In Chapter 10, Bauer discusses the role for feminine stereotypes in voter evaluations of female candidates. In Chapter 11, Greenlee, Deason and Langner focus on how motherhood and maternal appeals shape voter evaluations of female candidates. In the second half of Chapter 7, Bejarano notes how gender identity can intersect with other identities to affect voters’ judgments. All three chapters deal with the impact of gender stereotypes on how women on the campaign trail are perceived. The teaching activities below help students engage more deeply with the content of these chapters.

Sample Class Exercises:

Activity One: Identifying Feminine Stereotypes in Campaign Communication

Goals of Activity: This activity asks students to identify feminine stereotypes in campaign communication, including television news coverage, print news, campaign ads, websites, and campaign mailers. The purpose is to have students see the multitude of ways feminine stereotypes are used to describe female and male candidates through traits, issues, behaviors, and visuals. This can also be done with masculine stereotypes instead of feminine stereotypes. The activity can be done in class or as a take-home essay assignment for students. This exercise is appropriate for courses on Gender & Politics, Campaigns & Elections, Media & Politics, Political Psychology, and Research Methods.

Suggested Readings:


In-Class Variation 1: Show students campaign ads or clips of candidate news coverage. While watching the materials, have students write down all the ways that feminine or masculine stereotypes emerge in the ads. Have the students write down the ways in which motherhood, fatherhood, and children are depicted in the ads. After students identify the feminine stereotypes in the ads – including maternal traits or behaviors – have them hypothesize about how a viewer might use this information to evaluate the abilities of female candidates as leaders. The students can then compare and contrast how feminine stereotypes might affect female and male candidates.
Recent and classic campaign ads work well for this type of activity, and the activity works with ads that are on behalf of female and male candidates.

**In-Class Variation 2:** Print out several recent short news articles covering the campaigns of female candidates. Have the students read through the articles and then, working in small groups, have the students identify all the ways that feminine or masculine stereotypes come through in the article. For example, an article might talk about a female candidate’s children or stereotypic women’s issues. As with the first in-class activity, have students hypothesize how a viewer might use this information to evaluate the abilities of female candidates as leaders. Have the students compare and contrast how feminine stereotypes might affect female and male candidates.

**Take-Home Variation 1:** Have the students evaluate one campaign ad from a female candidate and one ad from a male candidate. Ask the students to identify how the setting of the ad, the other individuals featured in the ad, the narrator, the music, the appearance of the candidate, and the issues discussed emphasize or de-emphasize feminine stereotypes. Have students compare and contrast how the ads from female and male candidates differ and how voters might respond to these ads.

**Take-Home Variation 2:** This assignment works well in the fall campaign season, and can be expanded to a semester-long project. Assign each student to follow the news coverage of a female candidate or allow the student to select his or her own candidate to follow. Have students read and code news coverage of that female candidate in her local newspaper (this can be done through databases such as Lexis-Nexis or Pro-Quest). Either a) provide students with a coding sheet, or b) ask the students to develop the coding instrument as part of an in-class exercise. The coding scheme should capture each mention of feminine and masculine traits as well as feminine and masculine issues. At the end of the data collection, the students should analyze their data to identify any patterns of feminine and masculine traits or issues depicted in the news coverage. This assignment works well an undergraduate research methods class where the students may be learning how to conduct a content analysis.
Activity Two: Gender Stereotypes and Intersectionality

Goals of Activity: This activity teaches students the content of feminine and masculine stereotypes, while also drawing connections between stereotypes about political parties and stereotypes about race and ethnicity. It encourages to think about gender stereotypes intersectionally and to recognize areas of research that scholars have not yet fully explored. This activity is well suited for courses on Gender & Politics, Race & Politics, Political Psychology.

Suggested Readings:


In-Class Exercise: This exercise has three components. These can be done in one day or across multiple classes. These exercises are most effective when done before assigning the suggested readings.

Part 1: Start by having students list all the characteristics that make-up feminine stereotypes and then have students list all the characteristics that make-up masculine stereotypes. Each student can do this independently, or the class can do this collectively on a white board. Encourage students to come up with as many feminine and masculine characteristics as they possibly can. Then have students go through each list and mark the characteristics they would most like to see in a political candidate or leader. You can encourage them to think specifically about different political offices such as the presidency, a governorship, or senate seat. There should be more masculine characteristics that fit with leadership compared to feminine characteristics.

Part 2: Using the approach laid out in Part 1, this portion of the exercise highlights the overlap between gender stereotypes and partisan stereotypes. With the student-generated lists of feminine and masculine qualities, have students mark all the qualities they associate with Republicans and all the qualities they associate with Democrats. There should be an overlap between feminine stereotypes and Democratic Party stereotypes and an overlap between masculine stereotypes and Republican Party stereotypes.

