants, managers, and candidates themselves – do more than win (or lose) elections; they engage with and influence institutional norms and ideals of gender and candidacies. Explaining the need to play to gender norms in strategy, one campaign practitioner I interviewed told me, “I’m not a social change agent here. I’m a campaign manager, and I got to win” (Personal interview). In this conclusion, I argue that candidates and their teams do – in fact – have the capacity to make lasting social change, despite their focus on immediate electoral victory. By offering, shaping, and applying new rules of engagement in political contests, in addition to bringing new voices into the decision-making process, campaigns’ most prominent actors can put forth and advance a transformative agenda that has long-term implications for disrupting institutional gender norms with some short-term benefits in shifting values and images of officeholders. While less directly, this process has electoral effects in opening campaigns to new types and images of candidates, particularly across gendered lines.

By offering routes for institutional change from the inside-out, I describe an incremental process and progress. Duerst-Lahti (2002) affirms, “Institutional assumptions and preferences can be altered every day, through small but persistent changes, which is not a trivial matter” (385). Whether it be bringing small children on the trail or offering alternative qualifications for political office in candidate messaging and presentation, the

strategic decisions that campaigns make can provide these small and persistent forces of change. Krook and Mackay (2011) outline a model of “bounded innovation” in institutions whereby “periods of institutional reproduction overlap with moments of institutional creation” (13).<sup>3</sup> Mackay (2011) further describes processes of institutional lock-in and innovation: “Already existing institutional structures to some extent ‘lock’ actors on certain paths. However, this does not preclude action and still leaves scope for innovation” (186). It is that innovation – especially on the part of internal actors - that transforms the largely informal gendered constraints “embodied in customs, traditions, and codes of conduct” of political campaigns (North 1990, 6). I offer five specific steps toward institutional innovation below, arguing that these tenets of a transformative agenda are worthy of greater consideration and application by scholars and practitioners alike.

### *1. Insiders’ Awareness*

Internal campaign actors must bring a full understanding of campaign contexts and countervailing forces at play, including gender’s function within electoral contests, to achieve electoral victory. Like policymakers who must define a problem before determining a policy solution, campaign practitioners negotiating campaign terrain must define the prevailing gender order of the political landscape before determining best practices in navigating it. Moreover, identifying gendered dimensions of campaigns – instead of discounting their importance – is necessary in yielding a complete understanding, and subsequent reimagining of campaign institutions. Duerst-Lahti (2002) explains that attention must be paid to “the gendered worldview implicit in the institutions” in order to directly address it or mobilize for change (384). On a more concrete level, Democratic consultant Mary Hughes reminds practitioners to “give gender its due” in strategizing to fully understand where campaigns can create competitive advantages (Personal interview). Finally, after noting that women’s

behaviors, images, and messages, are judged differently than men, Democratic consultant Ann Liston told me, “I think part of our challenge is just to be conscious of it, and not to overcompensate” (Personal interview). Therefore, whether for electoral goals of victory or institutional efforts toward change, campaign insiders must take note of the gender dynamics at play in the institutions in which they work.

Throughout this project, but especially in Chapters 3 and 4, I provided a measure of campaign insiders’ perceptions of the prevailing gender order in campaigns. In Chapter 3, I outlined consultants’ perceptions of gender stereotypic beliefs among voters and illuminated the degree to which consultants view gender as an important factor in campaign strategizing. In finding variation among consultants’ responses in these areas, I discussed the potential implications for alternative views of campaigns’ gendered dimensions. First, in a political climate where voter beliefs vary by candidate gender, consultants who amplify, underestimate, or misread voters’ gender stereotypes might miss important opportunities to best negotiate campaign terrain for optimal electoral outcomes. In other words, strategic approaches are strengthened when insiders evaluate the multiple and often clandestine ways in which gender beliefs and expectations influence voters. However, it is not simply knowing what voters think or expect of gender that makes for effective or innovative strategy – and it may often be that these two attributes do not coincide; falling into gendered rules of the game instead of offering new ones can be just as replicative as overlooking that they are gendered at all. Therefore, in Chapters 4 through 6, I investigated insider perceptions further – tying them to strategic behaviors and institutional and electoral impact. I emphasized that it is not only important for campaign actors to be conscious of voters’ gendered expectations and institutions’ gendered dimensions, but it is also vital that they consider steps toward



disrupting that prevailing gender order in order to yield long-term change and a more equitable distribution of gender power.

In *Campaign Craft*, Burton and Shea (2010) write, “A wise strategist knows that any [campaign] plan is only as good as its assumptions, and that assumptions can be wrong” (31). I challenge campaign insiders to not only re-evaluate their own assumptions of gender, but also consider routes toward challenging gendered assumptions of voters and political consumers through the strategic decisions they make. Burton and Shea (2010) add that consultants who use “the same tricks of the trade” have a potentially homogenizing effect on American politics (214). It is those candidates and practitioners who offer more nuanced understanding of gender and alternative (innovative) approaches to candidate image, message, and tactics that will have a transformative effect on campaigns, instead of a homogenizing one.

## 2. *Professional Inclusion*

Throughout my findings, I described the partisan differences in insider awareness of or attention to gender in strategizing, with Republican practitioners and candidates being more likely to describe campaign terrain and voter perceptions as gender neutral. Democratic insiders, on the other hand, more frequently outlined gender differences in voter perceptions and – subsequently – strategic advice. However, as I mentioned above, it is not only recognizing gender dimensions, but also determining how best to navigate them, that influences the degree to which campaign strategies are electorally successful and/or institutionally disruptive. Chappell (2006) identifies “gender equality entrepreneurs” as ideal sources of institutional innovation and political change in her analyses, and it is those entrepreneurs that I believe are necessary to build and enact a transformative agenda for gender and campaigns. These entrepreneurs need not view gender as determinative in

campaigns, nor should they identify gender neutrality as an institutional goal. Instead, they should offer alternative perspectives on strategizing for men and women candidates that redefine expectations of gender and officeholder instead of adapting to them.

Though gender equality entrepreneurs among professionals might come from multiple backgrounds, ideologies, demographics, and genders, I contend in this dissertation that bringing more women into the profession of campaigns is an important step toward internal understanding, recognition, and redefinition of the prevailing gender order. Female consultants, campaign managers, and candidates offer new perspectives and fresh insight into political campaigning, inclusive but not limited to addressing gender dynamics.

In interviews with candidates and campaign practitioners, I asked about the differences women offered to strategic perceptions and approaches and female insiders were quick to note the benefit of gender diversity on a campaign team. Democratic consultant Diane Feldman explained, “Women function differently on the team. They bring different things to the table. They bring different ideas to the table. [They bring] different relationships with the client to the table” (Personal interview). Other female consultants I interviewed cited an “emotional lens” that women bring to messaging, alternative – and more nuanced – approaches to candidate contrast, different sites for attention in campaign images, and recognition of candidates’ (and campaign teams’) conflicting demands of personal and professional life. They provided examples of where their perspective challenged male colleagues’ assumptions about women voters or gender-based appeals, and some women added that their passion for electoral victory was amplified even more in races where they could advance women in government. Like women in politics, female practitioners remain far underrepresented in campaign institutions, and the dearth of their presence in political practice both enhances their consciousness of gender and their considerations of

how to best navigate it in order to challenge institutional norms instead of simply adapting to them.

Finally, it is not only women who have the potential to bring new faces to the campaign profession and new perspectives to political strategies. The campaign profession remains lacking in racial diversity as well, and often depends on life-long “politicos” who adhere to strategies and approaches that have led to electoral victories in the past. Especially related to the intersectional influence of race and gender for voters and candidates, the critical dearth of women of color in the campaign profession is particularly limiting to the perspectives and experiences brought to strategizing. As many insiders I spoke with noted when asked about the uniformity among campaign professionals (and the candidates for whom they work), diversity at the strategic table brings numerous advantages to any campaign, especially in efforts to appeal to broad and diverse constituencies. Moreover, that diversity may offer innovative approaches to campaigning that neither replicate male models or create female ones, but instead offer alternative routes toward electoral victory and institutional navigation.

### *3. Internal Disruption*

Professional inclusion and gender equality among entrepreneurs are potentially effective routes toward disruption of campaigns’ gendered norms from the inside out. More than their presence, however, it is their behaviors and decisions that can develop alternative roles, images, and gender attributes for candidates. Specifically, practitioners’ and candidates’ willingness to challenge prevailing institutional norms of masculinity is vital to redefining gender in campaigns so that men and women can offer unique styles of leadership, campaign messages and images, and tactical approaches to campaigns that are deemed equally appropriate for political office and similarly likely to be exercised or adopted by men or

women. In her interview with me, a female gubernatorial candidate said, “The goal of equality should be for [gender] to be a difference, but not an issue” (Personal interview). U.S. Senate candidate Jennifer Brunner (D-OH) added, “Women have made a mistake over the years in thinking that they have to [campaign] exactly like a man would to be equal. ... We don’t have to do it on their terms” (Personal interview).

Throughout this dissertation, I have offered some examples or recommendations for internal disruption of institutional gender norms and expectations. I review each of those recommendations here. First, I contend that female candidates and their teams should be careful not to reinforce or adapt to masculine models of campaigning. Instead of working to be “like men” in the credentials women seek, issues they emphasize, or traits they adopt, candidates and campaign practitioners should better integrate women’s unique attributes and experiences into strategic plans and personas. This redefinition of candidates’ qualities for success is not only influential for women who run, but for male candidates who are offered new sites for electoral engagement and alternative routes to success. In waging campaigns on their own terms instead of masculine ones, candidates do not neutralize gender, but challenge gender expectations that are ripe with constraints of both masculinity and femininity. This includes perceived constraints on men in running against – or contrasting – female opponents. In Chapter 6, I argued for alternative models of appropriateness in campaign tactics that are based on beliefs about fair sites for and sources of candidate contrast and competition instead of gendered expectations of traits and behaviors. In adopting these models, campaigns have the capacity to move the site for evaluation and tactical execution to one where competition is not perceived as solely a performance of masculinity.

In addition to challenging masculine models of competition, I argue that disrupting campaigns' gendered expectations means challenging strategic tendencies to determine whether women benefit more from playing up feminine advantages or from reassuring voters of their masculine credentials. Campaign scholars and practitioners have long analyzed whether "running as women" or adapting to masculine politics is more effective in leading women candidates to electoral victory.<sup>4</sup> Even in this project, I considered practitioners' discussion of an effective balance between masculinity and femininity in modern campaigns. Despite the electoral implications associated with candidates' performances of masculinity and femininity, I contend that a truly transformative approach to campaigns would consider how to best disassociate these traits from ideals and expectations placed uniquely on men or women, or inherent in images and personas of candidates and officeholders. In concrete terms, men need not only benefit from perceptions of toughness, women need not only benefit from empathetic or authentic images, and candidates need not only embody masculinity in order to appease voter expectations and institutional norms. While candidates may benefit from advantages on attributes influenced by their sex or gender, re-gendered campaign institutions would offer these advantages across candidate gender and would revalue traits, issue expertise, and attributes expected of candidates to permit alternative models of appropriateness and electoral success.

This revaluation is evident in masculine realms other than politics – like business – where inadequacy of and frustration with the status quo has led internal actors to seek and value alternative qualities of leadership like compromise, inclusion, transparency, and calculated risk-taking – all qualities more often associated with women. In the current political context, similar frustrations with the persons in power offer campaigns sites by which they can give honesty, integrity, authenticity, and newness greater value in campaign

strategizing than those traits more associated with men and masculinity. In addition to offering new traits for leadership, campaigns can offer alternative sources of desirable traits that may be more inclusive of women's experiences.

