Selecting for Masculinity: Women's Under-Representation in the Republican Party

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*T*he gap between women's representation in the Democratic and Republican parties has grown significantly in the last three decades. We argue existing explanations undervalue voters' contributions to this trend by focusing on voter responses to candidate *sex* rather than candidate *gender*. We theorize that Republican voters (especially the most conservative) prefer masculine candidates in intraparty and entry-level elections. Because sex and gender are correlated, this limits the number of Republican women who advance through the political pipeline. Experimental vignettes from two rounds of the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (N = 2,000) and two large surveys of Republicans (N > 10,000) show that Republican (but not Democratic) voters penalize candidates with "feminine" self-presentation regardless of the candidate's sex. Original data on the self-presentation of Republican candidates for entry-level office (N = 459) confirm Republican candidates often present themselves in gender-stereotypical ways. In short, voters play an underappreciated role in the partisan gap in women's representation.*

There is a large partisan gap in women's representation in the United States, with the proportion of elected Democratic women far outpacing the proportion of elected Republican women (Elder 2014). After the 2018 congressional elections, women made up 37.8% of the Democratic caucus in the House and Senate and only 6.6% of the Republican caucus, a gap of 31.2 percentage points.[1] Even after 2020, a relatively successful election year for Republican women, the partisan gap was still 25.1 percentage points.[2] Hence, many of the most pressing questions about rates of women's representation in the United States are fundamental questions about the lack of women elected from the Republican Party.

Gender scholars have examined some of the partisan differences in candidate pipeline (Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale 2014; Oliver and Conroy 2020; Thomsen 2015), recruitment (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013;

Karpowitz, Monson, and Preece 2017), and campaign finance (Crowder-Meyer and Cooperman 2018; Kitchens and Swers 2016) that contribute to this gap. But while there is increasing recognition that Republican voters' generally higher levels of sexism have important political implications (Cassese and Barnes 2019; Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018), the conventional wisdom is that voter choice is not a primary contributor to women's underrepresentation in the United States. Analyses of actual election returns show when women run, they win at more or less the same rate as men (Dolan 2014). And experimental studies generally show little evidence of voter discrimination against women candidates (Schwarz, Hunt, and Coppock 2018).

We challenge the conventional wisdom that voters do not play a significant role in women's underrepresentation—and in the partisan gap in particular—by arguing that Republican voters may not be markedly responsive to the *sex* of candidates, but they are highly sensitive to the *gender* of candidates (their masculine or feminine self-presentation) and the interaction of sex and gender. The increasingly strong link between masculinity and Republican politics (Hayes 2011; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003; Winter 2010) makes it difficult for candidates with more feminine backgrounds and issue priorities to succeed in the modern Republican Party. Because women are more likely to have feminine self-presentation, a selection process that favors masculinity will have also profound consequences for women's representation.

This insight has been difficult for both observational studies of election outcomes and experimental studies of voter preferences to identify because both see little variation in candidate gender even when there is

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[1] https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/current-numbers.
[2] https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-us-congress-2021.

variation in sex. Observational studies of electoral success typically focus on races for higher office, so any selection for masculinity in entry-level political offices would mean we only see a "unique 'survivor' group" (Sapiro 1981, 63) of women running for higher office. Most experimental studies also suffer from a lack of variation in gender self-presentation among candidates by design: in an effort to isolate the effect of candidate sex, they compare voter reactions to *identical* men and women candidates rather than *typical* men and woman candidates (though see Bauer 2020a; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a; 1993b). In short, in both natural and experimental settings, it can be challenging to empirically disentangle the effects of candidate sex and gender on voter behavior.

In what follows, we draw on five original data collection efforts to examine the relationship between sex, gender, and voter preferences among Democrats and Republicans in intraparty entry-level electoral contests. Experimental vignettes from the nationally representative 2016 and 2018 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) demonstrate stark partisan differences in attitudes toward candidate gender. Two survey experiments each conducted on over 10,000 Republican caucus-goers confirm the CCES findings and allow us to further untangle the relationship between candidate sex and gender, as well as the role of conservative ideology, with a high level of precision. Finally, observational data on Republican candidate self-presentation in entry-level intraparty contests supports our intuition that Republican women are much more likely to present in feminine ways and hence be vulnerable to voter preferences for masculinity.

Together, these findings lead us to conclude that voters—especially the more conservative voters who disproportionately participate in intraparty elections—do contribute to women's underrepresentation in the Republican Party, but they do so mostly indirectly by favoring masculinity over femininity. This selection process filters out candidates, generally women, early on with more feminine self-presentation. Because entry-level political experience can be very important for being recruited for (Crowder-Meyer 2013) and successfully contesting (Kirkland and Coppock 2018) elections, this limits the number of women in the Republican political pipeline, pushes Republican policymakers to emphasize masculine issue priorities and has wide-ranging effects on American politics.

CONCEPTUALIZING CANDIDATE SEX AND GENDERED SELF-PRESENTATION

Pioneering feminists and queer theorists developed "gender" as a distinct concept to signify the idea that society perceives and then enforces distinctions between men and women ("sex") and this shapes social dynamics in a wide variety of ways (Scott 1986), while others focused on the idea that gender is constructed via behaviors, such that when they are enacted this constitutes the creation of one's gender identity (i.e., gender is "performative") (Butler 1990). At the root of this foundational work is the notion that gender is socially constructed and linked to hierarchy—in other words, it is intimately tied to power and politics. Although mainstream empirical political science has generally been slow to grapple with gender as a concept (Bittner and Goodyear-Grant 2017; Schneider and Bos 2019), there are key ways in which it ought to inform our analysis of various political phenomena.

Specifically, we argue conceptualizing gender as distinct from sex reveals significant voter contributions to the large partisan gap in women's representation via a preference for masculinity. When we discuss "gender" we mean the culturally constructed "symbolism of masculinity and femininity that we connect to being male-bodied or female-bodied" (Wade and Marx Ferree 2019, 5). More precisely, the way political candidates "do gender" is a manifestation of what is variously called gender performance, gender expression, gender (self-) presentation, or gender strategy depending on intentionality and context. Language surrounding these issues can be tricky and the needs of the research question should drive how we approach conceptions of gender (Lindqvist, Sendén, and Renström 2020).[3]

We have chosen to use the relatively neutral term of gender self-presentation (or the umbrella term of "gender") to capture ambiguity about the intentionality of a candidate's performance of gender in the context of our work. We think agnosticism about motives is especially appropriate for our work for two reasons. First, our focus is on entry-level candidates with little or no political experience participating in neighborhood caucuses. Some of these candidates may be strategically interacting with cultural scripts about gender, but most likely are not. Second, and perhaps more importantly, our interest is less on the motivations of the candidates and more on the responses of the voters. For example, when candidates talk about being a nurse, voters may read that as a presentation of femininity whether the candidate intended to deploy feminine symbolism or not.

Operationalizing gender self-presentation has become an active discussion in the gender and politics field as scholars have pushed the field to think about gender and candidate evaluations. Schneider and Bos draw on classic sociological work and lay out one approach—social role theory—which argues that "gendered traits and stereotypes develop as a result of the differential roles that men and women occupy in society" (2019, 175). This differentiation takes many forms, but two of the most observable are occupational segregation (176) and public opinion (178).

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[3] Relying on conceptualizations of sex that focus exclusively on male and female bodies leaves out the approximately 2% of the population who are intersex (Blackless et al. 2000), and drawing clear lines between sex and gender belies the ways in which sex itself is socially constructed (Fausto-Sterling 2000). We further acknowledge that attempts to operationalize distinctions between masculinity and femininity are rooted in gender binary ideology and do not reflect the full spectrum of gender expression. They are also culturally specific (Wade and Marx Ferree 2019, 23–31). We believe there is important additional work to be done on these issues.

Our approach to designing the treatments in this project was to create short stump speeches that realistically reflect the way candidates for entry-level political positions present themselves. Our qualitative data reveal these kinds of speeches tend to focus on qualifications (work, prior political experience, life experience) and issue priorities. As Schneider and Bos (2019) note, both of these dimensions are likely to have gendered components. Indeed, Carroll and Sanbonmatsu (2013) show that men and women often come to politics with different backgrounds and life experiences. Men state legislators are more likely than women state legislators to come from law, business, and agriculture; women state legislators are more likely than men state legislators to come from education, nursing, the non-profit sector, and homemaking (2013, 23–4). These differences reflect widespread job segregation in the general population (Blau, Brummund, and Liu 2013) and are likely to have implications in elections. Men and women candidates—again, like men and women in the general population—also have somewhat different policy preferences and priorities (Crowder-Meyer 2007; Lawless 2015). Through the lens of social role theory, we are able to see how occupations and issues that are dominated by men or women become the content of stereotypes regarding masculinity and femininity.

There are, of course, many other ways candidates may express gender in campaigns. Trait-based gender performance is also important, with masculinity focusing on "agentic" traits and femininity on "communal" traits (Conroy and Green 2020; Schneider et al. 2016) and can be operationalized via scales like the Bem Sex-Role Inventory that McDermott (2016) employs in a survey of voters' gendered personalities. Though the specific context of our research did not focus on personality or traits, we see all of this as important to understand the full terrain of how candidates do gender.

While conceptions of masculinity and femininity are derived from the types of things that male- and female-bodied individuals tend to do, they are also available for men and women to perform independent of sex. When applied to candidate self-presentation, this means two things are true: men and women candidates can self-present in masculine or feminine ways (or both), but it is more common that men candidates will present in masculine ways and women candidates in feminine ways. The latter point is key to our argument about voters' roles in women's representation. Discussions of representation tend to focus on the number of men and women in office—in other words, they focus on candidate sex. Empirical approaches that try to ascertain whether voters are to blame for women's underrepresentation generally do so by trying to make all else equal comparisons between men and women who run. But the challenge with these approaches is that "all else equal" misses important real-life gender differences in pathways to power. In other words, sex and gender are confounded in the real world.

Hence, comparing *identical* men and women candidates means that one is not comparing *typical* men and women candidates. A focus on s*ex bias* (whether men or woman candidates are disadvantaged in the electoral process) rather than g*ender bias* (whether masculinity or femininity is disadvantaged in the electoral process) can miss the mechanisms that indirectly lead to lower women's representation.

The bulk of the existing research on the role voters play in women's underrepresentation focuses on measuring sex bias either through experimental manipulation of the sex of a hypothetical candidate or observational work that seeks to make ceteris paribus comparisons about the success of men and women candidates via controls (Bauer 2020b; Brooks 2011, 2013; Burrell 1994; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Dolan 2004; Dolan and Lynch 2013; Ekstrand and Eckert 1981; Fox and Smith 1998; Hayes 2011; King and Matland 2003; Madsen 2019; Mo 2014; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Smith and Fox 2001), with a recent meta-analysis suggesting that there is little or no direct bias against women candidates among voters (Schwarz, Hunt, and Coppock 2018). Yet most scholars studying voter support for men and women candidates either explicitly or implicitly acknowledge that to the extent that voters discriminate, underlying gender stereotypes are likely to blame (Bauer 2015; 2020a; Dolan 2010; Dolan and Lynch 2016; Hayes 2011; Lawless 2004; Mo 2014; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Schneider and Bos 2014).

