Notes and Comments

Putting Scandinavian Equality to the Test: An Experimental Evaluation of Gender Stereotyping of Political Candidates in a Sample of Norwegian Voters

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The issue of the equitable representation of women in political bodies has concerned both political activists and political scientists for a number of years. Greater representation of women is predicted to have a number of effects on public policy and social interactions. Among these effects are changes in policy priorities, improved system legitimacy and a change in the political culture as old stereotypes disappear and women come to be viewed as the equals of men in the political sphere. The view has been that if women were to get into office, they could prove themselves effective. Therefore societal views on women as political leaders would change, and old stereotypes as to their limited competence would break down. The hope of many is that as women politicians become commonplace, a country’s political culture would change so that gender is no longer a relevant consideration in evaluating political leaders. This Note directly tests the assertion that increased participation by women leads to a gender-neutral view of political leaders.

The overwhelming majority of countries are nowhere near the stage at which the process just described has been played out. While demands for better representation have been forwarded, these demands have met with very modest success. The Inter-Parliamentary Union reported in 1991 that women made up 11 per cent of the national legislatures in its 144 member countries. There are, therefore, relatively few places where it is possible to look at whether increased representation has led to decreased gender stereotyping.

There are, nevertheless, some countries where women play a prominent role in political life. The Scandinavian countries in general and Norway in particular can point...
to extensive participation by women at all levels of electoral representation. In most countries women’s representation forms a pyramid. A significant presence is often found on local councils, but representation decreases at the regional level and becomes even smaller in national legislative bodies and the cabinet. In Norway, however, the pyramid is inverted. At the local municipal council level women make up 31 per cent of representatives; at the national level they make up 40 per cent of the parliament and 48 per cent of the cabinet. The prime minister (100 per cent of the prime minister if you will) is a woman. In addition, two of the six opposition political parties represented in the Norwegian Storting (parliament) have women leaders. The three parties with women at the helm accounted for 71 per cent of the vote in the 1993 parliamentary election and include the two largest parties.

Women in Norway have been in prominent positions on the national political scene for more than a decade. Seeing women actively carrying out important, essential and varied political roles should have a positive effect on perceptions of women’s political competence. Spohn and Gillespie argue that the existence of female role models is especially important as adolescents develop political images. Quoting Jennings and Niemi, they note: ‘political learning will be facilitated by exposure to issues which involve concrete as opposed to abstract referents and prolonged as opposed to short-term saliency.’

For more than a decade Gro Harlem Brundtland has been either prime minister, as she is currently, or the leader of the largest opposition party. Moreover, the past three governments, two Labour and one Conservative–Centre coalition, have filled over 40 per cent of their cabinet positions with women. On a wide variety of important issues the relevant cabinet minister in each of the last three governments was a woman. In developing their opinions on the proper role of women in politics the Norwegian public has had prolonged exposure to concrete referents of women in top leadership positions. Especially important to note is that this exposure has been to many different women, not just to one woman or a few women, as is the case for most countries where women have been prime ministers. Even if historically there may have been some sexism among Norwegian voters, it can be argued that this should be dissipated by seeing women successfully serve in political office.

Based on the significant socializing effect of having women serve in major political offices for more than a decade, the exposure theory argues that Norwegian women should be largely regarded as the equals of their male counterparts. To test the hypothesized causal relationship between exposure to women politicians and voter’s perceptions of women candidates, an experiment was run testing for the existence of gender schemata in the evaluation of male and female candidates. Before describing the

1 The countries with the highest proportion of women in democratically elected national legislatures are Sweden at 34 per cent, Finland at 39 per cent and Norway at 40 per cent.
6 This period spans from 1986 to the present.
experimental design, a discussion of the general strengths of experiments and results from similar experiments in the United States is in order.

**EXPERIMENTAL STRENGTHS AND PREVIOUS EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS**

The experimental method provides one overwhelming advantage over all other methods of hypothesis testing: control. It is very difficult to control for all relevant variables and for problems of simultaneity in other types of research; therefore, empirical findings can almost always be drawn into question. Experiments avoid these problems in two ways: first, by employing randomization to control for extraneous factors that might influence the dependent variable; secondly, by ensuring a clear causal ordering between the independent and dependent variables. Sapiro points out two additional advantages experiments enjoy over other research tools in studies of gender bias.\(^7\) An experiment allows testing for the effects of a variable (gender) without drawing attention to that variable. Since the respondents are unaware that candidate gender is being varied, they are much less likely to use a ‘socially acceptable’ response. In contrast, in a survey setting, if directly asked whether women are as competent as men, respondents are aware that the ‘socially correct’ answer is ‘yes’. Moreover, the experimental method also provides a test of unconscious gender bias. Both men and women may profess to a belief in equality and yet possess attitudes inconsistent with this belief. Only an experiment can tap such unconscious bias.