Finally, I argue that redefining gender in campaigns necessitates insiders' and scholars' attentions to diversity among and between men and women. In reporting my findings and analyses, I emphasized partisan and ideological differences, especially among women candidates, as disruptive of prevailing gender expectations in today's campaigns. Women's ideological diversity evidences the need to challenge gender-based generalizations and to consider the unique attributes of different types of men and women, based on experiences, identities, and ideologies they bring to campaigns and elections. For male candidates and their campaigns, this means infusing greater complexity in gender-based appeals. It also means looking at women voters as multi-faceted instead of a uniform bloc with solely gender-based interests, concerns, or demands. In doing so, candidates and campaign professionals can contribute to institutional change by infusing those issues, credentials, and tactics typically targeted to women voters in appeals to the entire electorate. In essence, these strategies better address and integrate the nuances of gender (of candidates and voters) in campaign strategy, instead of maintaining feminine messages, tactics, traits, or appeals to women as separate or "other."

#### *4. External Pressures*

Institutions scholars note that institutional change results from both external pressures – like societal change – and internal disruption (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). While this project focuses most explicitly on the role of candidates and campaign professionals in providing institutional disruption from the inside, I offer external pressures as another tangible step toward transforming the gendered institution of campaigns. Most importantly,

I argue that internal disruption and external change are inter-related, as internal efforts to adopt alternative strategies for success and models of appropriateness can influence societal perceptions of gender and candidates. Moreover, external pressures on campaigns can induce strategic change to meet newly gendered realities.

In this project, I described some external pressures perceived by campaign insiders as influential in electoral outcomes, from the dominant influence of the economic climate to regional gender norms. The most recent examples of corruption and scandal among male politicians of both parties and overall voter frustration with politics and the status quo also provide external impetuses for change in what voters' demand in the candidates seeking office. While these external pressures do not necessarily have a universally transformative effect – focusing on economic credentials *could* reinforce masculine ideals of issue expertise or experience, and adapting to regional gender norms does little to disrupt them – they do provide potential sites for institutional change, especially in how internal actors choose to react to and address them via campaign strategy. For example, in 2008 and 2010, women candidates offered diverse sources of economic expertise – from leading large companies and financial institutions to relating their ability to balance a family budget to balancing the budget of a state or nation. Similarly, while practitioners cautioned that progressive images of female candidates might face greater criticism in more traditional regions or states, the possibility of environmental change – brought potentially by simply seeing women, and mothers, in leadership – offers an external force for redefining institutional norms and insiders' negotiation of campaign terrain.

External pressures are not only brought by broader social trends or environmental change, but actors external to specific campaigns might also provide impetus – or even permission to alter campaigns' gendered terrain. In the statewide races I investigated, insiders

explained the influence of political parties, external funders, women's organizations, and media as influential actors in campaigns' victory or defeat. In addition to influencing electoral outcomes, these actors – sometimes directly influential in internal decision-making – can also spur institutional change. For example, Ann Liston described the institutional impact of EMILY's List for gender in campaigns:

It has literally changed the face of power and it continues. It had a phenomenal impact, I believe, on female candidates, on male and female voters and how they perceive female candidates, and in the operative world of bringing into the political bloodstream... generations of political female operatives (Personal interview).

As I argued in Chapter 4, organizations like EMILY's List have shifted gender power dynamics in today's campaigns, especially on the Democratic side, to give female candidates greater legitimacy and viability among voters and insiders. However, their influence on internal strategizing and decision-making presents mixed evidence of institutional transformation. As the women candidates I interviewed noted, there is still room for greater progress among the strategies they adopt and tactics they recommend to women candidates to further alter institutional expectations instead of working to meet them. The same is true for other organizations committed to advancing women in politics, especially those who offer strategic advice and guidelines for women's campaign strategies and tactics.<sup>5</sup> In outlining the "Key's to the Governor's Office" or steps toward the U.S. Senate, these entities need to reflect not only on the electoral implications of their recommendations, but also on the institutional environments that their guidelines promote.

Like EMILY's List, other external funding organizations play significant roles today's high-cost campaigns. Furthermore, it is often these outside organizations that play most directly into blatant stereotypes, or even sexist attacks, on behalf of the candidates of their choice. While not directly tied to strategies adopted by internal campaigns, the decisions and approaches of outside organizations often reinforce gendered dimensions of campaigns



instead of challenging them. In contributing to the culture of campaigns, these organizations could better disrupt gender ideals by avoiding gender-based attacks and/or touting new credentials and attributes for candidates and officeholders. Party committees and organizations have similar influence in shaping messages and imagery via independent expenditures. However, parties also play a more internal role in campaign strategizing when working directly with candidates. As I argued in Chapter 4, there are multiple sites for parties' environmental influence on the gendering of campaigns, starting with candidate recruitment and continuing with strategic support and resource allocation throughout the campaign process. Finally, parties provide another site for disruption among actors themselves, as the dominance of male leadership only perpetuates gender disparities in institutional power and influence. Bringing women into decision-making roles in all aspects of electoral politics – including party leadership – presents additional opportunities for unique perspectives on gender and alternative approaches toward its negotiation in campaign strategy.

##### *5. Redefining Victory: The long-term investment of institutional change*

Each of these steps toward a transformative agenda for campaigns emphasizes institutional versus electoral outcomes. While campaigns are motivated by victory alone, I contend that a long-term investment in institutional change and innovation translates into beneficial electoral effects. In other words, altering the gender power dynamics in campaigns will better position female candidates to run and win, in addition to providing alternative sites for credentials, attributes, and engagement for both men and women candidates. In re-gendered campaign environments, victory results from institutional disruption – over adaptation to institutions' gendered norms. Moreover, by providing greater diversity in what and who is deemed electable in today's campaigns, candidates and their teams may provide

sites for strategic success that exist across – instead of uniquely in - campaign contexts.

While it is naïve to believe that campaign professionals will be guided by goals other than electoral success, I contend that promoting disruption of gendered political institutions like campaigns will provide a greater long-term electoral return on investment than simply adapting to gendered expectations in each election cycle. This long-term investment can be made through the steps I offer in this section – from greater awareness among and inclusion of internal actors, to specific sites for disrupting gender norms from internal and external forces and actors. While seemingly small steps in and of themselves, the cumulative effects of these changes in environment, behavior, and power distribution in campaigns can yield significant institutional redefinition and disruption so that men and women can enter, engage, and win campaigns in ways alternative to those guided by gender-based constraints.

### **Research Limitations and Future Sites for Study**

Focusing on the institutional, over electoral, outcomes of campaigns is both a strength and limitation of this project. While the normative purchase of my analysis is significant and has potentially long-term implications for transforming gender dynamics in political campaigns, this study does less to meet the demands of the persistent push for predictive or prescriptive analyses of paths to electoral success among both scholars and practitioners. Though I highlight the translation of theory into practice and the impact of institutional disruption on electoral outcomes, future analyses of this type might expand the study of internal decision-making by tying it more directly to campaigns' electoral effects. For example, are those campaign practitioners and teams that display greater consciousness of gender stereotypes or dimensions, and draw upon those perceptions in strategic practice, more or less likely to wage successful campaigns for men and women candidates? Moreover, are strategies that redefine instead of replicate or adapt to gender expectations able to

simultaneously produce electoral victory and institutional change? Or are these processes mutually exclusive in electoral practice? More comprehensive data could better answer these questions, though this study provides a foundation for understanding how internal perceptions and behaviors in campaigns may matter in shaping external results. In this way, I have provided an exploratory approach to an understudied phase of campaigns and an often-overlooked population of political actors. Future analyses could provide fuller analyses of how perceptions of insiders translate into electoral output, and what impact that output has on both voters' gendered perceptions and candidate choice. Future scholarship should also attempt to provide even more systematic investigations of gender dimensions throughout the campaign process – from recruitment and early strategic planning to campaign output, candidate presentation, and voter reaction and results. In these analyses, scholars should consider how or if insider perceptions can be better measured or isolated against other intervening factors in campaigns' strategic development and effects. One of the more important intervening factors in campaigns' capacity for strategic communication is the media (Kahn 1996; Falk 2010), and it is one given little attention in this study. Investigating campaigns' strategies for addressing media, especially gender biases therein, would further enrich the study of how – and to what effect – campaigns negotiate gendered terrain in campaign institutions in light of other institutional actors.

Broader analyses of electoral outcomes and gender-informed strategies may also provide greater generalizability or predictability in their findings, a desire of much political science literature and, more recently, of scholarship directly focused on gender and campaign strategy (see Harrell 2010). However, this project is rooted in a feminist institutionalist framework for explaining institutional gender dimensions, replication, and change. As Mackay (2011) outlines, “The goal [of feminist institutionalism] is not to generate broadly

generalizable theories, but instead to identify mechanisms that have explanatory purchase across different settings” (194). Highlighting the role of internal actors and the interaction of gender with the most identified factors influential in campaign outcomes represent some of these mechanisms of institutional maintenance, explanation, or disruption across political contexts. Lovenduski (2011) adds that institutionalism is focused on explanation over prediction. She writes, “Feminist political scientists want to discover and explain gender effects in political life, a project that inevitably leads them to focus on how political institutions are formed and sustained and how gender is embedded in them” (Lovenduski 2011, viii). In this dissertation, I have sought to do just that – investigating and explaining how campaign practitioners both perceive negotiate gendered terrain of campaigns and what impact their perceptions and decisions have on the short and long-term gendering of campaign institutions.

While the explanatory purchase of this study is significant, even greater insight could be provided by expanding the sites for analysis to more types of electoral contests. Studying races for the U.S. House of Representatives or even state legislatures, in addition to including male-male contests for comparison of gender performance and perceptions, would further enrich the comparability within this study and the capacity for contrast among electoral contexts and campaign dimensions. As findings from this study show, more analysis of differences between executive and legislative contests – especially the gendered expectations therein – is also possible in deciphering unique gender dynamics across campaign types. Additionally, there remain significant sites for greater investigation of partisan differences among and between men and women, and for analysis of the intersections of racial and gender stereotypes within campaign institutions, with special attention to how those dynamics are addressed in strategy. Though this study emphasizes

campaigns as gendered institutions, images and experiences of non-white actors within campaign institutions remain alternative to the expected norms. Like gender, disruption of racial dynamics are evident from the local to presidential level in U.S. politics, though understanding the sources of institutional progress is most complete when scholars and practitioners can consider the intersection of race and gender in meeting and/disrupting institutional expectations of appropriateness for candidates and officeholders.

Finally, this study provides initial evidence that insiders' identities and experiences – especially among campaign consultants and campaign managers – may have institutional effects. Future scholarship must take campaign practitioners seriously as political actors in order to fully understand campaign processes and effects. Likewise, I argue that integrating campaign scholarship and practice is mutually beneficial for professionals in both fields.

Grossman (2009b) writes:

A literature that is directly related to the concerns of practitioners thus does not currently inform consultant thinking. Likewise, consultant ideas drive candidate decision-making without being taken seriously in political science. As a result, one of the best opportunities to relate political science research to real-world concerns about the political process remains unfulfilled (22).

In providing evidence of the benefit of probing the campaign mind – from understanding the motivations behind campaign strategizing and sources of variation in gender-informed approaches, this study highlights the opportunities of investigating political practice and practitioners to scholarly ends. However, much more could be done to integrate these worlds, and scholars could begin by spending more time investigating differences in practitioners' perceptions of gender dynamics and motivations for institutional (over electoral) progress. Investigating these differences among practitioners includes more in-depth analyses of practitioners' identities and experiences, including the ideological and demographic traits they bring to strategic decision-making tables.