Given this widespread understanding, it is puzzling that there has been relatively little direct testing of the way that candidate gender self-presentation shapes voter evaluations. Huddy and Terkildsen's (1993a; 1993b) foundational work is a notable exception, as is the handful of more recent studies from political psychology (Bauer 2020a; 2020c) and campaign strategy (Schneider 2014) perspectives that push gender back to the forefront. Our work draws on many of these same themes while also seeking to more fully interrogate the role that partisan stereotypes, the femininity/competence double bind, and the resulting selection effects have on the broader question of why there has been such divergence in recent decades between women's representation within the Republican and Democratic parties.

PARTISAN STEREOTYPES, THE DOUBLE BIND, AND SELECTION EFFECTS

Beyond providing conceptual clarity, distinguishing between how voters' responses to candidate sex and candidate gender self-presentation is important because it holds clues for the partisan patterns in women's representation that shape American politics. Since the 1980s, the image of the Republican Party has become tightly linked to masculinity, both explicitly and implicitly. The development of modern partisan issue ownership leaves Republicans with perceived expertise on "masculine" topics like taxes and defense and Democrats with perceived expertise on "feminine" topics like healthcare and concern for the poor (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). This also bleeds into partisan trait ownership—Democrats are more

compassionate (i.e., feminine) and Republicans are better leaders (i.e., masculine) (Hayes 2005). Hence, "when people think about the Republican Party, they are likely to draw on ideas about masculinity" (Winter 2010, 589). The nomination and election of Donald Trump in 2016 exacerbated this tie between Republican politics and the performance of masculinity (Boatright and Sperling 2019).

Republican voters also tend to be more committed to traditional gender roles than Democratic voters (Horowitz, Parker, and Stepler 2017). And conservative gender attitudes among Republicans have reverberated through elections in important ways (Cassese and Barnes 2019; McDermott 2016; Schaffner 2022; Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018; Sharrow et al. 2016; Thomsen 2015; Wineinger 2019). These partisan differences have been brewing for decades, part of a growing cultural divide between the two parties in which Republicans focus more on moral traditionalism, including traditional gender roles (Layman 2001; Wolbrecht 2000). Of course, attitudinal and policy preference variation exists among Republican identifiers (Barnes and Cassese 2017). But since intraparty contests tend to mobilize stronger and more ideologically extreme partisans (Karpowitz and Pope 2015), those with the most conservative views have an outsized influence on candidate selection and broader party culture (Layman and Weaver 2016). This may help to explain some of the findings about women's disadvantages in primary elections (Lawless and Pearson 2006).

If Republican politics is tied to masculinity and Republican voters have more traditional views on gender roles, many women candidates may struggle to present themselves in ways that are appealing to Republican voters—especially the most conservative Republican voters. The tightrope of needing to present as both strong and competent to comply with masculine ideals of leadership while also refraining from offending traditional gendered expectations of femininity is likely to be most acute for Republican women candidates. Jamieson dubs this the "femininity/competence double bind" and notes that it is likely to be difficult for women politicians to be seen as competent without being seen as unlikeable (Jamieson 1995). While some research disputes the existence of this kind of double bind for women politicians (Barbara Lee Family Foundation 2016; Brooks 2013; Hayes and Lawless 2015), recent research finds that these factors do matter for how candidates both emerge (Oliver and Conroy 2020) and are perceived (Conroy 2016; 2018).

There is some research specifically about how Republican women have attempted to navigate this double bind. For example, Sarah Palin's "mama grizzly" persona was an attempt to repurpose frontier mythology to create a space for strong but feminine women (Gibson and Heyse 2014). Of course, as Wineinger (2019) points out, access to this solution to the double bind is primarily available to white Republican women. Former Representative Mia Love (R-UT), the first Black Republican woman to serve in Congress, had to navigate the gendered terrain much more

carefully to avoid triggering "angry Black woman" and "welfare queen" stereotypes and thus focused much of her self-presentation on motherhood. Republican women from other racial and ethnic backgrounds face their own raced-gendered intersectional tightropes. For example, recently elected Korean-American Members of Congress Young Kim and Michelle Steel of California leaned on their conservative Christian identities and legal immigration stories as they campaigned[4] and have identified as "tough cookies" and "tiger moms"[5] as they address anti-Asian discrimination. Further, research suggests that lesbian candidates may face a particularly tricky masculinity/femininity tightrope, with men voters preferring more feminine self-presentations and women voters preferring more masculine self-presentations, though "these findings may not directly apply to the few cases of openly gay Republican candidates" (Golebiowska 2001). Other research confirms that women voters are more accepting of lesbian candidates, but that conservative voters have much lower levels of acceptance overall (Doan and Haider-Markel 2010). And voters perceive disabled candidates in highly gendered ways (Reher 2021) that could complicate navigating the double bind.

At the elite level, candidates have access to professional pollsters, consultants, and advisers who can steer them toward messages and imaging that account for the challenge of having to appear strong and competent as well as feminine and likable (Dittmar 2015). But these dilemmas could have an especially profound impact on the early stages of the political pipeline of women, where women do not typically have access to these resources.[6] Because of this, we argue that there is good reason to believe that there are selection effects at play regarding which types of women are able to successfully navigate these challenges.

The possibility of early selection effects based on masculinity is important for contextualizing the decades of electoral return analysis that consistently find little bias against women (Burrell 1994; Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994; Dolan 2004; Dolan and Lynch 2016; Ekstrand and Eckert 1981; Hayes 2011; Smith and Fox 2001). Most studies of real-world vote choice focus on elections for relatively high office, namely Congress and statewide executive office. The majority of candidates running for these offices already have electoral experience (Fowler 1996), so these studies generally measure the difference in outcomes between men and women who have already proven themselves to be electable. Indeed, analyses of congressional

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[4] For example, see https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/03/08/what-election-asian-american-gop-women-means-party/ and https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-ca-young-kim-39th-district-20181005-story.html.

[5] https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/21/politics/badass-women-young-kim-michelle-steel-asian-american-women/index.html.

[6] This is, of course, in addition to the way in which campaign finance resources may shape the candidate pool, with Republican women often struggling without the benefit of organizations like EMILY's List (Crowder-Meyer and Cooperman 2018; Thomsen and Swers 2017).

candidate self-presentation mostly find that men and women candidates present themselves similarly (Banwart and Winfrey 2013; Dolan 2005) and some even find that men are more likely to emphasize "feminine" aspects of their stories, like their families (Stalsburg and Kleinberg 2016).

We theorize these races may be too far downstream to catch the most significant ways in which voter biases shape women's representation. Voters are most likely to rely on stereotypes in low-information elections (Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstine 2020; McDermott 1997), such as intraparty contests and entry-level elections. Disadvantages at the earliest stages of the political process can prevent women from gaining political experience that would allow them to be seen as part of the pool of well-qualified candidates for higher office. It can also prevent women from being part of the political networks that most party leaders turn to when thinking about candidate recruitment (Crowder-Meyer 2013). In fact, the handful of studies that have looked at lower-level offices do show some signs of discrimination against women candidates (Brown, Heighberger, and Shocket 1993; Brown 1994; Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstine 2015). Even small biases among voters can compound across the stages of the political pipeline to office, let alone over the course of several elections. Who runs for state and federal office is likely to reflect these selection effects, so examining earlier contests is crucial.

In short, we make three claims about the relationship between voters and the large partisan gap in women's representation. First, voter biases may not be against women per se; rather, they may reflect preferences for masculinity over femininity, and women disproportionately perform femininity. Second, dynamics in the Republican Party that strongly favor masculinity may make it particularly difficult for those whose gender self-presentation skews feminine, disproportionately women, to successfully navigate elections. Finally, studying voter biases in entry-level, intraparty political contests is essential to understanding the role voters play in limiting the pipeline of women candidates. The typical focus on federal and state-level elections is problematic because selection effects have already taken root by that stage. In other words, the partisan gap in women's representation is the result of early stage selection effects in the Republican Party that are technically neutral between men and women candidates but strongly favor masculinity over femininity.

STUDIES 1 AND 2: EXPERIMENTS ON CANDIDATE GENDER PREFERENCES AMONG DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS

To isolate the effect of candidate gender self-presentation on voter behavior, it is necessary to vary candidate gender self-presentation. In the experimental studies that follow, we draw on data about gendered pathways to office and gendered policy priorities to create candidate profiles that have stereotypically masculine and feminine qualifications and issue priorities. Our

vignettes focus on precinct party office elections, as these are an entry-level opportunity for citizens to stand for election and require few qualifications and only a modest time commitment. We thus see this as a hard case for finding gender bias among voters, since the stakes are low and a very wide variety of candidates could adequately represent their neighborhood copartisans in this role.[7]

With these vignettes, outlined in Table 1, we conducted a survey experiment on the 2016 and 2018 CCES to identify patterns in candidate gender preferences among Democratic and Republican voters.[8] Our experiment was included on the pre-election modules that included 1,000 respondents, with a total of 2,000 respondents completing the study over the two election years. Because the research designs of the two studies were identical and results were nearly so, we combine them here for purposes of analysis, a choice that has the added virtue of bolstering our statistical power.[9]

Respondents were presented with a vignette election experiment with hypothetical candidates Julie Baker and Steven Hall using the following introduction: "Below are two hypothetical candidates for the position of delegate to the state [Republican/Democratic] convention. Imagine that they were running for state delegate in your precinct and gave the following speeches. Please read their speeches carefully, make a vote choice, and answer the additional questions on the pages that follow."

In this iteration, Steven Hall always gave a "masculine" speech and Julie Baker gave one of the four speeches listed in Table 1: Masculine; Feminine; Law School Graduate Mom; and Mom. This allows us to ascertain the independent effect of a woman candidate's gendered self-presentation on voter evaluations and vote choice. The first panel shows the language that was shown to Republicans, Republican leaders, and independents who said they would prefer to participate in a Republican primary. The second panel shows the language that was shown to Democrats, Democratic leaders, and independents who preferred to participate in a Democratic primary.

The Masculine condition pairs the occupation of bank vice president or software engineer with a brief conservative or liberal issue statement regarding the economy. The alternative not randomly assigned to Julie Baker was used as the masculine profile for

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[7] One challenge in designing masculine and feminine candidate profiles is that occupational prestige is closely tied to how a job is gendered (Bose and Rossi 1983). While acknowledging this challenge, we build on Carnes (2016) by noting political underrepresentation is often a function of *perceptions* of a group rather than *actual* skills and qualifications for office. Further, when we disaggregate the results between the vice president of a bank and the software engineer, we find no evidence that patterns reported below are driven by respondents privileging the position of bank vice president.
[8] See Supplementary Appendix for details of recruitment and summary statistics.
[9] In the analyses that follow, we control for year. Patterns were similar in both years, though somewhat more pronounced in 2016 than in 2018.