The use of experiments to test for the effect of gender on voter evaluations of candidates has been confined largely to the United States. These studies can be split into two groups. One set of experiments runs hypothetical candidates against each other in hypothetical elections, manipulating candidate gender to see if gender affects the vote.\(^10\) In the simplest of these experiments, where gender is one of the very few pieces of candidate information the voter has, candidate gender often has a direct effect.\(^11\) Experiments which provide at least some substantive information about the candidates, usually find gender effects, but often as an interaction effect, occurring only for a limited subsample or only for special candidate types.\(^12\) The second set of experiments, and the more interesting set from the perspective of this study, asks respondents to evaluate a candidate, basing the evaluation either on one of the candidate’s speeches or on the candidate’s biography. This approach allows researchers to develop a more complete picture of the gender stereotypes that exist among the electorate.

Sapiro asked 143 students in two introductory political science classes first to read a candidate’s speech, then to evaluate the candidate’s competence in a series of policy

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\(^11\) Garrett and Brookes, ‘Effect of Ballot Color, Sex of Candidate, and Sex of College Students’; Sigelman and Sigelman, ‘Sexism, Racism, and Ageism in Voting Behavior’.

\(^12\) Erikson and Eckert, ‘The Impact of Candidate’s Sex on Voter Choice’; Spohn and Gillespie, ‘Adolescents’ Willingness to Vote for a Woman for President’.
areas. Sapiro found no gender effect on competence in areas discussed in the speech, but there were competence differences in policy areas not discussed in the speech. The female candidate was rated as more competent at ‘improving our educational system’, ‘maintaining honesty and integrity in government’, and ‘dealing with health problems’. The male candidate was rated as more competent at ‘dealing with military issues’ and ‘making decisions on farm issues’.

Since Sapiro’s initial study there have been several replications with slightly modified research designs. Rosenwasser and her colleagues gave students a biographical description of two candidates and requested competence evaluations. Kahn used a mock up newspaper front page where she planted a story on a Senate race and manipulated the incumbent’s and challenger’s gender. She used both a student sample and a sample of non-students recruited from the community. Leeper repeated Sapiro’s experiment, but used an aggressive sounding ‘masculine’ speech, rather than a vaguely worded speech, to see if the tone affected the woman candidate’s advantage on feminine issues.

While there are some differences, overall these studies exhibit surprising consistencies. First, all the experiments found a consistent set of policy areas in which women were perceived to be more competent than men. These areas – schools, health and women’s issues – are ones in which women are actively involved both politically and through workplace participation. In addition, most of these fields share a nurturing image often associated with women. Secondly, male stereotypes appeared infrequently. The one stereotype which appeared with some consistency was men’s ability to deal with defense issues, but even this effect was not found in all studies. Thirdly, for both men and women, superior competence existed only in fields about which no information was given to the respondents. Whenever policy information was available, candidate gender had no effect on the evaluation of the candidate.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

This experiment was designed to test for gender schemata in a sample of the Norwegian public: 528 students in six secondary education institutions in the Bergen area participated in the experiment. I visited twenty-six classes in the period 4–13 June 1991. In each class I asked the students to read a speech by a candidate and then evaluate that candidate on a number of characteristics. Each student chose to read either a Labour

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party or a Conservative party speech. Half the students received directions and a questionnaire indicating that the candidates were female, the other half that the candidates were male.

As a cover story, I introduced myself as a visiting professor who was interested in nomination processes. I explained how the nomination process in Norway is a much more closed party affair than it is in the United States. I stated that my research aimed to evaluate how the Norwegian system might be different if nominating procedures were more open. To help with this research, I was asking each of them to read a speech by a candidate who had competed at the nominating conventions prior to the last parliamentary elections. Each questionnaire packet contained two speeches, one by a Conservative party candidate, the other by a Labour party candidate. Students were asked to choose the speech for the party which was closest to their own outlook.17 I told the students they represented ‘typical’ Norwegian voters and that their candidate evaluations would be compared with those of party activists. To further support the cover story, several questions at the start of the questionnaire dealt with nomination processes. In debriefing sessions, none of the students indicated they had been able to guess the experiment’s true intent.

The speeches used in the experiment were excerpts from debates in the Norwegian Storting, primarily the new Labour government’s Regjeringserklæring (Declaration of Intent) on 6 November 1990 and the debate on that ‘Declaration of Intent’ on 15 November 1990. These proceedings occurred immediately after the Conservative-Centre coalition had resigned, and a new Labour government had taken over. The Declaration of Intent is a broad description of a newly formed government’s goals. The purpose of the ensuing debate is to allow opposition parties to react to the government’s proposals and to emphasize their proposed approaches to public policy issues. Most of the speech attributed to the Conservative candidate was taken from a speech by former Conservative Prime Minister Jan P. Syse. The speech allegedly given by the Labour party candidate was taken primarily from Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland’s ‘Declaration of Intent’.