Due to the dearth of women in the profession and, therefore, in my analyses, much more research needs to be done to better understand the strategic role that women play in modern campaigning, outside of being candidates themselves. Brewer (2003) provides an important foundational study on female campaign consultants, and this volume offers additional arguments for women's inclusion into the profession of campaigns in order to alter the prevailing gender norms. In order to expand the study of women in campaigns, future research should target women insiders for survey and interview analyses, expand the population for study to include women in non-strategic campaign roles, and investigate campaign professionals at all electoral levels – from local to national campaign contexts. In doing so, researchers could better explain the reasons for women's dearth in strategic roles, the potential impact of their inclusion at the decision-making table, and possible prescriptions for increasing both their presence and influence in campaigns.

Finally, even greater opportunities to investigate partisan differences among women candidates and how they inform the strategies campaigns adopt will emerge in future elections. Due to the increase – though slow - in women's presence both on the campaign trail and in political office, the expectations for and images of candidates and officeholders are likely to undergo at least minimal change. And in an environment where Republican women are being given greater attention from the presidential level down, the contrast between women and the diversity among them is important to consider in future analyses of gender, campaign strategy, electoral success, and institutional transformation.

The path toward redefining the norms of campaigns and political institutions is uncharted, but may be clarified further as more women wage and win campaigns. Not only do these campaigns provide evidence of how gender shapes strategic decisions for women, but they also challenge male candidates – who have historically had little incentive to pursue

strategies in any way incongruent with the prevailing gender order – to confront new political terrain. In approaching both the study and practice of campaigns with a feminist lens, I urge campaign practitioners and scholars to consider the gendered perceptions that found campaign institutions, inform campaign behavior, and – therefore – replicate campaigns’ gendered dimensions. Moreover, I illuminate the scholarly benefit of investigating campaigns’ gender dynamics via insiders’ perceptions and behaviors at campaigns’ earliest stages of strategic planning. Finally, in concluding this dissertation, I provide some preliminary steps toward transforming, or re-gendering, campaigns so that men and women can enter them on their own terms and with alternative models of appropriateness instead of the masculine models that have for decades left women candidates, their teams, and scholars asking how women can succeed within masculine institutions of campaigns instead of disrupting the institutions themselves.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Voters have historically preferred leaders – candidates and officeholders – whose traits and attributes align most commonly with men; ideal political leaders are tough, strong, autonomous, protectors of their constituents (Kahn 1996; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989; Young 2003). Those traits and attributes most associated with women – compromise, honesty, empathy – have less often been among the most demanded attributes of political leaders (Kahn 1996; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989).

<sup>2</sup> In a survey of consultants in 2009, Grossman (2009c) asked about the purpose of campaigns and 91% of respondents said the most important purpose of campaigns was to “win elections” rather than to “inform voters about candidates,” to “inform representatives about the opinions of voters,” or to “get people to talk about politics with each other” (98).

<sup>3</sup> Mackay (2011) explains multiple, and often nuanced, change mechanisms that can cumulatively yield significant institutional change, from “layering” new institutional elements atop older ones to “conversion” of old institutional arrangements for new purposes and “displacement,” or wholesale removal, of existing institutional elements that perpetuate prevailing gender dynamics (186).

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 2

<sup>5</sup> Organizations dedicated to advancing women in politics via campaign trainings and advice at the national level include the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, Women’s Campaign Forum, Emerge America, the Excellence in Public Service

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Series, the Yale Campaign School, EMILY's List, National Women's Political Caucus, and the Barbara Lee Family Foundation. State-based organizations similar to and often affiliates of these organizations are also influential in perpetuating models for campaigning or providing alternative approaches for women candidates.



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## APPENDIX A: NATIONAL SURVEY OF CAMPAIGN CONSULTANTS

The following survey was created and administered in Survey Monkey Professional, an online survey service. Because skip logic was used at some points in the survey, some completion pages appear before the end of the document. Moreover, in some cases, a branching format was used to ask respondents follow-up questions. Survey respondents could exit the survey at any time, but could also return to the survey for completion later.



# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Informed Consent

The information below describes the objectives of this study and methods to ensure respondent confidentiality. **Please review this information and click "Yes" to proceed with the survey.**

The following survey is requested as part of a study that looks at how campaigns make decisions about strategy and tactics, shaping candidates' images and message development, among other concerns. The purpose is to effectively incorporate campaign practitioners' voices and experiences into academic scholarship on electoral campaigns. Findings will be part of my dissertation project at Rutgers University.

Approximately 1000 top-tier political consultants active in campaigns throughout the country will be asked to participate in this survey about your experiences and considerations in campaign consulting. It should only take about 20 minutes of your time and does not require further participation. While I am unable to compensate you for participating, I will be happy to send you a statistical summary of consultants' views upon completion of the project.

As with all surveys your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may end the survey at any time or choose not to answer questions with which you are uncomfortable without any penalty to you. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. All of your answers will be held in strictest confidence. This means that I will not share your answers with anyone, and will not store the names or addresses of respondents in the same data file as where answers to the questionnaire are located. The Institutional Review Board at Rutgers wants me to remind you that nothing traveling over the Internet can be guaranteed to be 100 percent confidential—there is always the possibility that an outside party (such as a computer hacker) may be able to gain access to your information. If you are worried about this, it will be best if you complete the survey on a private computer to protect your privacy. Additionally, you should be sure to always completely close your browser (or log-off the survey area) after completing the survey.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated, unless you have agreed otherwise.

Please feel free to contact me or Dr. Kira Sanbonmatsu (project advisor) if you have any questions or concerns in advance of taking the survey.

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This informed consent form was approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects on March 7, 2010; approval of this form expires on September 27, 2010.

## Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

**1. By participating in this study/these procedures, you agree to be a study subject.  
Please click “Yes” to continue to survey.**

☐ Yes

☐ No

## Thank You

Thank you for considering my request for participation. If you would like additional clarification about your consent to participate, please contact me at [kdittmar@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:kdittmar@rci.rutgers.edu)

Please press "**Next**" to leave the survey.

# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Political Consultants

In completing this survey, please realize that you may skip individual questions and return to them later by using the **"Prev"** and **"Next"** buttons at the bottom of the page. If you leave the survey before completing it, you may return to your unanswered questions later as long as you use the same computer. If accessing the survey on a different computer, you will be asked to start the survey over again. The progress bar above will show you how close you are to completion of this survey by providing the total percentage completed as you proceed.

Please use the **"Prev"** and **"Next"** buttons at the bottom of each page to navigate, not the forward and back buttons on your Internet browser.

Your responses will ONLY be submitted after you press the **"Done"** button on the final page of this survey.

### **2. Are you currently working as a professional campaign consultant for a candidate running for the U.S. House, Senate, or governor or have you done so in the past two years?**

- ☐ Yes, currently working as a political consultant and/or have done so in the past two years.
- ☐ No
- ☐ Refused

# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Thank You

Thank you for being willing to participate, but this survey is meant for political consultants who have worked for, or are currently working for, U.S. Congressional or gubernatorial candidates. If someone else at your firm would better fit this criteria and might be willing to participate, please share their contact information below so that I may request their participation.

Please press **"Next"** to leave the survey.

### 3. Colleague contact information:

|                |                        |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Name:          | <input type="text"/>   |
| Address:       | <input type="text"/>   |
| Address 2:     | <input type="text"/>   |
| City/Town:     | <input type="text"/>   |
| State:         | <input type="text"/> ▼ |
| ZIP:           | <input type="text"/>   |
| Email Address: | <input type="text"/>   |

# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Campaign Background

**4. Which of these best describes your role as a campaign consultant? (You may check more than one if necessary.)**

- ☐ General campaign consultant or general strategist
- ☐ Campaign manager
- ☐ Pollster, including survey research and focus group consultant
- ☐ Media consultant
- ☐ Direct mail specialist
- ☐ Research, including opposition research
- ☐ Fundraiser
- ☐ Field operations

Other (please specify)

**5. About how many paid workers are employed by your firm during the campaign season? (Please give your best estimate without using a range.)**

**6. About how many paid workers are employed by your firm for pay during non-campaign season? (Please give your best estimate without using a range.)**

**7. Does your firm work primarily for Republicans, primarily for Democrats, or does it accept clients from both major parties?**

- ☐ Primarily for Republicans
- ☐ Primarily for Democrats
- ☐ Both Parties

## Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

**8. Are you currently a principal in your firm, a senior associate, or a junior associate?  
(Please choose the title most similar to yours.)**

- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Senior Associate
- ☐ Junior Associate
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**9. In which year did you take your first paid campaign job as a consultant?**

# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Campaign Strategy

For the remainder of the survey, please consider your responses in the context of statewide or federal campaigns.

### 10. Which of the following analogies best characterizes political campaigns?

- ☐ Political campaigns are like waging wars. Each side has a battle plan and, in a limited period of time, you have to seize certain territory and hold it.
- ☐ Political campaigns are like cooking. You begin with a recipe, make necessary adjustments, and present a dish that will leave a good taste in voters' mouths.
- ☐ Political campaigns are like sporting events. The score changes, competing teams adopt different game plans and the winner isn't determined until the clock runs out.
- ☐ Political campaigns are like selling toothpaste. The voters are walking down the aisles to see which product cleans the teeth better and which one gives you better breath.

### 11. How important would you say the following factors are in shaping a candidate's campaign strategy?

|                          | Very Important        | Important             | Not Very Important    | Not Important at all  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Candidate Age            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Candidate Experience     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Candidate Gender         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Candidate Race/Ethnicity | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opponent Age             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opponent Experience      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opponent Gender          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Opponent Race/Ethnicity  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Campaign Strategy

**12. If a candidate had the credential listed below, how likely would it be that you would recommend emphasizing that particular credential in campaign materials (advertisements, literature, speeches, website, etc.)?**

|  | Very Likely           | Likely                | Not Very Likely       | Not Likely at All     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Community leadership                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Military experience                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Held previous elected office                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Raised a family  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Advanced degree (i.e. Master's, Ph.D., M.D., J.D.)     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Appointed to a major board and/or commission(s)        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Experience in the private sector (business, law, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**13. If given the choice of all of these credentials, which two credentials do you think would be most important to emphasize in a campaign? (Please mark two)**

- ☐ Community leadership
- ☐ Military experience
- ☐ Held previous elected office
- ☐ Raised a family
- ☐ Advanced degree (i.e. Master's, Ph.D., M.D., J.D.)
- ☐ Appointed to a major board and/or commission(s)
- ☐ Experience in the private sector (business, law, etc.)

# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Candidate Presentation, Communication, and Tactics

For the next several questions, think about more specific decisions made for male and female candidates in general election races for statewide or federal offices.