TABLE 1. Experimental Profiles for Woman Candidates 2016–2018 CCES

Label	Text
Republicans	
Masculine	"I'm [a Vice President at a local bank/an engineer at a local software firm]. I'm a committed conservative, and [I'm concerned about the heavy federal tax burden, which hurts economic growth. I trust our state legislators more than the politicians in Washington/I'm very worried about Washington's out-of-control budget deficit. I want to see more spending decisions made at the state and local level]"
Feminine	"I'm [a teacher at a local school/a nurse at a local hospital]. I'm a committed conservative, and I really care about education. I want control over our schools to be handled closer to home, not by bureaucrats in Washington"
Law Grad Mom	"I have a law degree, but right now, I'm a mom who volunteers at my kids' school. I'm a committed conservative, and I really care about education. I want control over our schools to be handled closer to home, not by bureaucrats in Washington"
Mom Only	"I'm a mom who volunteers at my kids' school. I'm a committed conservative, and I really care about education. I want control over our schools to be handled closer to home, not by bureaucrats in Washington"
Democrats	
Masculine	"I'm [a Vice President at a local bank/an engineer at a local software firm]. I'm [dedicated to progressive principles/a committed progressive], and [I'm concerned about a lack of investment in our infrastructure, which hurts economic growth. We need politicians in Washington who will address this issue. / I'm very worried about Wall Street insiders who hurt real economic growth on Main Street. I want to see more government decisions made with this important issue in mind]"
Feminine	"I'm [a teacher at a local school/a nurse at a local hospital]. I'm a committed progressive, and I really care about education. I want to make sure all children, no matter what their background, have the opportunity to succeed in America"
Law Grad Mom	"I have a law degree, but right now, I'm a mom who volunteers at my kids' school. I'm a committed progressive, and I really care about education. I want to make sure all children, no matter what their background, have the opportunity to succeed in America"
Mom Only	"I'm a mom who volunteers at my kids' school. I'm a committed progressive, and I really care about education. I want to make sure all children, no matter what their background, have the opportunity to succeed in America"

Steven Hall. For the Feminine profile, we randomly assigned Julie Baker to be a teacher or a nurse and to talk about education. The Law Graduate Mom has a law degree to signal a middle ground of a more masculine set of qualifications paired with a more feminine issue like education. In the Mom Only condition, Julie Baker only discussed her role as a mother who volunteers at her children's school (though she did not specifically identify herself as a stay-at-home-mom) and as in the other feminine profiles, emphasizes the issue of education. Both the occupation and issue content information, as well as the brevity of the speeches, are extremely realistic for these kind of precinct-level party elections (see Study 5 for more details).

We asked respondents to vote for one of the candidates and rate the likeability and competence of each one. Figure 1 outlines the ratings for likeability and competence that the CCES respondents gave the woman candidate compared to the baseline for the man candidate. The top panel shows the results for Democrats. Strikingly, Democrats always saw the woman candidate as significantly more likeable than the man candidate and feminine profiles received an exceptionally large boost on likeability. What's more, Democrats' competence ratings did not follow a "double bind" pattern, in which likeability is seen in opposition to competence and vice versa. The Masculine woman was seen as statistically indistinguishable from the Masculine man with regard to competence. Democratic respondents saw the Feminine woman and the Law Graduate Mom as *more* competent than the masculine man. Only in the Mom Only condition was the woman seen as less competent than the man. This is not to say that Democratic women candidates face no gender-related barriers, but Democratic voters tend to see a wide variety of woman candidates as both more likeable and more competent than a stereotypically masculine man candidate.

Among the nationally representative sample of Republicans, however, a different pattern emerges. The woman candidate in the Masculine condition was seen as about as likeable as the masculine man, while the women candidates in the more feminine conditions were regarded as more likeable. However, the competence ratings followed the opposite pattern, yielding solid evidence of a likability/competence double bind for women candidates among Republican voters. These effects are modest but meaningful. Among Republicans, for example, Cohen's d for the effect on likeability of the Mom Only condition (as opposed to the Masculine condition) was 0.26, and the effect on competence was 0.49.

FIGURE 1. **Gender Differences in Candidate Trait Evaluations, 2016 and 2018 CCES**
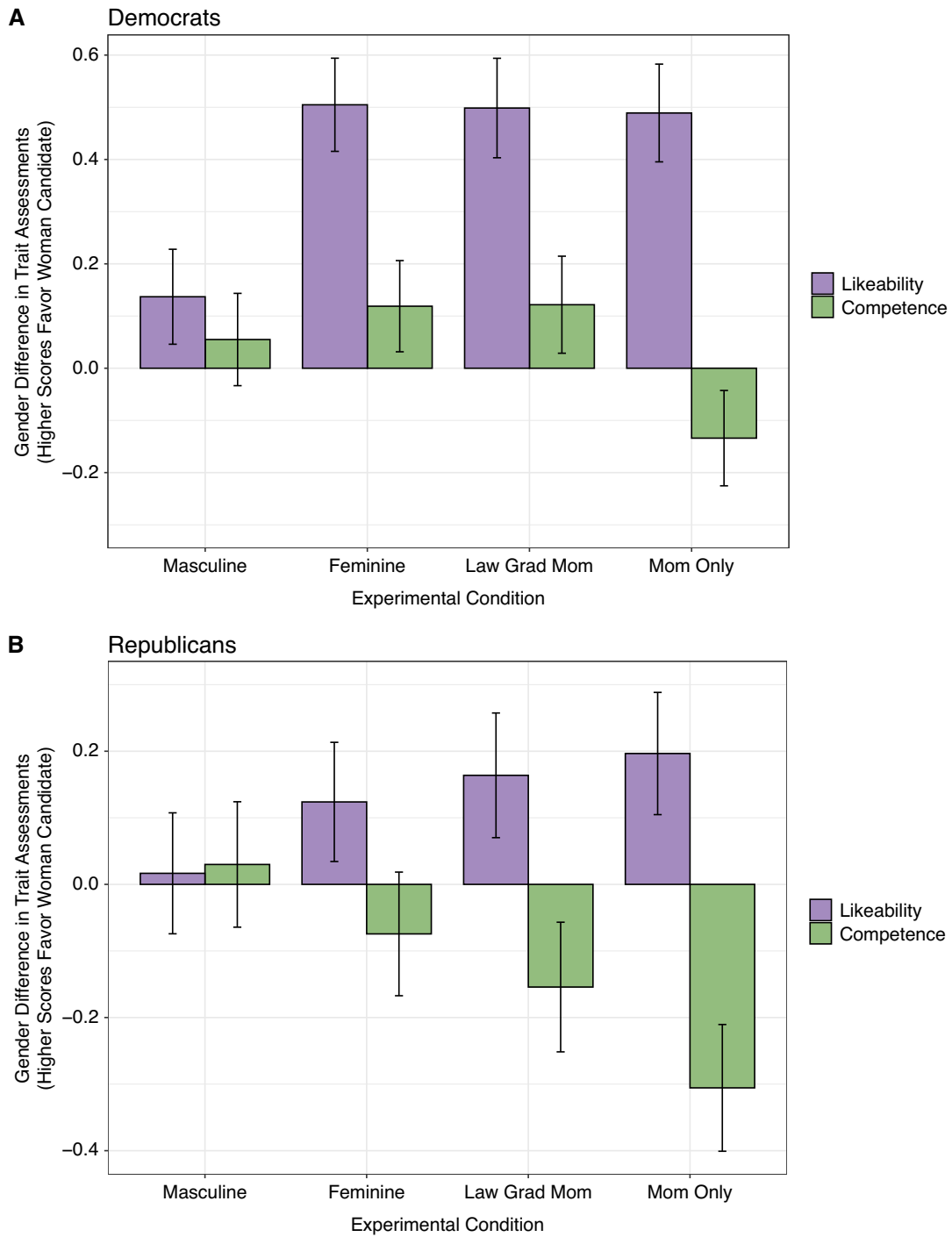
Figure 2 shows the results of the respondents' vote choice, and the dashed line is at 0.5—the point where the choice between the man and the woman is a coin flip. In every condition, Democratic voters significantly preferred the woman candidate, with the Feminine woman winning an astounding 75% of the time. Republican voters were less enthusiastic toward the woman candidate. In the Masculine condition, Republicans were indifferent between identical, masculine-coded men and women candidates. This replicates previous experimental work that finds little sex discrimination against identical women and men candidates. Republicans were also willing to vote for the Feminine candidate. However, the Law Grad Mom and Mom Only

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FIGURE 2. Women's Electoral Success by Condition and Respondent Party, 2016 and 2018 CCES
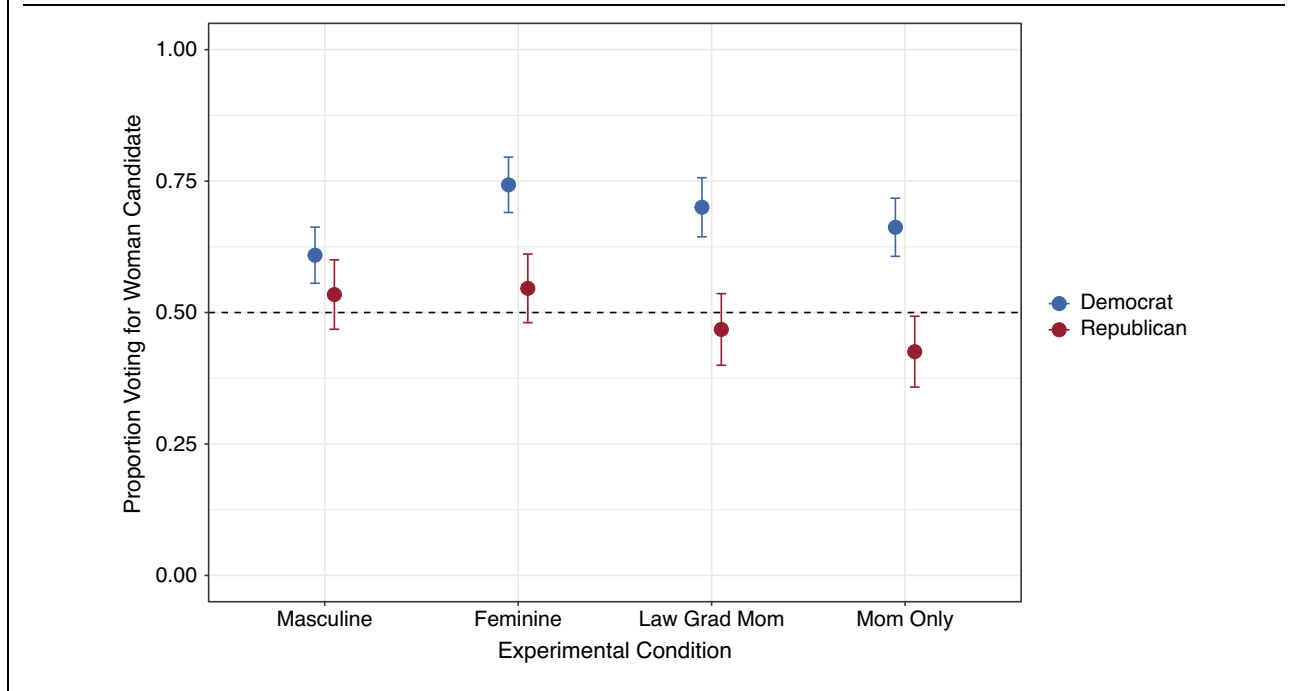
faced an electoral penalty, though only the Mom Only condition is statistically significant.