Part 3: This final part of the exercises shows how stereotypes about racial or ethnic minorities overlap or stand in contrast with gender stereotypes. For this variation, have students start with stereotypes about a minority group, and then separate that group into women and men. Rather than
showing how much stereotypes about race overlap with stereotypes about gender this activity should show how gender and race combine to create new and distinct stereotype categories.

**Activity Three: Feminine Stereotype Activation & Suppression**

*Goals of Activity:* This activity illustrates to students how and when the process of stereotype activation occurs. The activity allows students to see how a subtle association between women and feminine qualities calls to mind broader stereotypes of women. This is a good exercise to incorporate into a lecture, but it can work as a take-home assignment. This is appropriate for courses on Gender & Politics, Campaigns & Elections, Media & Politics, Political Psychology, and Research Methods.

*Suggested Readings:*


*In-Class Variation 1:* Start by showing students generic images of women that do not play to feminine or masculine stereotypes. While viewing an image, have students write down all the associations that come to mind when they see the photo. Next, switch to photos that play more obviously to feminine stereotypes, such as an image of a woman pushing a stroller. Again, have student write down all the associations that come to mind. Students should write down more feminine characteristics with a more explicitly feminine photo compared to the stereotype-neutral photo. Then, show students an image of a woman that emphasizes masculine stereotypes. Again, have students write down all the associations that come to mind. Students should write down fewer feminine concepts. Ordering the photos based on stereotype neutral, feminine, and masculine photos outlines the need for activation, when activation occurs, and when stereotypes can be suppressed. This exercise is best done before assigning the suggested reading.

*In-Class Variation 2:* Show a series of short videos of Sarah Palin in class. After each video, have the students write down the traits or roles that they believe Palin (or the McCain-Palin campaign) is attempting to highlight. After watching all of the videos, engage the class in a discussion of how Palin is portrayed – and in particular, her identity as a mother – differently across the three videos. Are some of the videos better at activating or suppressing gender stereotypes?

McCain – Palin ad: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVIaqCjvLpU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVIaqCjvLpU)
Palin RNC speech: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXK-LNEU9A0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXK-LNEU9A0)
Mama Grizzlies: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oF-OsHTLfxM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oF-OsHTLfxM)

*Take Home Variation 1:* Have each student select a female candidate or politician and then conduct a content analysis of three items: that individual’s campaign home page, one news article of the politician, and one other piece of campaign materials (such as ad). Have the students classify whether each piece of communication is something that would activate feminine stereotypes or suppress feminine stereotypes. Students can code the materials for issues, traits, and references to gender roles (with particular attention paid to motherhood) to determine whether the material will
activate feminine stereotypes or suppress such stereotypes. Have students write an analysis of their findings, including what affect these communication materials might have on voters.

Activity Four: Campaign Strategy and Gender Stereotypes

Goals of Activity: This exercise encourages students to consider how and when female candidates should emphasize feminine or masculine stereotypes in their campaign strategies. The goal of the assignment is to have students consider stereotyping from the perspective of a potential candidate rather than from the perspective of a voter. The assignment works best as a longer writing assignment for students outside of the classroom. It can be broken up into several small assignments over the course of the semester, with one final paper describing how all the campaign materials fit together. Or, it can be assigned as one large project. This activity is appropriate for courses on Gender & Politics, Race & Politics, Campaigns & Elections, Media & Politics, and Political Psychology.

Suggested Readings:


Take-Home Variation: With biographies of actual female candidates or with profiles of hypothetical female candidates, have the students create a campaign plan for a candidate. The plan should consider how feminine and masculine stereotypes should factor into the campaign ads, campaign appearances, and website of the candidate. The plan should also consider their partisan affiliation and the political context in which that candidate is running (this can be fictional or real). Students can develop draft storyboards of ads for a candidate, mock-ups of campaign websites, and drafts of speeches for the candidate to use on the campaign trail. Have the students write strategy memos about how the materials will minimize the negative effects of feminine stereotypes, maximize the positive effects of feminine stereotypes, and how the strategic choices will contribute to a winning campaign strategy. An added challenge could be to consider a female candidate who is non-white or not heterosexual.

General Discussion Questions

1. What are feminine stereotypes of political candidates?
2. What aspects of feminine stereotypes tap into shared ideas of what it means to be a mother or to be maternal?
3. Do maternal stereotypes differ for different races or ethnic minorities? How?
4. What are the positive aspects of feminine stereotypes? What are the negative aspects?
5. Do feminine stereotypes help, hurt, or have no effect on women’s candidacies?
6. Does being a mother help or hurt women’s candidacies? Is this equally true for white women as it is for women of other racial and ethnic minorities?
7. Do all voters rely on stereotypes to evaluate candidates? Under what conditions are voters most likely to use stereotypes? Are stereotypes more or less likely to be used for racial and minority candidates?
8. How do feminine stereotypes or maternal appeals affect male political candidates?
9. *What do you think?* When women use maternal appeals or talk about motherhood on the campaign trail, are they reinforcing unhelpful gender stereotypes? Or are they highlighting a feminine characteristic as a potential leadership strength?