**14. Consider the following candidate presentation strategies. Do you think that these strategies work better for male candidates, work better for female candidates, or work about the same for male and female candidates?**

|  | Works Better for Male Candidates | Works Better for Female Candidates | Works about the Same for Male and Female Candidates |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Picturing the candidate with his/her spouse.   | <input type="radio"/>            | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                               |
| Picturing the candidate with his/her family <i>only if</i> their children are grown. | <input type="radio"/>            | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                               |
| Picturing the candidate with his/her family <i>even if</i> their children are young. | <input type="radio"/>            | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                               |
| Picturing the candidate primarily in professional dress attire.                      | <input type="radio"/>            | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                               |

**15. In your campaign experience, have you found the following tactics to be usually necessary, sometimes necessary, or seldom necessary in competing against your candidate's opponent?**

|  | Usually Necessary     | Sometimes Necessary   | Seldom Necessary      |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Emphasizing the opposing candidate's <b>professional</b> faults and weaknesses | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Emphasizing the opposing candidate's <b>personal</b> faults and weaknesses     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**16. In your campaign experience, under what conditions have you found that emphasizing the faults and weaknesses of your candidate's opponent is usually necessary, sometimes necessary, or seldom necessary?**

|  | Usually Necessary     | Sometimes Necessary   | Seldom Necessary      |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| When my candidate is the challenger running against an incumbent | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When my candidate is the incumbent running against a challenger  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When my candidate is in a neck-to-neck race                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| When the opposing candidate attacks my candidate                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

17. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

***Male candidates need to tread more carefully in criticizing their opponent when that opponent is a woman.***

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Don't Know

# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Candidate Presentation, Communication, and Tactics

**18. Do you think that the following campaign challenges are more difficult for male candidates, more difficult for female candidates, or are equally difficult for male and female candidates?**

|                                     | More Difficult for Male<br>Candidates | More Difficult for Female<br>Candidates | Equally Difficult for Male/Female<br>Candidates |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Securing sufficient campaign funds  | <input type="radio"/>                 | <input type="radio"/>                   | <input type="radio"/>                           |
| Dealing with/combating media biases | <input type="radio"/>                 | <input type="radio"/>                   | <input type="radio"/>                           |
| Dealing with/combating voter biases | <input type="radio"/>                 | <input type="radio"/>                   | <input type="radio"/>                           |
| Managing campaign staff             | <input type="radio"/>                 | <input type="radio"/>                   | <input type="radio"/>                           |

**19. In head-to-head races, which of the following candidates stand to benefit MOST from targeting women voters?**

|                                       |                      |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Democratic Man vs. Democratic Woman   | <input type="text"/> |
| Democratic Man vs. Republican Woman   | <input type="text"/> |
| Democratic Man vs. Republican Man     | <input type="text"/> |
| Republican Man vs. Republican Woman   | <input type="text"/> |
| Republican Man vs. Democratic Woman   | <input type="text"/> |
| Democratic Woman vs. Republican Woman | <input type="text"/> |

# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Voter Beliefs

The following questions ask you to share your perceptions on voter beliefs and attitudes toward male and female candidates.

**20. Do you think the following themes are more effective for male candidates, more effective for female candidates, or do you think that they are equally effective for male and female candidates?**

|                    | More Effective for Male Candidates | More Effective for Female Candidates | Equally Effective for Male and Female Candidates |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Leadership         | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Change             | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Strength/Toughness | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Experience         | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Compassion         | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Government Reform  | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Family Values      | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Ethics             | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Honesty            | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Moral Values       | <input type="radio"/>              | <input type="radio"/>                | <input type="radio"/>                            |

**21. Do you think that voters associate the following traits and characteristics more with male candidates, more with female candidates, or about the same for both male and female candidates?**

|               | Associate More with Men | Associate More with Women | About the Same for Men/Women |
|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Emotional     | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Honest        | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Corrupt       | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Assertive     | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Tough         | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Compassionate | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Experienced   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Strong Leader | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Cooperative   | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Accessible    | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Qualified     | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Liberal       | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Conservative  | <input type="radio"/>   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>        |

## Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

**22. Do you think that voters think of the following policy issues as areas of greater expertise for male candidates, greater expertise for female candidates, or about the same for male and female candidates?**

|                   | Greater Expertise for Men | Greater Expertise for Women | About the Same for Men/Women |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| National Security | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Health Care       | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Defense           | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Family Policy     | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Education         | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Taxes/Economy     | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Foreign Policy    | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Social Programs   | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Crime             | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Immigration       | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |
| Environment       | <input type="radio"/>     | <input type="radio"/>       | <input type="radio"/>        |

**23. Do you think that voters are more likely to vote for a woman for Governor, more likely to vote for a woman for the U.S. Senate, or equally likely to vote for a woman for Governor or the U.S. Senate?**

- ☐ More likely to vote for a woman for Governor.
- ☐ More likely to vote for a woman for the U.S. Senate.
- ☐ Equally likely to vote for a woman for both offices (Governor and U.S. Senate).
- ☐ Don't Know

## Voter Beliefs

**24. Why do you think voters are more likely to vote for a woman for Governor than they are to vote for a woman for the U.S. Senate?**

## Voter Beliefs

**25. Why do you think voters are more likely to vote for a woman for the U.S. Senate than they are to vote for a woman for Governor?**



## 2008 Election

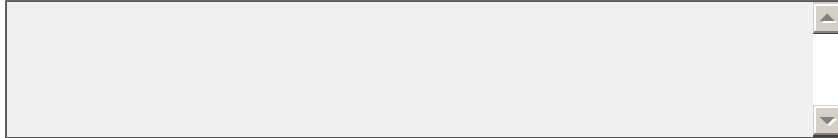
**26. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:**

***The 2008 Presidential election changed my perceptions about the role of candidate gender in developing and executing campaign strategy.***

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Don't Know

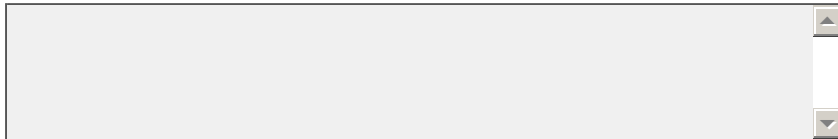
## 2008 Election

**27. *In what way(s)* did the 2008 Presidential election change your perceptions about the role of candidate gender in developing and executing campaign strategy?**



## 2008 Election

**28. What do you perceive as the role - if any - of candidate gender in developing and executing campaign strategy?**



# Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

## Consultant Identity

The following questions ask about your experiences in and perceptions of the profession of political consulting.

### 29. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

|  | Strongly Agree        | Agree                 | Disagree              | Strongly Disagree     | Don't Know            |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| In order to succeed in political consulting, it is necessary to have (a) mentor(s).                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Procuring my current position in the industry of political consulting was difficult.                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The population of political consultants nationwide is demographically diverse (race, gender, age, etc.). | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There are different "rules of the game" for men and women consultants.                                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### 30. Do you think the following characteristics of campaign consultants influence their recommendations for campaign strategy and tactics a lot, a little, or not at all?

|   | A Lot                 | A Little              | Not at All            |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Age   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Educational attainment (including advanced degrees) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Experience working in politics and campaigns        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Race/ethnicity                                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Religion  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Gender  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Political ideology                                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### 31. In general, do you believe male and female consultants usually approach campaign strategy in ways that are very similar, somewhat similar, or not similar at all?

- ☐ Very similar
- ☐ Somewhat similar
- ☐ Not similar at all

Please explain:

## Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

**32. About what percentage of active campaign consultants would you guess are women?**

## Demographic Information

**33. In what year were you born?**

**34. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- ☐ High school
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ College graduate (e.g., BA)
- ☐ Post-graduate degree

For post-graduate degree, please specify:

**35. Are you now married, living as married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married?**

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Living as married
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced or separated
- ☐ Single, never married

**36. If you have children, what is the age of your youngest child?**

**37. What is your racial/ethnic heritage?**

- ☐ White, non-Hispanic
- ☐ Black or African-American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Mixed-race
- ☐ Other (please specify):

## Political Consultants and Campaign Strategy

**38. Are you male or female?**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

**39. In general, how would you describe your political ideology?**

- ☐ Very liberal
- ☐ Liberal
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ Very conservative

**40. About how many candidates' campaigns have you worked on as a paid consultant?**

**41. Of those campaigns, about what percentage were:**

Percentage of Clients

|  |                      |   |
|--|----------------------|---|
| Female Candidates                                | <input type="text"/> | ▼ |
| Male Candidates                                  | <input type="text"/> | ▼ |
| Candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives | <input type="text"/> | ▼ |
| Candidates for the U.S. Senate                   | <input type="text"/> | ▼ |
| Candidates for Governor                          | <input type="text"/> | ▼ |

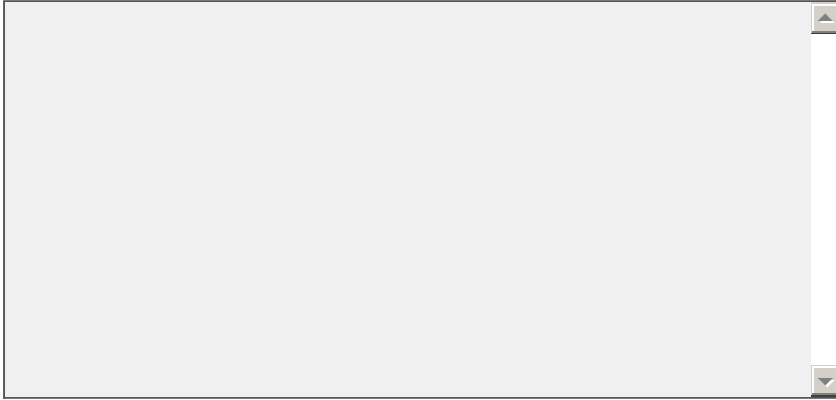
**42. Have you worked primarily for candidate campaigns in any one of the following regions, or do you work for candidate campaigns nationwide?**

- ☐ Northeast
- ☐ Southeast
- ☐ Midwest
- ☐ West
- ☐ Southwest
- ☐ Nationwide

## Thank you

Thank you for your time and expertise in completing this survey. Your responses are incredibly valuable to my research.

**43. Is there anything else that you would like to add?**



**44. Would you be willing to participate in a brief telephone interview about similar topics?**

☐ Yes

☐ No



## Contact Information

Please provide your preferred contact information below.

### 45. Preferred contact information:

Name:

Company:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

## Survey Complete

You've completed this survey. Please click "**Done**" to submit your responses.

**Thank you again for your participation.**

## APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTERS FOR SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

[SURVEY RECRUITMENT LETTER]

Date

Name

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City, State ZIP

Dear [NAME],

Political consultants and campaign practitioners are too rarely considered in research on campaigns and elections. As the “on-the-ground” eyes, ears, and brains of campaign operations, you have invaluable knowledge and insight for enhancing scholarly work in this area. I’m writing to request your participation in an online survey about campaign strategy and candidate presentation. Your expertise and experience will be the basis for my study of how candidates and campaign professionals make critical strategic decisions in political campaigns.

The Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University has endorsed this study for its potential value as a source of important information that both scholars and practitioners will find useful. Established in 1956 as part of Rutgers University, the Eagleton Institute of Politics is a leading non-partisan center for research, education, and public service, linking the study of politics with its day-to-day practice.

The survey is available at the web address listed below and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The online module will permit you to return to a partially-completed survey if you can not complete the survey at one time. A statistical summary of survey findings will be offered to all participants upon completion of the project, providing information and insights about your colleagues’ perspectives and the state of the profession.

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and survey results will be confidential. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions about the survey method, research focus, or anything else related to your participation. If you have additional questions, you can also contact Kira Sanbonmatsu, project advisor, using the information listed here.

If you are willing and able to participate in this study, please follow the web address below to the online survey. If you have any difficulties accessing the survey or would prefer that the survey be mailed to you electronically, please contact me via phone (630) 730-7399 or email (kdittmar@rci.rutgers.edu).

I want to thank you in advance for completing this survey and express my appreciation for your time and thoughtful consideration of the questions. Your participation will contribute an important and largely missing voice in academic research – the voice of political consultants and campaign operatives.

WEB ADDRESS PASTED HERE

Again, many thanks for taking part in this valuable research.