What's more, we find strong indications that voter's self-identified ideology plays an important role in these evaluations among Republicans. Figure 3 presents these results. Among Democrats (Figure 3a), we find no strong difference between the most liberal respondents and voters with more moderate ideological commitments. The pattern is quite different in Panel B. Self-reported strongly conservative Republicans penalized women candidates in the more feminine conditions, specifically the Feminine and Mom Only conditions. This penalty is substantial: strong conservatives were about 20 percentage points less likely to vote for women who self-presented with these profiles. In the Feminine condition, the difference between strong conservatives and other Republicans was also especially pronounced. However, strong conservatives did not seem to penalize the Law Grad Mom, though the confidence intervals are large. One interpretation of these results is that once a woman disclosed a more "masculine" credential, the strongest conservatives were willing to vote for her at rates equal to the masculine man candidate.

These results are consistent with the idea that the parties have diverged, with femininity being culturally acceptable and even desirable in the Democratic Party but presenting challenges among Republican voters, especially the most conservative Republican voters. Nevertheless, the sample sizes from our CCES data limit the extent to which we can dive into what is happening among Republicans, so the next section presents data from two large surveys of politically active Republicans.

STUDIES 3 AND 4: EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE OF ELECTORAL PENALTY FOR FEMININITY AMONG REPUBLICANS

In this section, we use experimental data from two large original surveys of politically active Republicans in a conservative, Republican-dominated state to understand in more detail the dynamics of candidate gender preferences among Republicans. Because these surveys are drawn from party caucus participants, they give us an especially clear view into the ways in which the party selectorate views candidates. Politically active individuals like the ones we survey have an outsized influence on the party ethos (Layman et al. 2010), so understanding their candidate preferences may be especially important. Study 3 is very similar to the design of the CCES experiments, while Study 4 expands on these experiments to test the effects of masculinity and femininity for both men and women candidates.

Study 3: 2016 Survey of Republican Caucus Participants

Study 3 consists of an online survey of 2016 Republican presidential caucus participants in this conservative, Republican-dominated state. We administered this survey just a few days after the 2016 party caucus meeting. We had unexpectedly high cooperation rates and received more than 10,000 responses, about half of whom were asked to respond to the experiment described here.[10]

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[10] See Supplementary Appendix for details of recruitment and summary statistics.

FIGURE 3. Women's Electoral Success by Condition and Respondent Party and Ideology, 2016 and 2018 CCES
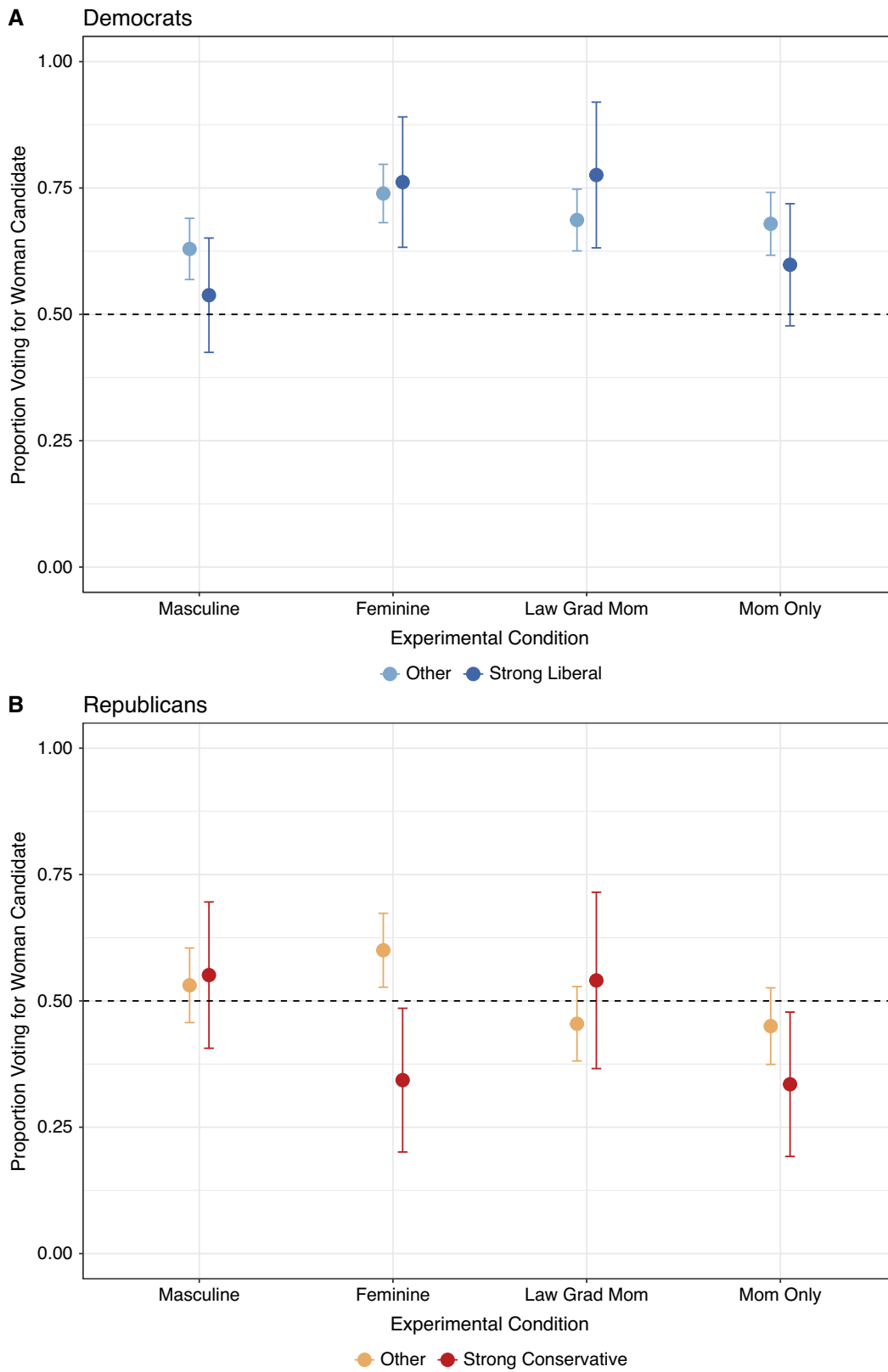
TABLE 2. Experimental Profiles for Woman Candidates 2016 Caucus Attender Study

Label	Text
Masculine	"I'm [a Vice President at a local bank / an engineer at a local software firm]. I'm a committed conservative, and [I'm concerned about the heavy federal tax burden, which hurts economic growth. I trust our state legislators more than the politicians in Washington/I'm very worried about Washington's out-of-control budget deficit. I want to see more spending decisions made at the state and local level]"
Masculine + Mom	"I'm [a Vice President at a local bank/an engineer at a local software firm] and a mom who volunteers at my kids' school. I'm a committed conservative …"
Feminine	"I'm [a teacher at a local school/a nurse at a local hospital]. I'm a committed conservative, and I really care about education. I want control over our schools to be handled closer to home, not by bureaucrats in Washington"
Feminine + Mom	"I'm [a teacher at a local school/a nurse at a local hospital] and a mom who volunteers at my kids' school. I'm a committed conservative, and I really care about education. I want control over our schools to be handled closer to home, not by bureaucrats in Washington"
Mom Only	"I'm a mom who volunteers at my kids' school. I'm a committed conservative, and I really care about education. I want control over our schools to be handled closer to home, not by bureaucrats in Washington"

After some warm-up questions, respondents were presented with a vignette election experiment very similar to the one in Study 1. Respondents were asked to evaluate candidates Steven Hall and Julie Baker to represent their precinct at a state party convention. As in the CCES experiment, for Steven Hall, the speech content always included masculine content about occupation and a brief issue statement. For Julie Baker, the speech content was randomized between five parallel profiles: Masculine, Masculine + Mom, Feminine, Feminine + Mom, and Mom Only.[11] Table 2 contains the full question wording of the five possible candidate occupation and issue profiles randomly assigned to Julie Baker.[12] Of particular note are the +Mom conditions, which added "…and a mom who volunteers at my kids' school" to Julie Baker's masculine or feminine occupation.

In these studies, we again asked respondents for a vote choice between Steven Hall and Julie Baker, as well as their impressions of the candidates' likeability and competence. Figure 4 presents the gender differences in judgments about the candidates, with positive scores indicating that respondents had a more positive view of the woman candidate than the (always masculine) man and negative scores indicating the opposite.

As in Studies 1 and 2, when the woman candidate presented herself in a masculine way, her likeability rating was indistinguishable from the masculine man candidate. But when a women's self-presentation included more feminine traits, she gained a significant "likeability advantage" over a masculine man. Though the full scale has a 7-point range, 95% of cases ranged

between −1 and +1, so this advantage represents between 1/3 and 1/2 of a standard deviation (Cohen's d ranges between 0.28 and 0.38). The most dramatic example of this is while women in the Masculine condition enjoyed no likeability advantage over men, women who simply added to their more masculine profile a mere mention that they volunteered at their children's school were seen as substantially more likeable than the man candidate. This likeability advantage was present for each of the more feminine profiles (Feminine, Feminine + Mom, and Mom Only).

Ratings of competence again follow an opposite pattern. In the Masculine condition, women were seen as equally competent as men. But, in every other condition, all of which presented women in more stereotypically feminine ways, women were seen as substantially less competent than men (Cohen's d ranges between 0.32 and 0.60). Together, the two trends in Figure 4 offer more clear evidence of a classic "double bind" for women candidates. When women described themselves as having more stereotypically feminine career paths and issue interests, respondents liked them more than the man candidate but simultaneously judged them to be less capable.

How do the experimental conditions affect respondents' vote choices? Figure 5 presents the proportion voting for the woman candidate, and several key results emerge from the figure. First, women are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged electorally when they present themselves with a more masculine profile. The proportion voting for the woman candidate was almost exactly 0.5. This result again replicates previous experimental work that has shown little disadvantage for women running for office when they have identical profiles to men.

But our results also qualify previous work in important ways. For example, women who self-presented with a masculine profile and also mentioned their identities as mothers received a significant electoral advantage, with voters choosing the woman candidate

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[11] These data were collected before Study 1, which is why there is no Law School Graduate Mom condition.

[12] There was an additional condition in the experiment: half of the profiles included a "Gender Appeal," in which Julie Baker added at the end of her speech, "I believe women like me have a lot to add to our party." We control for this treatment in these analyses (see Supplementary Tables A4 and A5).

FIGURE 4. Gender Differences in Candidate Trait Evaluations by Condition, 2016 GOP Caucus Attender Study
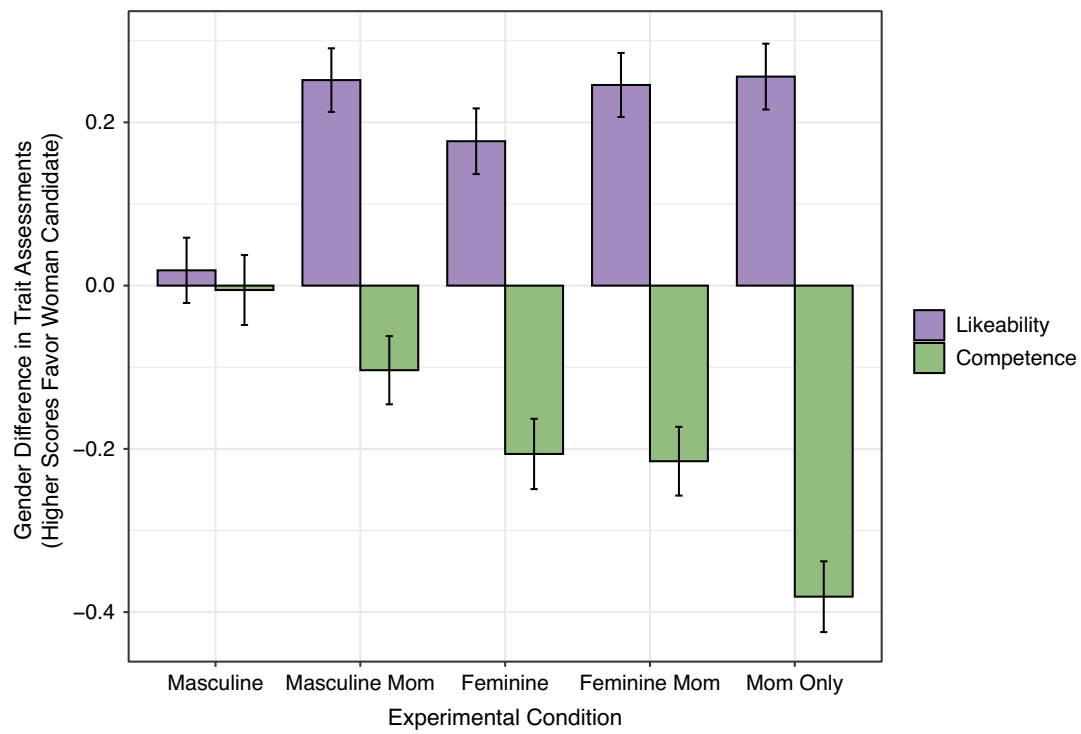

FIGURE 5. Women's Electoral Success by Condition, 2016 GOP Caucus Attender Study
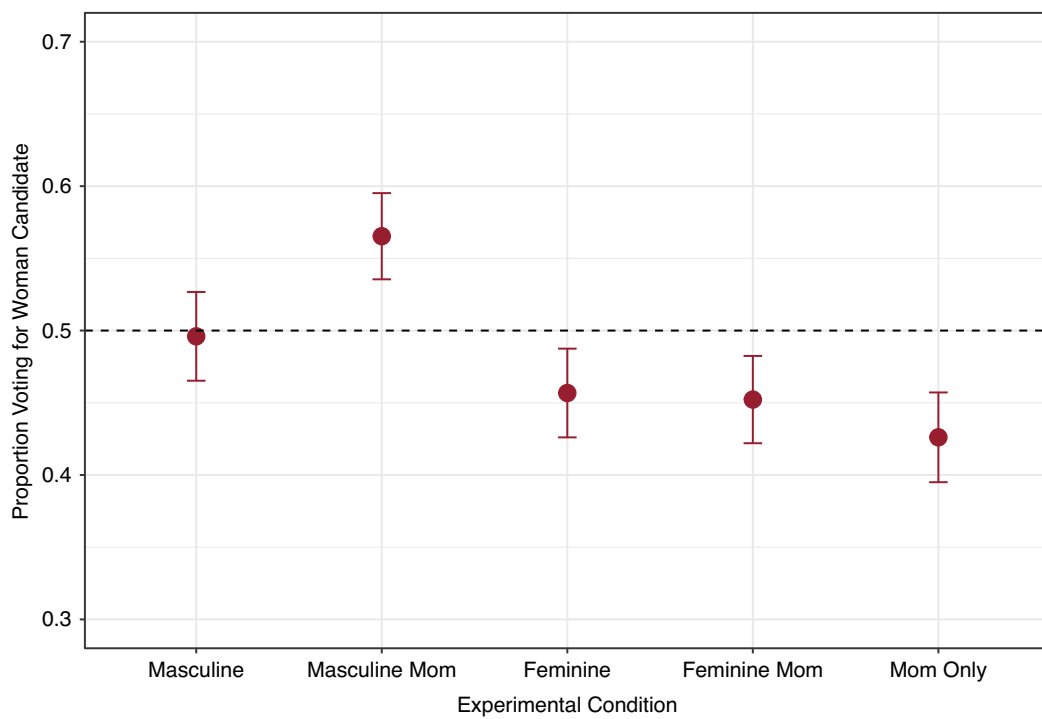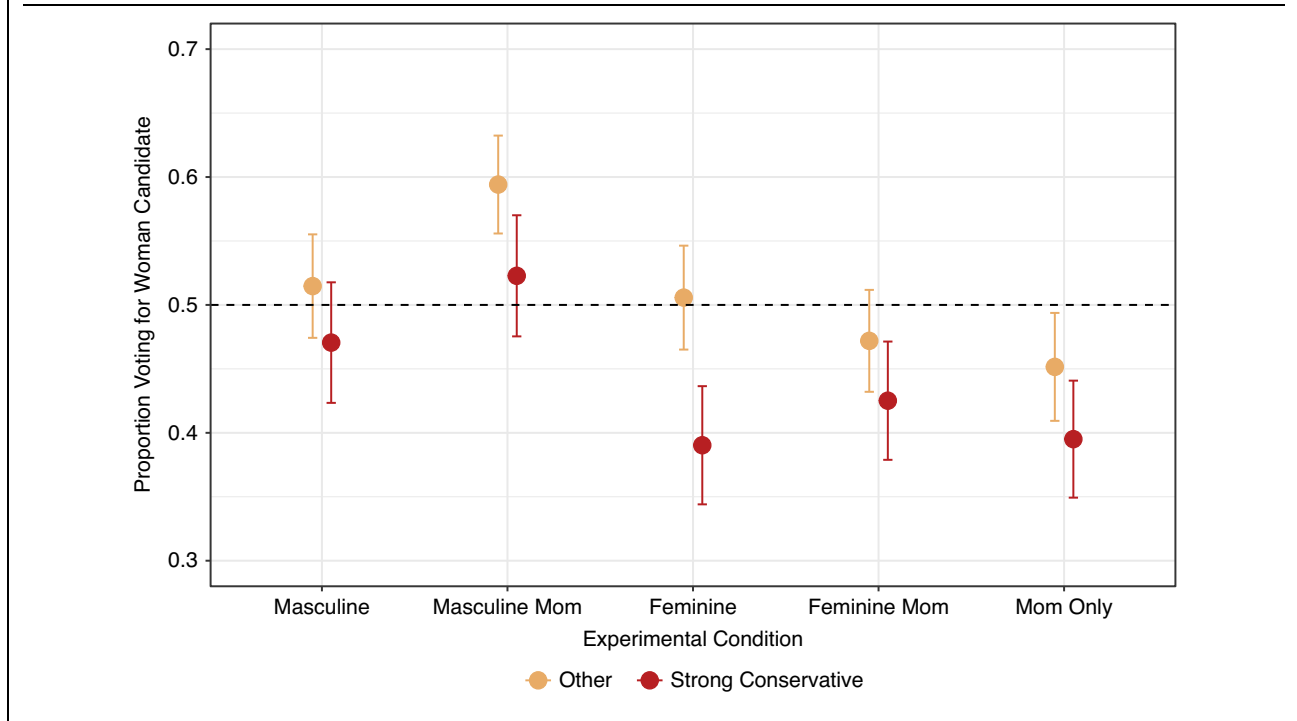
FIGURE 6. Women's Electoral Success by Respondent Ideology, 2016 GOP Caucus Attender Study

much more than half of the time. This "supermom" profile is the only experimental condition in which women had an electoral advantage among the respondents in this sample of Republican caucus attenders. Conversely, women who self-presented in more stereotypically feminine ways and did not mention more masculine attributes were electorally disadvantaged, with the proportion voting for a woman falling well short of 0.5 in the Feminine, Feminine + Mom, and Mom Only conditions. The greatest disadvantage for women was in the Mom Only condition, where the proportion voting for a woman was only 0.426 (95% CI ranges from 0.395 to 0.457). Relative to the Masculine condition, this is the difference between a coin flip election and a nearly 15-point loss.

As in the CCES data, self-identified ideology plays a key role in driving these results. We analyzed the data by self-reported degree of conservativeness. Figure 6 shows these trends. "Strong conservatives" were generally much less likely to support women candidates than other kinds of Republicans across the board.[13] Feminine women faced especially stiff electoral penalties among strong conservatives, a fact that is especially important given evidence that those who self-identify as most conservative are also more likely to participate in primary elections and caucuses designed to winnow the candidate field (Brady, Han, and Pope 2007;

Karpowitz and Pope 2015). We estimate that among strong Republicans, women who self-presented with a Feminine or Mom Only profile were likely to face a more than 20-point electoral rout. However, among other Republicans, the results were more promising for women. These more moderate Republicans were especially enthusiastic about the Masculine + Mom profile, and Mom Only was the only woman candidate who faced a clear electoral penalty.

In short, women do better with Republican voters—especially more conservative ones—when they focus on more stereotypically masculine qualifications and issues like taxes and the budget deficit rather than more stereotypically feminine issues like education. Women who self-present by emphasizing comparatively more feminine qualifications and issue interests faced a classic double bind; while they are seen as more likeable, they are also judged as less competent and were ultimately less likely to receive the votes of Republican caucus attenders, with the strongest conservatives driving this pattern.

Study 4: 2018 Survey of Republican Caucus Participants

Thus far, we have made the case that Republican voters do not necessarily show a bias against women candidates, but rather show a bias against feminine candidates. In other words, the underrepresentation of women in the Republican Party is the result of gender bias more than sex bias, especially among the most conservative voters. However, to fully make the case that femininity is an electoral liability independent of sex, we need to examine what happens when

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[13] We also find some evidence of differences between men and women respondents (see Supplementary Table A3) and the size of the treatment effects was largest among very conservative men. However, this difference between men and women was not present in the CCES data.