Sincerely,

Kelly Dittmar  
Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science and Research Assistant  
Eagleton Institute of Politics  
kdittmar@  
(630) 730-

[INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT LETTER]

Date

Name

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

City, State ZIP

Dear [NAME],

My name is Kelly Dittmar and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. As an observer and scholar of politics, I watched closely as the [2008/2010] elections played out on the national stage in preparation for post-election research. I am writing to you to an interview for this research about your role and insight in [candidate's] campaign for [office/state].



My dissertation project explores considerations made in drafting campaign strategy, including candidate image, message, and campaign tactics. I'm also interested in the influence of gender, if at all evident, in mixed-gender campaigns for governor and the U.S. Senate. As an active [participant/candidate] in the [2008/2010] election, your insight would be a great resource to my investigations. I hope that you will consider scheduling an interview with me about your experiences and knowledge in this area.

I will be scheduling interviews with willing participants from [dates]. The length of each interview will be dependent on your availability, though I would not expect any more than one hour of your time. Interviews can be conducted over the phone or in-person, depending on what is most convenient for you. While I realize that this interview may be hard to fit into your busy schedule, your contributions to this study will further the knowledge and understanding of campaign dynamics and decision-making, particularly for high-level races. More importantly, you will provide an important and largely missing voice in academic research – from practitioners of politics. Giving academic work an on-the-ground perspective of US campaigns will not only strengthen my study, but will provide a valuable contribution to the field of political science.

Participation in this project is entirely voluntary and the interview will be catered to your individual comfort level, including confidentiality, logistics, and topic areas. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions about the interview logistics, research focus, or anything else related to your participation.

If you are willing and able to participate in this study, please contact me via phone (630.730.7399) or email (kdittmar@eden.rutgers.edu) to schedule a time at your convenience. I truly appreciate your willingness to share your expertise and insight in this important area of political work and scholarship.

Sincerely,

Kelly Dittmar  
89 George St.  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
kdittmar@  
(630) 730-

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW LIST

NOTE: Six interview subjects (one candidate and five campaign team members) asked to complete their interviews “on background” only and did not wish to be listed as interview subjects. Therefore, they are not listed here or in the text of this dissertation by name or title.

*Candidates*

Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Interviewed 10/14/10  
MN Governor – Democratic Primary, 2010

Janice Arnold-Jones, Interviewed 6/25/10  
NM Governor – Republican Primary, 2010

Jari Askins, Interviewed 11/22/10  
OK Governor (D), 2010

Randy Brogdon, Interviewed 8/10/10  
OK Governor - Republican Primary, 2010

Jennifer Brunner, Interviewed 6/9/10  
OH Senate – Democratic Primary, 2010

Eliot Cutler, Interviewed 1/3/11  
ME Governor (I), 2010

Chuck DeVore, Interviewed 6/25/10  
CA Senate - Republican Primary, 2010

Pete Domenici, Interviewed 6/25/10  
NM Governor - Republican Primary, 2010

John Dougherty, Interviewed 9/30/10  
AZ Senate - Democratic Primary, 2010

Matt Dunne, Interviewed 10/14/10  
VT Governor - Democratic Primary, 2010

Drew Edmondson, Interviewed 9/9/10  
OK Governor - Democratic Primary, 2010

Tom Fiegen, Interviewed 6/22/10  
IA Senate - Democratic Primary, 2010

Lee Fisher, Interviewed 1/3/11  
OH Senate - Democratic Primary, 2010

Terry Goddard, Interviewed 11/19/10  
AZ Governor (D), 2010

Susan Harris, Interviewed 5/24/10  
NC Senate - Democratic Primary, 2010

Cheryle Jackson, Interviewed 6/23/10  
IL Senate - Democratic Primary, 2010

Bob Krause, Interviewed 7/9/10

IA Senate - Democratic Primary, 2010

Paul LePage, Interviewed 11/22/10

ME Governor (R), 2010

Ken Lewis, Interviewed 10/12/10

NC Senate - Democratic Primary, 2010

Sue Lowden, Interviewed 9/23/10

NV Senate - Republican Primary, 2010

Deb Markowitz, Interviewed 10/13/10

VT Governor - Democratic Primary, 2010

Pat McCrory, Interviewed 1/27/10

NC Governor (R), 2008

Christine O'Donnell, Interviewed 12/2/10

DE Senate (R), 2010

Rex Rammell, Interviewed 6/17/10

ID Governor - Republican Primary, 2010

Rosa Scarcelli, Interviewed 7/6/10

ME Governor - Democratic Primary, 2010

Rob Simmons, Interviewed 8/26/10

CT Senate - Republican Primary, 2010

Danny Tarkanian, Interviewed 7/13/10

NV Senate - Republican Primary, 2010

Doug Turner, Interviewed 7/1/10

NM Governor - Republican Primary, 2010

Allen Weh, Interviewed 6/25/10

NM Governor - Republican Primary, 2010

Ann Worthy, Interviewed 6/2/10

NC Senate - Democratic Primary, 2010

#### *Campaign Team Members*

Rita Aragon, Interviewed 1/17/11

OK Governor – Fallin (R), 2010

Whit Ayres, Interviewed 1/21/11 and 1/24/11

GA Governor – Handel (R), 2010

SC Governor – Haley (R), 2010

Dennis Bailey, Interviewed 7/23/10

ME Governor – Scarcelli (D), 2010

Dave Beattie, Interviewed 12/6/10

FL Governor – Sink (D), 2010

Paul Bentz, Interviewed 11/15/10

AZ Governor – Brewer (R), 2010

Glen Bolger, Interviewed 12/8/09  
NH Senate – Sununu (R), 2008

Kate Coyne-McCoy, Interviewed 12/2/10  
VT Governor – Markowitz (D), EMILY's List, 2010

Rich Davis, Interviewed 12/14/10  
FL Governor – Sink (D), 2010

Kelly Evans, Interviewed 2/9/10  
WA Governor– Gregoire (D), 2008

Scott Farmer, Interviewed 12/17/10  
SC Governor– Republican consultant, 2010

Pat Hall, Interviewed 9/20/10  
OK Governor – Edmondson (D), 2010

Sid Hudson, Interviewed 1/13/11  
OK Governor – Askins (D), 2010

Morgan Jackson, Interviewed 12/9/10  
NC Senate – Cunningham (D), 2010

Rob Jesmer, Interviewed 12/20/10  
Executive Director, NSRC – Republican Senate races, 2010

Rose Kapolcynszski, 11/23/10  
CA Senate – Boxer (D), 2010

Bill Kenyon, Interviewed 1/14/10 and 12/7/10  
NH Senate – Sununu (R), 2008  
CA Senate – Fiorina (R), 2010  
DE Senate – O'Donnell (R), 2010

Jon Lerner, Interviewed 12/21/10  
SC Governor – Haley (R), 2010

Sheryl Lovelady, Interviewed 12/6/10  
OK Governor – Nonpartisan observer and analyst, 2010  
Director, Women's Leadership Initiative, Carl Albert Congressional Research and  
Studies Center at the University of Oklahoma

Jim Margolis, Interviewed 12/9/10  
CA Senate – Boxer (D), 2010  
NV Senate – Reid (D), 2010

Valerie Martin, Interviewed 11/23/10  
NH Senate – Hodes (D), 2010

Mindy Mazur, Interviewed 1/27/11  
MO Senate – Carnahan (D), 2010

Mac McCorkle, Interviewed 2/15/10  
NC Governor – Perdue (D), 2008



Martha McKenna, Interviewed 12/10/09 and 12/6/10  
 Political Director, DSCC – Democratic Senate races, 2008  
 Political Director, DSCC – Democratic Senate races, 2010

Mark Mellman, Interviewed 1/28/11  
 CA Senate – Boxer (D), 2010

Jim Merrill, Interviewed 12/6/10  
 NH Senate – LaMontagne (R), 2010

Kevin O'Holleran, Interviewed 11/23/10  
 VT Governor – Dunne (D), 2010

Ted O'Meara, Interviewed 11/17/10  
 ME Governor – Cutler (I), 2010

Matt Robinson, Interviewed 11/19/10  
 SC Governor – Bauer (R), 2010

Terry Sullivan, Interviewed 8/4/10  
 SC Governor – Barrett (R), 2010

Sam Swartz, Interviewed 11/10/10  
 NC Senate – Marshall (D), 2010

Michelle Tilley Johnson, Interviewed 1/19/11  
 OK Governor – Askins (D), 2010

Robert Uithoven, Interviewed 11/15/10  
 NV Senate – Lowden (R), 2010

Marty Wilson, Interviewed 11/29/10  
 CA Senate – Fiorina (R), 2010

Zach Wineburg, Interviewed 12/20/10  
 Deputy Political Director, DGA - Democratic Gubernatorial Races, 2010

#### *Campaign Consultants*

Kati Baumgartner, Interviewed 8/4/10  
 Terry Benham, Interviewed 11/12/10  
 Amber Carrier, Interviewed 7/23/10  
 Amy Dacey, EMILY's List, Interviewed 2/17/11  
 Julie Daniels, Women's Campaign Fund, Interviewed 1/31/11  
 Karen Emmerson, Interviewed 8/9/10  
 Chris Esposito, Interviewed 8/6/10  
 Brett Feinstein, Interviewed 7/23/10  
 Diane Feldman\*, Interviewed 4/1/10  
 Anna Greenberg, Interviewed 7/21/10  
 Mary Hughes\*, Interviewed 4/2/10  
 Wooten Johnston, Interviewed 8/4/10  
 Celinda Lake\*, Interviewed 1/29/10  
 Natalie LeBlanc, Interviewed 7/21/10  
 Hal Malchow, Interviewed 7/22/10  
 Chris Panetta, Interviewed 8/2/10

Adam Probolsky, Interviewed 8/25/10

Scott Schweitzer, Interviewed 8/3/10

Ryan Steusloff, Interviewed 9/17/10

J. Toscano, Interviewed 8/6/10

Joshua Ulibarri, Interviewed 7/23/10

Erik Williams, Interviewed 7/19/10

\* Interview conducted prior to completing consultant survey

APPENDIX B: GUBERNATORIAL AND U.S. SENATE CONTESTS INCLUDED IN  
INTERVIEW ANALYSIS OF 2008 AND 2010 ELECTIONS

| <b>2010 Gubernatorial Contests - General Election</b> |                          |  |                |                           |
|---|--------------------------|--|----------------|---------------------------|
| <b>State</b>  | <b>Type</b>              | <b>Candidates</b>  | <b>% Vote</b>  | <b>No.<br/>Interviews</b> |
| Arizona   | Incumbent/<br>Challenger | Jan Brewer (R - Incumbent)<br>Terry Goddard (D - Challenger) | 54<br>43       | 2 (1D, 1R)                |
| Florida   | Open                     | Rick Scott (R)<br>Alex Sink (D)                              | 49<br>48       | 3 (3D)                    |
| Maine   | Open                     | Paul LePage (R)<br>Eliot Cutler (I)<br>Libby Mitchell (D)    | 38<br>37<br>19 | 4 (1D, 2R,<br>2I)         |
| New Mexico  | Open                     | Susan Martinez (R)<br>Diane Denish (D)                       | 53<br>47       | 2 (2D)                    |
| Oklahoma  | Open                     | Mary Fallin (R)<br>Jari Askins (D)                           | 60<br>40       | 7 (5D, 1R,<br>1NP)        |
| South<br>Carolina                                     | Open                     | Nikki Haley (R)<br>Vincent Sheheen (D)                       | 51<br>47       | 5 (1D, 4R)                |

NOTE: Interviews are listed more than once if they were with party committee leaders or consultants working in multiple races. See Appendix A for more details.