FIGURE 7. Gender Differences in Candidate Trait Evaluations, 2018 GOP Caucus Attender Study
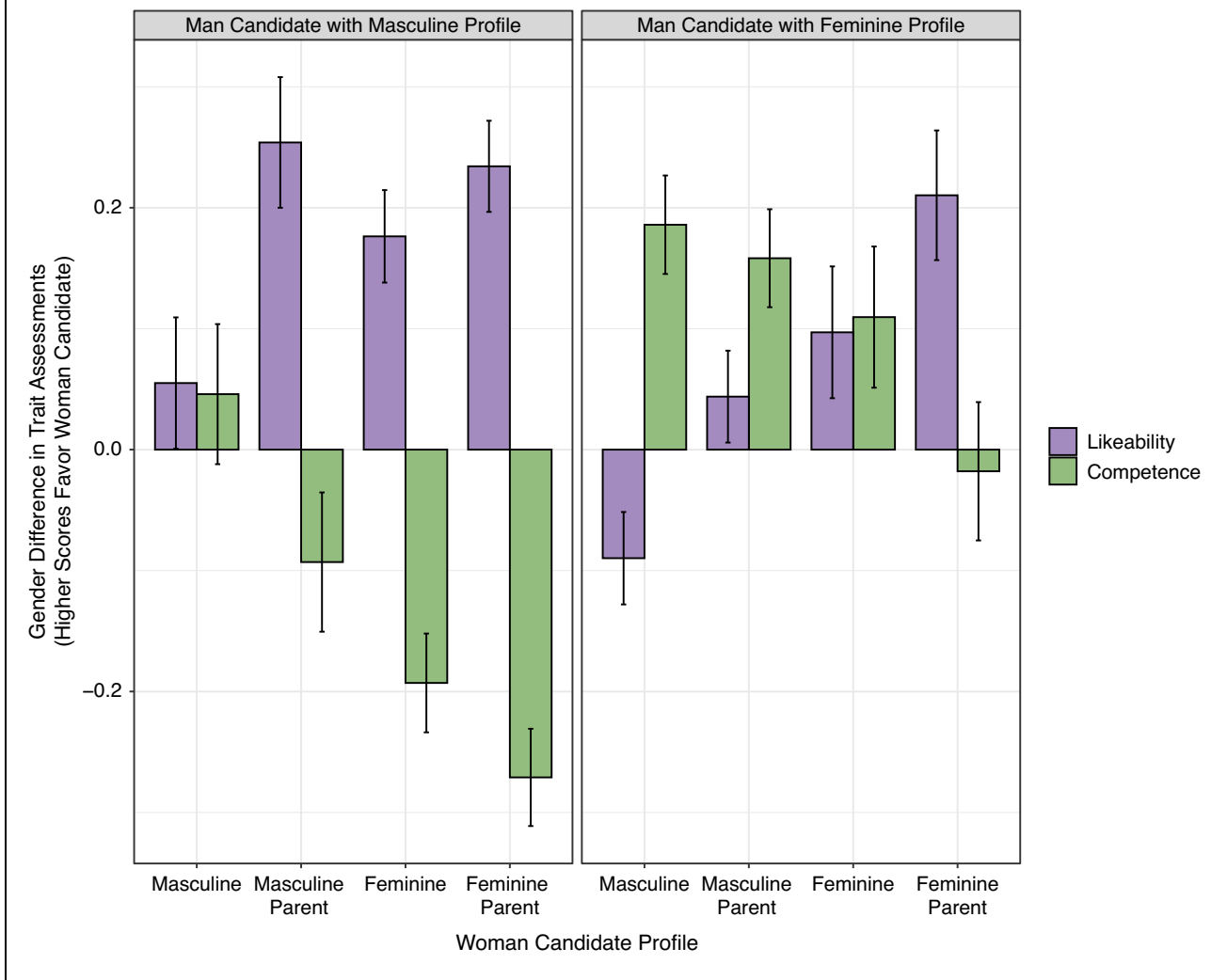
respondents are presented with masculine and feminine men candidates as well as women candidates.

To do so, in 2018 we recontacted the pool of Republican voters we surveyed in 2016 with a new survey experiment. Once again, we received more than 10,000 responses.[14] In this experiment, we again measured support for Julie Baker and Steven Hall with four profiles: Masculine, Masculine+Parent, Feminine, and Feminine+Parent (see Supplementary Table A6 for full text). However, instead of always assigning Steven Hall the masculine profile, we allowed for all 16 possible permutations between the candidates. This fully crossed design allows us to compare the effect of a masculine or feminine profile on Julie to the effect of a masculine or feminine profile on Steven, which is important for untangling the influence of sex and gender.

Figure 7 reveals the effect of the experimental treatments on the gap in likeability and competence. The

left panel of the figure displays the results when the man candidate took on a Masculine profile across each of the four profiles to which the woman candidate could have been randomly assigned.[15] These results essentially replicate our findings from the two previous survey experiments. When Steven had a Masculine profile, Julie experienced no deficit in likeability or competence if she also had a Masculine profile. Her likeability increased and competence decreased when she emphasized her role as a parent, and the competence-likeability double bind was largest in the conditions where Julie's was described with a Feminine profile or when she combined her Feminine profile with references to motherhood.

The right panel of Figure 7 shows how trait evaluations are affected by giving the man candidate the Feminine profile. The third set of bars, for example, demonstrates the effect of giving the man candidate a

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[14] See Supplementary Appendix for details of recruitment and summary statistics.

[15] Results for conditions in which the man candidate described himself as a "dad who volunteers at his kids' school" can be seen in Supplementary Figure A1.

FIGURE 8. Probability of Voting for Woman Candidate by Condition, 2018 GOP Caucus Attender Study
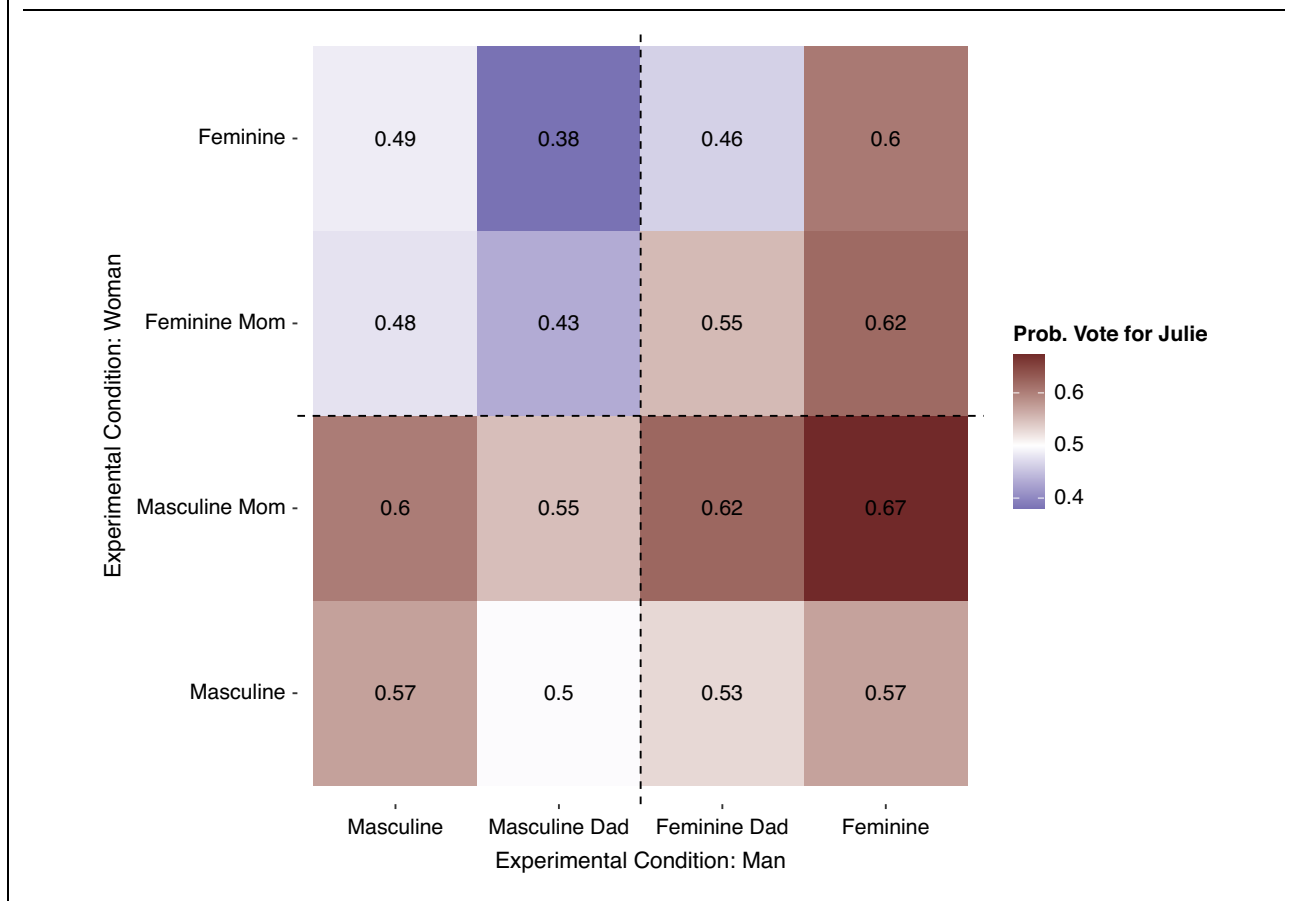
feminine profile and the woman candidate a masculine profile. In this condition, the pattern was the inverse of the double bind the feminine woman candidate experienced in our previous studies and in the left panel of Figure 7. When given a Masculine profile and running against a Feminine man, Julie was seen as more competent and less likeable than Steven. In other words, when we reversed candidate sex and gender, it was the man, not the woman, who experienced the double bind.

However, the right panel of Figure 7 is not a perfect mirror reverse of the left panel. When compared to Steven with a feminine profile, Julie experienced an advantage in both competence and likeability in nearly every other experimental treatment. Thus, our results suggest that Republican voters especially penalize feminine men. In other words, gendered expectations interact with and cannot be completely disentangled from sex because men who violate those expectations by taking on a feminine profile are regarded in less positive ways across multiple evaluative dimensions.

Figure 8 illustrates how the various permutations affected vote choice decisions, with each of the 16 boxes indicating one experimental condition. The estimated probability of voting for the woman candidate in each matchup is highlighted by the color coding, with darker reds indicating a greater likelihood of a victory for her. In this sample, unlike the 2016 sample, voters somewhat preferred Julie over Steven on average. But we do see considerable variation across the different matchups, with both Julie and Steven performing much better when they have masculine profiles than when they have feminine profiles. The worst scenario for Julie (38%) is when she has the Feminine profile and Steven has the Masculine Dad profile, and the best scenario for her (67%) is the reverse—when she has the Masculine Mom and he has the Feminine profile.

As in other analyses, these results become even more dramatic when we subset our sample on self-identified "strongly conservative" respondents. Figure 9 shows an extremely clear pattern of masculinity mattering more than sex for these respondents. When both candidates present as masculine or both present as feminine, the outcomes depend on who talks about parenthood but generally show a weak preference for Julie (in keeping with this sample's overall weak preference for her). However, when Julie presents as feminine and Steven as masculine (the upper left-hand quadrant of the figure), she faces a deficit of between 18 and 34 percentage points.[16] When Steven presents as feminine and Julie as masculine (the lower righthand quadrant), he faces a deficit between 16 and 32 percentage points.

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[16] If the probability of voting for one candidate is 0.33, for example, the probability of voting for the other is, by definition, 0.67, yielding a deficit of 34 percentage points.