| 2010 Gubernatorial Contests - Primary Election |                     |        |                |
|--|---------------------|--------|----------------|
| State  | Candidates          | % Vote | No. Interviews |
| Democratic Primaries                           |                     |        |                |
| Maine  | Libby Mitchell      | 34.4   | 4              |
|  | Steve Rowe          | 22.7   |                |
|  | Rosa Scarcelli      | 21.5   |                |
|  | Patrick McGowan     | 19.8   |                |
| Oklahoma                                       | John Richardson     | 1.3    | 7              |
|  | Jari Askins         | 50.3   |                |
|  | Drew Edmondson      | 49.7   |                |
|  | Peter Shumlin       | 24.8   |                |
| Vermont  | Doug Racine         | 24.6   | 6              |
|  | Deb Markowitz       | 23.9   |                |
|  | Matt Dunne          | 20.8   |                |
|  | Susan Bartlett      | 5.1    |                |
| Republican Primaries                           |                     |        |                |
| Georgia <sup>a</sup>                           | Karen Handel        | 34.1   | 1              |
|  | Nathan Deal         | 22.9   |                |
|  | Eric Johnson        | 20.1   |                |
|  | John Oxendine       | 17.0   |                |
|  | Jeff Chapman        | 3.0    |                |
|  | Ray McBerry         | 2.5    |                |
|  | Otis Putnam         | 0.4    |                |
|  | Butch Otter         | 54.6   |                |
| Idaho  | Rex Rammell         | 26.0   | 1              |
|  | Sharon Ullman       | 8.4    |                |
|  | Pete Peterson       | 5.2    |                |
|  | Walt Bayes          | 3.0    |                |
|  | Tamara Wells        | 2.8    |                |
|  | Susana Martinez     | 50.7   |                |
| New Mexico                                     | Allen Weh           | 27.6   | 4              |
|  | Doug Turner         | 11.6   |                |
|  | Pete Domenici, Jr.  | 7.0    |                |
|  | Janice Arnold Jones | 3.1    |                |
| Oklahoma                                       | Mary Fallin         | 54.8   | 3              |
|  | Randy Brogdon       | 39.4   |                |
|  | Robert Hubbard      | 3.3    |                |
|  | Roger Jackson       | 2.5    |                |
| South Carolina <sup>b</sup>                    | Nikki Haley         | 48.9   | 5              |
|  | Gresham Barrett     | 21.8   |                |
|  | Henry McMaster      | 16.9   |                |
|  | Andre Bauer         | 12.4   |                |

NOTE: All interviews reported here were completed with candidates or campaign practitioners from the Democratic Party for Democratic primaries and the Republican Party for Republican primaries; except 1 neutral observer in Oklahoma. Interviews are listed more than once if they were with party committee leaders or consultants working in multiple races. See Appendix A for more details.

<sup>a</sup> In Georgia's primary run-off, Nathan Deal defeated Karen Handel (50.2% to 49.8%).

<sup>b</sup> In South Carolina's primary run-off, Nikki Haley defeated Gresham Barrett (65.1% to 34.9%).

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**2010 U.S. Senate Contests - General Election**


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| <b>State</b>   | <b>Type</b>          | <b>Candidates</b>              | <b>% Vote</b> | <b>No.<br/>Interviews</b> |
|----------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Alaska         | Incumbent/Challenger | Lisa Murkowski (R-Incumbent)   | 40            | 1 (1R)                    |
|                |                      | Joe Miller (R-Challenger)      | 36            |                           |
|                |                      | Scott McAdams (D-Challenger)   | 23            |                           |
| California     | Incumbent/Challenger | Barbara Boxer (D-Incumbent)    | 52            | 8 (4D, 4R)                |
|                |                      | Carly Fiorina (R-Challenger)   | 42            |                           |
| Connecticut    | Open                 | Richard Blumenthal (D)         | 55            | 3 (2D, 1R)                |
|                |                      | Linda McMahon (R)              | 43            |                           |
| Delaware       | Open                 | Chris Coons (D)                | 56            | 5 (2D, 3R)                |
|                |                      | Christine O'Donnell (R)        | 40            |                           |
| Missouri       | Open                 | Roy Blunt (R)                  | 54            | 3 (2D, 1R)                |
|                |                      | Robin Carnahan (D)             | 41            |                           |
| Nevada         | Incumbent/Challenger | Harry Reid (D-Incumbent)       | 50            | 2 (1D, 1R)                |
|                |                      | Sharron Angle (R-Challenger)   | 45            |                           |
| New Hampshire  | Open                 | Kelly Ayotte (R)               | 60            | 3 (2D, 1R)                |
|                |                      | Paul Hodes (D)                 | 37            |                           |
| North Carolina | Incumbent/Challenger | Richard Burr (R-Incumbent)     | 55            | 1 (1D)                    |
|                |                      | Elaine Marshall (D-Challenger) | 43            |                           |
| Washington     | Incumbent/Challenger | Patty Murray (D-Incumbent)     | 52            | 1 (1D)                    |
|                |                      | Dino Rossi (R-Challenger)      | 48            |                           |

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NOTE: Interviews are listed more than once if they were with party committee leaders or consultants working in multiple races. See Appendix A for more details.

| 2010 U.S. Senate Contests - Primary Election |                     |        |                |
|--|---------------------|--------|----------------|
| State  | Candidates          | % Vote | No. Interviews |
| Democratic Primaries                         |                     |        |                |
| Arizona                                      | Rodney Glassman     | 34.7   | 1              |
|  | Cathy Eden          | 26.5   |                |
|  | John Dougherty      | 24.1   |                |
|  | Randy Parraz        | 14.6   |                |
| Illinois                                     | Alexi Giannoulis    | 38.9   | 1              |
|  | David Hoffman       | 33.7   |                |
|  | Cheryle Jackson     | 19.8   |                |
|  | Robert Marshall     | 5.7    |                |
|  | Jacob Meister       | 1.8    |                |
| Iowa   | Roxanne Conlin      | 77.5   | 2              |
|  | Bob Krause          | 12.9   |                |
|  | Tom Fiegen          | 9.4    |                |
| North Carolina <sup>a</sup>                  | Elaine Marshall     | 36.4   | 5              |
|  | Cal Cunningham      | 27.3   |                |
|  | Ken Lewis           | 17.1   |                |
|  | Marcus Williams     | 8.5    |                |
|  | Susan Harris        | 7.0    |                |
| Ohio   | Ann Worthy          | 3.9    | 2              |
|  | Lee Fisher          | 55.6   |                |
|  | Jennifer Brunner    | 44.4   |                |
| Republican Primaries                         |                     |        |                |
| Alaska <sup>b</sup>                          | Joe Miller          | 50.9   | 1              |
|  | Lisa Murkowski      | 49.1   |                |
| California                                   | Carly Fiorina       | 56.4   | 5              |
|  | Tom Campbell        | 21.7   |                |
|  | Chuck DeVore        | 19.3   |                |
| Connecticut                                  | Al Ramirez          | 1.8    | 2              |
|  | Linda McMahon       | 49.4   |                |
|  | Rob Simmons         | 27.8   |                |
|  | Peter Schiff        | 22.8   |                |
| Delaware                                     | Christine O'Donnell | 53.1   | 3              |
|  | Mike Castle         | 46.9   |                |
| Nevada                                       | Sharron Angle       | 40.1   | 4              |
|  | Sue Lowden          | 26.1   |                |
|  | Danny Tarkanian     | 23.3   |                |
|  | John Chachas        | 3.9    |                |
|  | Chad Christensen    | 2.7    |                |
| New Hampshire                                | Kelly Ayotte        | 38.2   | 2              |
|  | Ovide Lamontagne    | 37.0   |                |
|  | Bill Binnie         | 14.1   |                |
|  | Jim Bender          | 9.1    |                |
|  | Dennis Lamare       | 1.0    |                |
| Non-partisan Primary <sup>c</sup>            |                     |        |                |
| Washington                                   | Patty Murray        | 46.2   | 1 (1D)         |
|  | Dino Rossi          | 33.3   |                |
|  | Clint Didier        | 12.8   |                |
|  | Paul Akers          | 2.6    |                |

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NOTE: All interviews reported here were completed with candidates or campaign practitioners from the Democratic Party for Democratic primaries and the Republican Party for Republican primaries. Interviews are listed more than once if they were with party committee leaders or consultants working in multiple races. See Appendix A for more details.

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<sup>a</sup> In North Carolina's primary run-off, Elaine Marshall defeated Cal Cunningham (60% to 40%).

<sup>b</sup> Lisa Murkowski proceeded to compete as a write-in candidate with a Republican label in the general election.

<sup>c</sup> Washington holds a non-partisan primary where the top two vote-getters compete in the general election.

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**2008 Select Gubernatorial and U.S. Senate Contests - General Election**


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| Office    | State          | Type                     | Candidates   | % Vote   | No. Interviews |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------------|--|----------|----------------|
| Governor  | North Carolina | Open                     | Bev Perdue (D)<br>Pat McCrory (R)                                    | 50<br>47 | 2 (1R, 1D)     |
| Governor  | Washington     | Incumbent/<br>Challenger | Christine Gregoire (D -<br>Incumbent)<br>Dino Rossi (R - Challenger) | 53<br>47 | 1 (1D)         |
| US Senate | New Hampshire  | Open                     | Jeanne Shaheen (D)<br>John Sununu (R)                                | 52<br>45 | 4 (2R, 2D)     |
| US Senate | North Carolina | Open                     | Kay Hagan (D)<br>Elizabeth Dole (R)                                  | 53<br>44 | 1 (1D)         |

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NOTE: Interviews are listed more than once if they were with party committee leaders or consultants working in multiple races. See Appendix A for more details on individual interview subjects.



## APPENDIX E: DETAILED INTRODUCTION OF 2010 CASES

NOTE: Brief excerpts from these introductions are included in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

### Florida Gubernatorial Election: Alex Sink v. Rick Scott

The Florida gubernatorial election of 2010 pitted two relatively unknown candidates against each other in a battle of messaging and money. Alex Sink (D), the sitting Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the state, brought with her 26 years of experience in business and banking, culminating with her presidency of Florida's largest bank (1993-1997) and role as President of Florida Operations for Bank of America from 1997 to 2000. This background supported the fiscal conservatism that Sink touted, positioning herself as an ideological moderate. Despite Sink's relatively recent entry into electoral politics, winning her position as CFO in 2006, her husband also waged a statewide bid for governor in 2002 and lost in the general election to Jeb Bush. After considering a bid for the U.S. Senate, Sink decided to enter the gubernatorial contest officially on May 12, 2009, becoming the first candidate in the race to replace Governor Charlie Crist.<sup>1</sup> Sink had very little opposition in the Democratic primary, winning 77% of the vote against Brian P. Moore. For much of the primary season, Sink and her team assumed they would face Attorney General Bill McCollum (R) in the general election. However, the political climate, persistence, and pocketbook of Republican primary contender Rick Scott surprised many, including McCollum, and ultimately resulted in his nomination. Rick Scott (R) is a multi-millionaire businessman most affiliated with for-profit health care companies and investment. He started his health care company, Columbia/HCA, in 1987, and it went on to become the largest private for-profit health care company in the United States. However, in 1997, Scott was forced to resign as CEO amidst convictions of billing fraud and questionable business practices. To the surprise of many, he announced his candidacy in April 2010, almost a year after Sink became the first official

candidate for governor. Scott spent \$4.7 million introducing himself swiftly and furiously to voters via television and radio ads, spending more than McCollum had raised in the 12 months prior to Scott's entry into the race. Adam C. Smith of the *St. Petersburg Times*, wrote, "Scott's last-minute candidacy caught the McCollum campaign — and most everybody else — flat-footed" (5/7/10). Well-funded and successfully positioned as the outsider in the race, Scott defeated McCollum in the Republican primary for governor by one percentage point.<sup>2</sup>

Both Sink and Scott entered the general election context in an always unique Floridian political climate. Due to Crist's decision not to run for re-election and the Mel Martinez's resignation from the U.S. Senate, Florida saw an election season where all three cabinet offices in the state, the governorship, and a Senate seat were up for grabs. In the nation's fourth largest state, this degree of high-level electoral competition meant that individual races struggled to be heard without significant resources dedicated to media expenditures. Also, the partisan climate both statewide and nationally advantaged Republican contenders. Despite Obama's win in Florida in 2008, no Democrat has held the governorship since Lawton Chiles defeated Jeb Bush in 1994. Sink's victory would not only have been significant for partisan reasons, but also because Florida remains one of 27 states in the nation that has never had a female governor (CAWP 2011). Asked about whether her gender would influence the race, Sink demurred in an October 4, 2011 interview with the *Naples Daily News*, "You know, I'd like to think that we're past all of that." She added that gender's function would be hard to predict, "Certainly — and I appreciate this — a lot of women are very enthusiastic about the idea of having the first woman governor. ... And it's probably time."

Sink took advantage of gendered perceptions of honesty and integrity as she contrasted those traits with her opponents' questionable business history. Scott, on the other

hand, emphasized his position as a political outsider ready to bring jobs to Florida. Like many Republican candidates in 2010, Scott tied his Democratic opponent to President Barack Obama, repeatedly calling Sink a liberal who wanted to raise taxes. Despite Sink's efforts to counterattack with evidence of Scott's corruption in the private sector, Scott continued to strengthen his base of support as November neared thanks, in part, to the shifting allegiances of McCollum supporters to him. Going into Election Day, polls could not definitively predict who would emerge victorious. However, observers did not that Scott had spent about \$73 million compared to Sink's \$11 million, making it the most expensive gubernatorial race in Florida history. On election night, Scott defeated Sink by just one percent of the vote – 53,000 votes out of the 5.3 million cast. Exit polls showed that the economic downturn was of most concern to voters and Scott benefitted from Independent and Tea Party support and support of independent voters throughout the state.

Alex Sink told *Politico* that her defeat was a function of two major factors: President Obama's unpopularity and Rick Scott's independent wealth. She said, "I faced headwinds from Washington that I liken to a tsunami and was going up against a guy who had unlimited resources. I could have overcome either one but not both" (quoted in "Centrist Dems Rip 'Tone-Deaf' White House," *Politico*, 11/6/10). Other observers argued Sink's loss of the Hispanic vote, voter turnout, and overall Republican strength across all races this cycle made the difference between winning and losing for the Democratic candidate. Finally, *St. Petersburg Times* reporter Adam C. Smith provided ten things Sink could have done differently to ensure her election. Among them, he argued Sink needed to "play the woman card more," adding, "Sink did little to appeal directly to women, rarely showing her family or talking about how well she understands the challenges of working women" (11/6/10).

South Carolina Gubernatorial Election: Vincent Shaheen vs. Nikki Haley

Similar to Rick Scott, Nikki Haley (R) entered the 2010 gubernatorial election in South Carolina against great odds. The daughter of Indian immigrants and three-term state representative faced a full Republican primary field of strong male contenders, including Attorney General Henry McMaster, Lieutenant General Andre Bauer, and Congressman Gresham Barrett. Her conservative voting record in the state legislature was helpful in a political year where Tea Party fervor was strong, but early estimates argued she would have little electoral success due to the experience and reputations of her opponents. Upon entering the contest on May 14, 2009, Nikki Haley was known by about six percent of South Carolina Republican voters. She had little financial support and her strongest political ties were to Governor Mark Sanford (R-SC), whose reputation had by then collapsed due to exposure of his extra-marital affair. Haley was not without advantages, however, as she was viewed as highly charismatic and representative of change due to both her ideological positions and unique identity as a woman of color in a state where white men have long dominated politics.

Because South Carolina is an overwhelmingly Republican state, there was little question that the Republican nominee for governor would win in November. Therefore, the most competitive and interesting race to analyze in 2010 is the primary contest between Haley, Barrett, McMaster, and Bauer. Congressman Barrett entered the race in March 2009 as a strong conservative with a military background, four terms in Congress, and a thematic centered on economic development, energy production, and education reform. Attorney General McMaster announced his candidacy in August 2009 with the theme “Path to Prosperity,” promising to bring a new day to South Carolina where honesty and integrity are paramount and jobs are created. A twice-elected Attorney General, presidential appointee, and Republican Party leader in the state, McMaster began his race with a strong base of

support and recognition as a serious contender. On the other hand, Lieutenant Governor Andre Bauer was rarely viewed as a likely victor in the Republican primary for governor. From his very conservative views to gaffes and previous allegations of ethics violations, Bauer entered the race officially in March 2010 with significant challenges that only increased significantly after a consultant to his campaign publicly claimed that he had an affair with Nikki Haley.

These allegations, by Bauer consultant Larry Marchant, followed initial allegations of extra-marital relations with Haley from South Carolina blogger and political insider Will Folks. It was these allegations, and the attention paid them by both state and national media, that many argue boosted the Haley campaign by simple virtue of giving her the publicity and name recognition that she alone could not afford. I elaborate on the highly gendered dimensions of these allegations and their electoral impact in Chapters 5 and 6. Outside of this scandal, the gubernatorial contest – primary and general election – were influenced by the political climate in South Carolina, outside involvement, and strategic decisions made by each campaign. In 2010, South Carolina had an unemployment rate of 11%, ranking sixth in the nation, and also faced an expected billion-dollar shortfall. Only 24% of voters expressed satisfaction with the federal government, and perceptions of state politics were not much more positive after Governor Sanford's affair and admission fallout painted the state negatively in the national spotlight. Finally, South Carolina was in 2010 and continues to be the state with the lowest percentage of women in its state legislature in the nation, with the distinction of having the only legislative chamber in the country with no women – the South Carolina Senate (CAWP 2010; 2011). In this context, Nikki Haley ran to be the first woman governor of the state, the first governor of color, and an underdog committed to changing the way business is done in state government.

Despite fundraising struggles and little name recognition, Nikki Haley's campaign took her primary opponents by surprise in May of 2010 after helpful endorsements from first lady Jenny Sanford and former Governor Sarah Palin. May also brought the two sets of affair allegations referenced above, in addition to a firm, consistent, and ultimately effective denial by Haley. In the June 8<sup>th</sup> primary contest, Haley defeated her closest opponent – Gresham Barrett – by 27 percentage points. Just missing the 50% threshold needed to avoid a run-off, she went on to defeat Barrett for the nomination on June 22, 2010 with 65% of the vote. While the affair allegations continued to make news through November, Haley was able to secure enough financial support and Republican loyalty to defeat Democratic nominee Vincent Sheheen in November by 3.5 percentage points. Sheheen's ability to compete against Haley surprised many in what is termed a "one-party state," but he could not close the gap enough to defeat her on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

#### Oklahoma Gubernatorial Election: Jari Askins vs. Mary Fallin

Both Jari Askins (D) and Mary Fallin (R) campaigned to become Oklahoma's first woman governor in 2010. Neither candidate was unaccustomed to breaking down gender barriers in their political pasts. Askins became the first Democratic woman elected Lieutenant Governor in 2006, was the first woman to become Democratic Leader of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, was the first woman to be elected state representative from Southwest Oklahoma, and was the first woman to chair the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board. Mary Fallin became the first female Lieutenant Governor in Oklahoma in 1994 and just the second female member of Congress from Oklahoma in 2006. In campaigning to break another glass ceiling in Oklahoma politics, both women faced primary opponents. Fallin won the Republican primary easily against two challengers, using her 20-year record and more than \$2.4 million to defeat State Senator Randy Brogdon by 16 points.

Askins, on the other hand, was expected to lose her primary bid against a very popular Attorney General Drew Edmondson. Edmondson, a four-term Attorney General, Vietnam veteran, and member of a well-respected political family, entered the Democratic primary after Askins announced, but – according to the *Associated Press* - raised more money than her overall.<sup>3</sup>

Askins and Edmondson had few ideological differences and similar campaign messages, emphasizing job creation and economic development for Oklahoma. Moreover, neither candidate took on the other directly, citing their personal relationship and respect for each other. Askins defeated Edmondson in a July 27<sup>th</sup> primary race by only 1,500 votes. Some credited her success to her ability to turn out a very targeted vote, while others noted the difficulty of pinpointing a deciding factor in such a close contest. Edmondson did not contend the results and, instead, quickly threw his support to Askins in hopes that she would keep the governor's office in Democratic hands after sitting Governor Brad Henry (D) was term limited out of the office after two terms.

Soon before the primary, Lieutenant Governor Askins told Scott Cooper of *The Oklahoma Gazette*, “If my opponent happens to be a woman, then it’s not about gender. It’s about qualifications. It’s a whole lot easier to focus on those kinds of issues when you are the same gender” (7/21/10). However, at the start of the general election, much attention was paid to the unique circumstance of a woman-woman race for governor, especially in a state where women’s representation has been historically low.<sup>4</sup> As the general election progressed, very little about the race received attention and many observers described it as boring and uneventful. The dearth of game-changing moments was particularly harmful for Lieutenant Governor Askins, who started behind in the polls, never closed the gap, and was defeated by 20 points in the November election. In January 2011, Governor Mary Fallin

took office alongside 11 Republican statewide officials, marking the first time that one party held every statewide elective executive post in Oklahoma.

#### California Senate Election: Barbara Boxer vs. Carly Fiorina

While Oklahoma made history by electing their first woman governor in 2010, California's very female election for the U.S. Senate was consistent with the all-female Senate delegation in the state for the past decade. Senator Barbara Boxer (D), elected to Congress in 1982, faced a tough electoral climate for Democrats in her 2010 re-election bid. Despite the Democratic-leaning history in the state, political groups and parties targeted the 2010 Senate race there as a potential win for Republicans. Boxer, a long-time politician at the local and national level, entered the contest with high name recognition, national support, and a fundraising base that outshined both her opponents and many other statewide contenders throughout the country. As a strong incumbent, Boxer faced no real opposition in the Democratic primary and focused exclusively on her general election opponent.

Carly Fiorina (R) announced her candidacy in November 2009 and soon became the favorite to be Boxer's opponent. Fiorina, former CEO of Hewlett-Packard and well-known for being the first woman to head up a Fortune 20 company, came to the race from working on John McCain's campaign for president in 2008. In 2009, before officially launching her candidacy, Fiorina was diagnosed and treated for breast cancer. Early on in her campaign, she joked with her supporters, "I have to say that after chemotherapy, Barbara Boxer just isn't that scary anymore." The Republican primary tightened after former five-term Congressman Tom Campbell decided to enter the Senate race instead of running for governor. Though Campbell entered the race in January 2010 as the Republican frontrunner, strong advertising and messaging by Fiorina's campaign increased the gap between the top two Republican contenders and ultimately led to Fiorina's primary victory over Campbell by



25 percentage points. Despite her attention to defeating Campbell from January through June, Carly Fiorina and her team were always focused on defeating Senator Barbara Boxer. They launched a site called [callmebarbara.com](http://callmebarbara.com) in November 2009 to highlight Boxer's failed leadership and continued with attacks in speeches, advertisements, and web videos through November 2010. Boxer, too, quickly focused on Fiorina as her likely opponent, working early to define her as part of the economic problem in the United States. Contrasting the layoffs she approved while at Hewlett-Packard to her "golden parachute" upon leaving the company, Boxer and her team effectively painted Fiorina as a candidate with flawed priorities for California workers. At the same time, Boxer focused on her own message of economic accomplishment for Californians, paying little attention to social issues in order to assure voters that she was addressing their number one concern: the economy. While Fiorina's message was similarly dominated by economic issues in a state hit hard by the housing crisis and with a 12% unemployment rate, she struggled to shake the decisions she made as HP CEO that hurt the everyday employees from whom she was now courting votes.