FIGURE 9. Probability of Voting for Woman Candidate by Condition, 2018 GOP Caucus Attender Study, Strong Conservatives Only
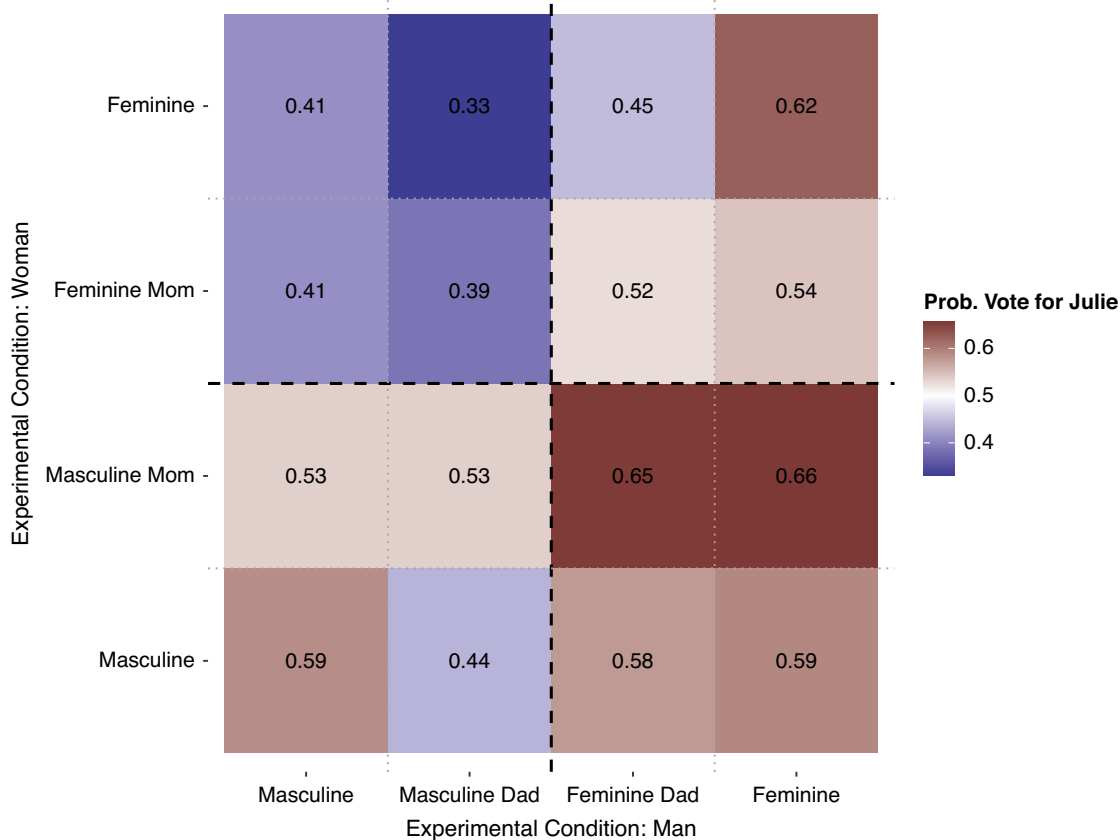
In other words, both candidates are extremely unlikely to win the support of conservative voters when they have a feminine profile and their opponent has a masculine profile.

Together, these results provide evidence that among Republicans, gender presentations profoundly shape voters' judgments about candidates and their leadership traits, and they do so independent of candidate sex. This influences vote choice, *especially* among the most conservative Republicans.

STUDY 5: OBSERVATIONAL DATA ON REPUBLICAN MEN'S AND WOMEN'S SELF-PRESENTATION

In the real world, is variation in candidate gender actually correlated with candidate sex? Existing research suggests that women and men do have somewhat different pathways to power (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013), but there is no evidence that men and women candidates for offices like gubernatorial or congressional races present themselves in dramatically different ways with regard to masculinity and femininity (Banwart and Winfrey 2013; Dolan 2005; Stalsburg and Kleinberg 2016). However, we suspect this may be

the results of selection effects and that data from entry-level elections may show gender differences.

In this section, we report data we gathered from neighborhood Republican Party precinct caucus meetings in 2014 in the same conservative state as Studies 3 and 4.[17] We find solid support for the idea that among these candidates for entry-level party offices, there are distinct differences in how men and women present themselves with regard to their qualifications and issue priorities, and these correspond with stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity. Of course, there are also many similarities between men and women in these races, but we believe the evidence we present here provides an important plausibility check for our argument that voters have ample opportunity in entry-level races to shape the candidate pipeline according to their gender biases and that this disproportionately hurts women candidates.

We sent dozens of trained student observers to a random sample of locations within a four-county geographic area that contains about 75% of this Republican-dominated state's population. They

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[17] Our memorandum of understanding with the party prevents us from being able to disclose the specific state these data were gathered from.

TABLE 3. Gender Differences in Topics Mentioned 2014 Neighborhood Caucus Observations

	Men	Women	Difference	z	p
Qualifications	60.77	65.83	–5.07	0.98	0.33
	(2.65)	(4.32)	(5.08)		
Issues	52.21	50.00	2.21	0.42	0.68
	(2.71)	(4.56)	(5.31)		
Ideological references	45.72	44.17	1.56	0.29	0.77
	(2.71)	(4.53)	(5.29)		
Neighborhood	22.12	20.00	2.12	0.49	0.63
	(2.25)	(3.65)	(4.29)		
Party platform	6.78	0.83	5.95	2.52	0.01
	(1.37)	(0.83)	(1.60)		
Family	6.19	18.33	–12.14	3.92	<0.001
	(1.31)	(3.53)	(3.77)		
Gender appeal	1.77	11.67	–9.90	4.56	<0.001
	(0.72)	(2.93)	(3.02)		

Note: Cell entries in the women and men columns are average values for each gender; standard errors are in parentheses. The difference column, *z*, and *p*-values are generated from a difference-of-proportions test. *N* = 339 men, 120 women.

gathered information about who ran for delegate and other precinct positions, as well as what was said during those contests. The neighborhood caucus meetings examined here are much like the well-known Iowa presidential caucuses in structure and form. Redlawsk, Tolbert, and Donovan (2011, 24) succinctly describe the Iowa caucuses as "lengthy local party meetings used to conduct party business and select delegates." Neighbors in the precinct gather as partisans to nominate and elect precinct leaders, collect funds for the local party organization, discuss issues, and select delegates to county and state nominating conventions.

We focus on candidate speechmaking and self-presentation in campaigns for the position of delegate to the state party convention ("state delegates"). State delegates have historically played an important role in nominating candidates for statewide and federal offices and determining the party platform. These are the most important and competitive races held at the caucus meetings, with over 97% of state delegate contests having more than one candidate. However, barriers to election as a state delegate are low, even for political novices. About 3,500 delegates are elected statewide every two years at more than 2,000 precinct caucus meetings that are attended by as few as a half-dozen or as many as a couple of hundred voters per meeting. Getting nominated requires no advance preparation; campaigning is typically limited to a short speech of a minute or two at the neighborhood meeting. Turnover from year to year is high. Hence, these caucuses are an ideal setting to study and observe low-stakes, grass-roots candidate emergence. Women typically comprise about 20–25% of elected delegates, despite the fact that caucus meetings are, on average, roughly evenly split between men and women.

To collect detailed data about the proceedings of the precinct meetings, we sent trained observers who were blind to the purposes of the study to a sample (*n* = 130) of meetings held in 2014.[18] Observers kept systematic notes about the candidates who ran for office, including which candidates gave speeches and which did not, as well as the content of these speeches. (See Supplementary Appendix for additional details about the observers.) After observers completed their work, a separate set of coders, also blind to the overall purpose of the study, were trained to read and code the observers' notes. The observer's notes on speeches were not especially extensive. At the same time, the norm for these speeches is that they are quite short. Thus, while coding for the content of speeches is a blunt instrument for identifying patterns because of their brevity, it is also likely that student observers could accurately capture the gist of what was said.[19]

Overall, we have speech summaries for 339 men and 120 women candidates. Table 3 captures the gender differences in the general topic areas mentioned by the candidates (see Supplementary Appendix for details of the coding instructions). Large percentages of both men and women candidates talked about their qualifications for office, raised issues they cared about, and made reference to ideology. In this sense, these speeches are similar in structure to stump speeches candidates at higher electoral levels might give.

Men and women both mentioned qualifications, issues, ideology, and neighborhood most frequently. But, men were somewhat more likely than women to talk about the party platform, while women were substantially more likely than men to talk about gender and to reference family in some way. This is the opposite of what analysis of congressional candidates finds

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[18] The experimental conditions of the larger project, described in Karpowitz, Monson, and Preece (2017), did not have an effect on the content of the speeches; thus, we have combined all of the data for this article.

[19] See Supplementary Appendix for details of intercoder reliability.

TABLE 4. What Sorts of Qualifications Are Mentioned?

	Men	Women	Difference	z	p
Qualifications mentioned					
Party offices held	21.11	19.23	1.87	0.35	0.73
	(2.25)	(3.65)	(4.29)		
Previous experience as delegate	20.60	17.95	2.65	0.50	0.62
	(2.87)	(4.35)	(5.21)		
Professional background	19.60	20.51	−0.91	0.17	0.86
	(2.81)	(4.57)	(5.37)		
Executive and business experience	11.56	2.56	9.00	2.35	0.02
	(2.27)	(1.79)	(2.89)		
Military service	6.53	1.28	5.25	1.79	0.07
	(1.75)	(1.27)	(2.17)		
Campaign experience	1.01	2.56	−1.56	0.98	0.33
	(0.71)	(1.79)	(1.92)		
Homemaker/Parent	0.50	6.41	−5.91	3.04	0.002
	(0.50)	(2.77)	(2.81)		
Issues mentioned					
Education	25.14	43.33	−18.19	2.66	0.008
	(3.28)	(6.40)	(7.19)		
The Constitution	16.57	20.00	−3.43	0.60	0.55
	(2.81)	(5.16)	(5.88)		
Marriage and marriage equality	15.42	13.33	2.10	0.39	0.69
	(2.73)	(4.39)	(5.17)		
The caucus system	12.00	10.00	2.00	0.42	0.68
	(2.46)	(3.87)	(4.59)		
Government spending/deficit	10.86	5.00	5.86	1.34	0.18
	(2.35)	(2.81)	(3.67)		
Taxes	6.86	1.67	5.19	1.52	0.13
	(1.91)	(1.65)	(2.53)		
Gun control	4.57	3.33	1.24	0.41	0.68
	(1.58)	(2.32)	(2.80)		
Health care	4.00	1.67	2.33	0.86	0.39
	(1.48)	(1.65)	(2.22)		
Economy/jobs	3.43	1.67	1.76	0.69	0.49
	(1.38)	(1.65)	(2.15)		
Religious freedom	2.29	0.00	2.29	1.18	0.24
	(1.13)	(0.00)	(1.13)		
National defense	1.43	0.00	1.43	0.83	0.41
	(0.80)	(0.00)	(0.80)		
The environment	0.57	1.67	−1.10	0.80	0.43
	(0.57)	(1.65)	(1.75)		

Note: Cell entries in the women and men columns are average values for each gender; standard errors are in parentheses. The difference column, *z*, and *p*-values are generated from a difference-of-proportions test. Analysis limited to candidates who mentioned qualifications (*N* = 199 men, 78 women) or issues (*N* = 175 men, 60 women) in any way.

(Stalsburg and Kleinberg 2016), but it is consistent with studies about the politicization of motherhood (Deason, Greenlee, and Langner 2015) and how conservative women politicians frame their family experiences (Schreiber 2016; Wineinger 2019).

More specifically, Table 4 presents the *types* of qualifications men and women highlighted in their speeches, with results limited to the subset of candidates who mentioned any qualifications at all. Among this group, many candidates talked about their professional backgrounds (work as lawyers, doctors, engineers, nurses, or teachers, for example), their previous experience as a state delegate, previous experience in other party offices, or previous campaign experience. For these qualifications, we find no meaningful gender differences. However, men referenced executive or business experience (work as business managers, small business owners, and other similar management positions) much more often than women and were marginally more likely to invoke past military service. Women were substantially more likely than men to describe themselves as parents or homemakers.

Table 4 also shows the gender differences in specific issues raised among the subset of candidates for state delegate offices who mentioned any issues at all. The most common issues referenced by candidates of both sexes were education, the Constitution, marriage and marriage equality, government spending and the

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deficit, and the neighborhood caucus system itself—a list that is not surprising for a conservative gathering.

Men were somewhat more likely than women to talk about the economy, government spending and the deficit, taxes, and healthcare,[20] though these differences do not reach statistical significance in a difference-of-proportions test. In a regression model with controls, however, men candidates' increased likelihood of mentioning government spending and the deficit ($p = 0.09$) and taxes ($p = 0.09$) come closer to standard levels of statistical significance. On the other hand, women were dramatically more likely to talk about education than men, with more than 43% mentioning it, compared to 25% of men. This gender difference is statistically robust ($p = 0.008$) in a difference-of-proportions test and remains so in regression models with controls ($p = 0.005$). These results are largely consistent with previous work (Crowder-Meyer 2007; Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014), which finds that in the general population, men tend to be somewhat more focused on financial issues like taxes, government spending, and the economy, while women often prioritize "care issues" like education or the needs of families and children.

Overall, our content analysis of the speeches shows many similarities between men and women candidates. But it also reveals meaningful differences between men and women that reinforce and reproduce stereotypically masculine and feminine identities and concerns. While candidates constructed their speeches in broadly similar ways, men and women often emphasized different sorts of social roles, personal experiences, and political issues. Men were more likely to highlight their executive experience and military service, label themselves as conservatives, and emphasize concerns about government spending and taxes. Women were more likely to invoke the role of homemaker or stay-at-home parent, to describe themselves in terms of their familial relationships, to raise the issue of education, and to make gender-based appeals to the voters.

These gendered differences in self-presentation also seem to be related to candidates' electoral prospects. While our findings here are strictly observational and constrained by the limited information we have about each candidate, regression analysis shows that women who presented in distinctively feminine ways—mentioning being a homemaker or parent, invoking family as a topic, or raising the issue of education—were less likely to be elected as a state delegate (see Supplementary Table A9).[21] The size of the effect for women

candidates was substantial, reducing the predicted probability of being elected by more than 20 percentage points (Supplementary Figure A2). For men, the effect of feminine self-presentation was also negative, but much smaller and not statistically robust. In addition, the effect of male self-presentation, defined as mentioning business or executive experience, military background, conservative ideology, taxes and government spending, or deficits, was positive for both men and women, but not statistically significant.

In sum, our observations of real-world precincts show that men and women candidates for at least this type of Republican entry-level partisan office look different from each other. The previous sections show that Republican voters are predisposed to select for masculinity among candidates, and this section shows that they have the opportunity to do so in real-world elections in a way that disproportionately disadvantages women candidates. Theories of representation that fail to account for this miss an important on-the-ground reality.

DISCUSSION

Our research is motivated by the fact that although there is little scholarly evidence of direct voter bias against women, there are many reasons to believe that gender matters in campaigns and elections. Consequently, our aim has been to explore voter preferences for candidate masculinity and femininity. We argue that understanding how gender dynamics shape electoral prospects—especially in entry-level settings—is critical for a more complete view of the political pipeline and the partisan gap in women's representation. Voters may not oppose women candidates because they are women; instead, they may oppose candidates because they exhibit femininity, which disproportionately hurts women candidates. Thinking about candidate gender self-presentation in elections may help to explain otherwise puzzling empirical outcomes.

Experimentally, we find an overall preference for masculinity among Republican voters but not among Democratic voters. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that the Republican Party often rhetorically champions traditional gender roles, candidates who present themselves in more traditionally feminine ways are seen as less competent and are substantially less likely to garner votes. These voting patterns tend to be strongest among self-identified strong conservatives, who often dominate the caucuses, primaries, and other low-turnout elections that dramatically shape the candidate pool for higher office. While it is tempting to lay this entirely at the feet of misogyny, we believe something fairly complex is going on. Conceptual work on misogyny identifies it as the "enforcement arm" of sexist hierarchical ideology and suggests that women

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[20] At the time of the neighborhood meetings, the state was in the midst of discussions about whether to expand Medicaid, and many Republicans framed it as primarily a fiscal issue, raising questions about the cost of expanding Medicaid and the size of the federal government.

[21] Models control for other elements of the candidate speeches and for features of the precinct and caucus meeting. Because we know little about the candidate other than what they stated in their speeches, these regression analyses almost certainly suffer from omitted variable bias. In addition, these observations came in the context of a field experiment that included other precinct-level

treatments. These results average across those treatments. For these reasons, we emphasize that these results are merely suggestive, though they are broadly consistent with our experimental findings.

who deviate from performing traditional femininity are likely to be punished (Manne 2017). We see this play out in the likability ratings. Yet at the same time, it is the women who conform to feminine gender norms who struggle for electoral support and the women who perform masculinity who are advantaged. This is consistent with a hierarchy of power that elevates masculinity, but is more complicated than straightforward sexism.

Our study was conducted just prior to and during the administration of Donald Trump, a moment in American history when issues of sex and gender occupied a great deal of attention for a variety of reasons, not the least of which were the historic candidacy of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump's history of misogyny, dramatically illustrated by the Access Hollywood tape among many other examples. Trump's tendency to perform certain dimensions of masculinity sparked a significant backlash, as seen in the Women's March immediately after his inauguration, but probably also contributed to the fact that sexism was an important predictor of Republican voter preferences in both 2016 and 2018 (Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018; Schaffner 2022). While our study focuses on intraparty contests, not on presidential or other more prominent elections, this larger gendered context means that scholars should continue to examine how candidate self-presentation shapes the choices of Republican voters going forward. To what extent has Trump's continued control over the Republican Party signaled the ascendancy of a certain way of "doing gender"? Will the post-Trump years bring different dynamics and more space for a greater variety of candidates, including those who signal femininity?

More broadly, we believe that refocusing scholarly attention toward candidate gender presentation as opposed to just studying the effects of candidate sex is crucial for understanding women's underrepresentation in politics. While the proportion of women elected in the Democratic Party has steadily increased over the last 40 years, the numbers for the Republican Party are essentially the same as they were in the 1990s (Carroll and Sanbonmatsu 2013), even after notable successes in 2020 congressional elections. Our research suggests that while institutional factors such as party support have no doubt contributed to these trends, Republican voters are not blameless. What do the gendered preferences we have identified mean for the Republican Party's ability to build on the successes of 2020? At the very least, these preferences likely had an effect on the way women candidates presented themselves to Republican voters and thus on the nature of representation Republican women provide.

Of course, sex and gender are not the only axes of marginalization that might matter for voters. Considerable previous scholarship has shown that normative gender standards are connected to racial and sexual identities as well (Wineinger 2019), and we strongly suspect that these biases shape the Republican candidate pipeline of other marginalized candidates in ways similar to what we find for women. While some work has begun to address the intersection of race and gender among Republicans (Karpowitz et al. 2021; Rigueur 2016), much more remains to be learned. In our experimental design, candidates said nothing about either their racial or sexual identities. This means assumptions about heterosexuality, race, or other axes of marginalization come from the experimental participants themselves, and it is likely that most assumed the candidates were the "unmarked" categories of straight, white, able-bodied, and so forth. Unmarked categories are those that are "assumed for a role or context without qualification," and being unmarked means that people tend to see certain characteristics, such as being white or straight as "the norm in a specific role" (Wade and Marx Ferree 2019, 106). By contrast, other social identities, including and especially racial, sexual, and disability identities, are "marked" as different or outside the norm.

Given the predominance of straight white candidates in the Republican Party, unmarked categories of whiteness and heterosexuality likely held in the minds of most study participants. But even if not, our analysis, like that of all experiments, holds all characteristics that were not explicitly manipulated as equal between treatment conditions. In light of the patterns we have documented, the scope conditions for this study should prompt additional experimental research in which candidates in marked categories are explicitly varied by the researchers. We strongly endorse a research program focused on understanding how marked elements of candidate identities, including racial or sexual identities, affect voter responses to choices about self-presentation. One virtue of the experimental work we have reported here is that subsequent experimentation can build on it in a careful, iterative way. While Republicans of color or gay Republicans are a considerably smaller group than women Republicans, we expect voter preferences about racial and sexual identities will intersect with preferences about gender to shape opportunities for different types of candidates to rise through the Republican ranks. And on the Democratic side, the intersection of these identities is more common and may have quite different effects, privileging a different set of candidates. For partisans on both sides, the effects of masculinity and femininity are likely to be connected to attitudes about candidates' race, sex, and sexual identities. Given these intersections, candidate choices about self-presentation loom all the more important.

It is also important to note that the present study has documented that certain kinds of women are extremely electorally competitive among Republicans, even among the most conservative voters. "Supermoms" who have successful masculine careers and focus on masculine issue priorities but who also volunteer at their kid's school are the best-performing candidates among Republican voters. At the same time, many kinds of women and some men are at a distinct disadvantage. Republican voters, especially the most conservative ones, do not see candidates—women or men—with backgrounds in "women's work" and who care about "women's issues" as especially competent, and they are not particularly willing to vote for them. This

disproportionately hurts the Republican women seeking office with these traits and effectively limits the number of women in the de facto candidate eligibility pool. Beyond descriptive representation questions, there are no doubt consequences for substantive representation, which we see as a prime area for further study. Even when Republican women are elected, we find strong electoral incentives for them to focus on issues men typically care about at the expense of issues women typically care about. In short, we show that notions of what qualifies one for office among Republican voters are closely tied to masculinity, and this has wide-ranging consequences for American politics.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000783.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Research documentation and data that support the findings of this study are openly available at the American Political Science Review Dataverse: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/Z0IGLS.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research: one of the authors previously consulted for this party under the administration of a different party chair, but there were no ongoing ties during this project.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

The authors declare the human subjects research in this article was reviewed and approved by Brigham Young University's Institutional Review Board, and certificate numbers are provided in Supplementary Appendix B. The authors affirm this article adheres to the APSA's Principles and Guidance on Human Subject Research.

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