While the polls consistently showed Boxer with the lead through November, the closing gap in the general election race was worrisome to many who knew that an incumbent Senator should be facing a much less serious challenge. After defeating Fiorina by 10 percentage points on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, Boxer told an audience of election night supporters that the campaign for her fourth term in the U.S. Senate was "the toughest and roughest campaign of my life." Her campaign may have been even harder in another state, as California represented the most "blue" state of 2010 – one of only two states to actually gain Democratic seats in both the legislature and the governorship.<sup>5</sup> While Republicans tried to capitalize on a dire economic climate in the state and voters' focus on it, Democrats

maintained a registration and turnout advantage to maintain their strength in state and statewide offices. Moreover, unlike elsewhere in the country, Californian voters viewed Democrats more favorably than Republicans through Election Day, and the strong dissatisfaction with the federal government, health care reform, and immigration issues elsewhere in the country was tempered in California by the liberal-leaning ideologies throughout the state.

#### New Hampshire Senate Election: Paul Hodes vs. Kelly Ayotte

Partisan dynamics in New Hampshire are often more complicated than in states like California. Reporting on 2010 election results there, the *New York Times* wrote, “No state swung more sharply toward the Democrats in the last few cycles, and none swung harder in the Republicans’ direction on Tuesday” (11/4/10). According to *CNN* exit polls, only 23% of New Hampshire voters expressed satisfaction with the federal government on Election Day 2010 and nearly half of voters wanted a repeal of the Democrats’ health care bill. At the state legislative level, the New Hampshire House of Representatives shifted from 56% Democratic control in 2008 to 75% Republican control in 2010. On the Senate side, Democrats went from 58% of seats in 2010 to 21% control in 2010. Incumbent Democratic Governor John Lynch won his fourth term, but his opponent came within seven percentage points in the final vote count. In this context, Democratic candidates for Congress fared poorly; Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter (D) lost by 12 percentage points as an incumbent and Ann McKlane Kuster (D) lost by 1.5 percentage points in an open-seat contest. In the campaign for the open U.S. Senate seat created by Senator Judd Gregg’s (R) retirement, the partisan trend was upheld and Kelly Ayotte (R) assured that New Hampshire’s entire delegation to the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress would be Republican.

Kelly Ayotte (R) served as New Hampshire's Attorney General, the first woman in that role, from 2004 to 2009, achieving relatively strong name recognition and a reputation for being tough on crime. Among her years as Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, and Chief of the Homicide Unit, Ayotte's prosecutorial successes included convictions for two defendants charged with killing two Dartmouth professors, securing the first capital murder convictions in the state in over 60 years, and fighting to pass new laws cracking down on sexual and Internet predators. Married to a small businessman and Iraq War Veteran and mother to two young children, Ayotte described when and why she decided to run for the U.S. Senate, "[My family and I] were yelling at our television, just frustrated that they don't get it in Washington. They think somehow the government is going to create the jobs. And I think it's a failure of leadership." Unsurprisingly, that middle-class, anti-government fervor served as a major thematic of Ayotte's campaign and as a source of attack on Congressman Paul Hodes (D), who served in Washington for four years before the 2010 election.

Congressman Hodes (D-NH) worked to shed the insider image associated with his political title, touting votes he made against his party on some of the most controversial issues salient in the 2010 campaign – health care, the bailout, and the Clean Energy and Security Act. On his campaign website, for example, Hodes wrote, "Changing Washington isn't easy, but when I ran for office I said I'd bring my backbone with me and I've done exactly that. As your next Senator, I won't hesitate to take on anyone who stands in the way of the change we need." Before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2006, Hodes worked as an attorney in private practice and was an Assistant Attorney General in the early stages of his legal career (1980-1982). In a year where Democratic candidates faced an uphill battle, Hodes' newness to Congressional office and lack of strong statewide

popularity assured that the Republican tide would knock down his candidacy for the U.S. Senate.

While Hodes faced no opposition in the Democratic primary, Ayotte faced a number of competitors in seeking the Republican nomination. Businessmen Jim Bender and Bill Binnie and lawyer and conservative leader Ovide Lamontagne shared the September 2010 primary ballot with Ayotte, forcing her team to wage a campaign on two fronts – against tough primary competitors and Democrat Paul Hodes. Ayotte received support from much of the Republican establishment, including retiring Senator Judd Gregg and 2008 Republican presidential candidate John McCain, who called her “the next generation of leadership in the Republican Party” at a March 13, 2010 campaign townhall in Nashua, New Hampshire. Lamontagne, on the other hand, amassed his support and near victory by Election Day by appealing to the Tea Party and standing firm upon his strongly conservative beliefs. In a September editorial in the *Union Leader*, the paper credited Lamontagne for his honest approach:

He’s drawing attention in part because he’s the only proven, true-blue conservative in the race. As other candidates scramble to adopt positions to the right of each other, or to have the appearance of doing so, Lamontagne just points to his record and shows that, on issue after issue, not only is he more solidly conservative than the others, but he can prove it (9/8/10).

Though Bill Binnie spent an estimated six million dollars throughout the primary contest, he found few results in the polls, even after a series of negative attacks between himself and Ayotte in late summer 2010. Instead, Lamontagne closed the gap between himself and long-time poll leader Kelly Ayotte to its closest ever in the ten days before the primary election.<sup>6</sup> Despite this progress, Lamontagne fell short by just 1,600 votes on election night and Ayotte took the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate.

With the support of many outside groups and interests – from the American Action Network to individual legislators’ political action committees and a public endorsement from Sarah Palin – Ayotte moved from the September primary to November general election with a significant lead against her Democratic opponent. Hodes continued his attacks on Ayotte’s record as Attorney General and challenged her on social issues, but these efforts seemed ineffective as Ayotte took 60% of the November 2<sup>nd</sup> vote, defeating Congressman Hodes by 23 percentage points and winning majorities in nearly every demographic group. Among Independents – representing 44% of New Hampshire voters – Ayotte won 61% of the vote to Hodes’ 35%. Ayotte’s victory made her the first Republican woman to win a statewide office in New Hampshire, and the only female freshman member of the U.S. Senate in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.

#### Missouri Senate Election: Robin Carnahan vs. Roy Blunt

In the Missouri race for the U.S. Senate seat opened by the retirement of Senator Kit Bond (R), both general election candidates fought to paint the other as a political insider tied to the unpopular policies of the day. With largely insignificant primary challenges between them, Secretary of State Robin Carnahan (D) and Congressman Roy Blunt (R) quickly shifted their focus on each other in messaging and strategy. While Carnahan called Blunt “the very worst of Washington,” Blunt criticized Carnahan for her support of President Obama’s health care reform bill and stimulus package. In a state where Obama lost to McCain in 2008, this tie to the White House was particularly challenging for Carnahan.

Robin Carnahan entered the 2010 contest in February 2009 with strong party support and a belief among insiders that the Missouri Senate seat might be one of few Democratic gains in the 2010 season. Beyond her own political service as Secretary of State from 2004 to the present and significant popularity throughout the state, Carnahan brought

with her the weight of a political dynasty in Missouri. Her grandfather served in the U.S. Congress, her father was Missouri's governor, and her mother was appointed to the U.S. Senate seat won by her father only three weeks after his death. Carnahan's brother Russ has followed in these footsteps, serving as a congressman from Missouri since 2005. Together, this political history seemed beneficial to Carnahan upon entering the U.S. Senate contest in 2009. By the fall of 2010, however, her family name did little to overcome Blunt's attacks and the Republican wave sweeping across the country. In fact, the dynastic nature of her family's power fed into Republican claims that the rural farmer image that Carnahan put forth was a façade.

Politics runs in the family for the Blunts as well, as Roy Blunt's son, Matt, served as Missouri's governor from 2004 to 2009. Both father and son served as Secretary of State, the only Republicans to do so in Missouri since 1945. Unlike Robin Carnahan, however, Senator Blunt anchored his family's political involvement by entering government very early in his career. Beginning in 1972, Blunt served in county government. In the 1980s, he ran unsuccessfully for Lieutenant Governor and then successfully for Secretary of State, a post he held until 1992. In 1996, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from the most conservative district in the state and won re-election through 2010. Despite his 14 years in Washington, Blunt was able to defer Carnahan's insider label enough to overcome her on Election Day. While 52% of voters said that Blunt had been in Washington too long in 2010 *CNN* exit polls, 59% noted that they disapproved of President Obama; moreover, 40% of voters said that they voted to express opposition to Obama, and they did so by voting for Roy Blunt. Blunt's campaign was bolstered by a significant influx of independent spending – with \$3.8 million alone spent on his behalf by Karl Rove's American Crossroads and its sister group, Crossroads GPS. In total, the Missouri Senate race ranked sixth in the

nation for the highest amount of independent expenditures, according to the *Center for Responsive Politics*; pro-Blunt expenditures totaled \$6.8 million versus pro-Carnahan expenditures of about \$4.9 million. Whether due to finances, climate, or unsuccessful messaging, Carnahan was unable to take the lead in any polls throughout 2010, ultimately losing to Blunt at the ballot box by 15 percentage points.

The Missouri Senate race evidences the shifting political climate throughout the country from 2009 to 2010, as Robin Carnahan moved from a party favorite to electoral defeat. While Blunt's long-term history in Washington and ties to lobbyists and special interests could have exemplified voters' discontent with the federal government, their message on election day seemed to be that Democratic – or Obama – insiders were more specific targets of their anger and frustration.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Crist decided not to run for re-election as governor, instead opting to run for the US Senate seat vacated by Mel Martinez (R).

<sup>2</sup> Scott spent over \$50 million of his own money into the primary campaign in which he painted McCollum as a "desperate career politician" and a "Tallahassee insider." Describing the primary outcome in his concession speech, Bill McCollum said, "No one could have anticipated the entrance of a multimillionaire with a questionable past who shattered campaign spending records and spent more in four months than has ever been spent in a primary race here in Florida."

<sup>3</sup> Attorney General Edmondson is the son of former Representative Ed Edmondson (D-OK) and the nephew of former Governor and Senator J. Howard Edmondson (D-OK). James E. Edmondson, his brother, is a Justice on the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

<sup>4</sup> Since 2008, Oklahoma has ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in the United States in terms of the percentage of women in its state legislature. Currently, only 12.8% of state legislators are women and the greatest ever percentage of female legislative representation was 14.8% (from 2005-2006) (CAWP 2011). Only two women have ever been sent to Congress from Oklahoma, with a gap between their tenures from 1923 to 2007 (CAWP 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Hawaii and California were the only two states to gain Democratic seats in the legislature and shift from a Republican to Democratic governor in 2010.

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of polls throughout the campaign, see <http://www.realclearpolitics.com>.

APPENDIX D: GENDERED HISTORICAL IMAGERY IN 2010 CAMPAIGN MATERIALS



Source: Bumper sticker from U.S. Senate candidate Jennifer Brunner's (D-OH) primary campaign



Source: Image created by Linda Eddy and adopted by Jan Brewer (R-AZ) for Governor