In addition to addressing issues of substantive importance, the speeches were relatively long, each over 500 words (the speeches are attached as Appendix A and B). This approach differs from past American experiments, most of which provided only very minimal information or used a speech espousing general platitudes. I used this approach purposely to increase the impact and realism of the candidates’ speeches.

Three of the six schools visited for the experiment are inside the Bergen city limits and draw their students primarily from the city. The other three lie outside the city and draw a substantial number of students from rural districts. Convenience and access were important reasons for choosing secondary schools, but several other factors

17 By allowing respondents to choose which party speech they read an additional variable is introduced into the design. An alternative research design would have been to present students with no choice, but force them to read a specific party speech. I chose to allow students to select the speech they would read for four reasons. (1) The cover story emphasized the possibility of their participating in their party’s choosing of candidates. A forced choice would have been inconsistent with the cover story. (2) In a pre-test I found that respondents who were a considerable political distance from the candidate were very negative to the candidate and gender had no effect. Candidate’s gender did have an effect, in the pre-test, for those who identified politically with the speaker. (3) Allowing respondents to choose their party freely provides the opportunity to test whether women politicians are perceived differently across different political parties. (4) To the degree problems might be caused by party self-selection, they are easily controlled by making intra-party comparisons. For each packet both candidates were of the same gender, so candidate gender could not affect the respondent’s speech choice.
influenced the decision. First, choosing secondary school students rather than university students provides an opportunity to reach a more varied and representative sample of the public with respect to educational ambition, class background and knowledge of politics. Secondly, the specific schools were chosen based on the students' social background, type of education emphasized at the school, and how the school had voted in mock elections organized by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) in conjunction with the last parliamentary election. Thirdly, since the respondents are relatively young it can be assumed they were primarily socialized, politically speaking, in the 1980s. Throughout the 1980s women were prominent on the political scene. Having had experience with female leaders, these respondents should be less likely to harbour negative sex-based stereotypes about a woman's political ability. Most respondents were 18 or 19 years old; 88 per cent indicated that they would be eligible to vote in the next local elections (i.e., they would have been aged 18 by September 1991).

HYPOTHESES

The introduction laid out the argument that, through exposure to prominent women politicians performing an assortment of tasks, gender stereotypes should largely be eliminated from Norwegian political culture. While political culture is a societal level variable, the thought processes being considered are at the individual level. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how political culture would affect an individual's evaluation of political candidates.

Psychologists think of gender stereotypes as being part of a 'schema', a cognitive structure that enables an individual to make sense of and impose structure on the many stimuli with which he or she is bombarded in the course of daily living. Conover and Feldman describe schemata as information processing mechanisms. At its core a schema is fundamentally a cognitive structure that 'contains a concept's attributes and the links among those attributes'. Schemata are anticipatory structures which help the individual sort incoming information and interpret the signals received. What a person perceives in any individual situation is a function of the person's pre-existing schemata and the information being received. For example, in reacting to the speech they are given, politically informed respondents are likely to use detailed schemata for the major political parties to develop their perception of the candidate. A second type of schema which may be relevant in evaluating a candidate is a gender schema. Gender schemata lead to the processing of information on the basis of gender-linked associations, in this case associations between gender and competence in specific issue areas.

While gender schemata have clearly been shown to exist, our interest is in their cognitive availability — whether they are used in evaluating political candidates. This is likely to vary considerably across individuals. Some respondents evaluating a political candidate may not invoke a gender schema. This is the prediction for the bulk of these respondents. Others may invoke a gender schema, but only to fill in the picture.

18 I am greatly indebted to Jostein Ryssovik of NSD for his help in both identifying schools and in gaining access to the schools.
21 Sandra L. Bennett, 'Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing'.

of a candidate when they have incomplete information. Participants in the American experiments appear to have used gender schemata in this manner. Finally, for yet another group, a gender schema may be invoked and be so powerful that it serves as a filtering or discounting mechanism; this group ignores or discounts relevant information that is inconsistent with the schema and only processes schema-consistent information.

In addition to variations in saliency, gender schemata also vary in content. Different schemata can be attached to 'a female politician' and 'a male politician'. The expectation for this sample is that gender schemata will not be used in the evaluation of candidates. If gender schemata do exist, at a minimum, it is reasonable to expect that the evaluation of political figures should be associated with a more 'female-friendly' gender schema in Norway than in the United States. This should be true, both because of Norway's strong societal norms of egalitarianism, and because of the socializing effect of the extensive participation of women in Norwegian politics during the entire decade preceding this experiment.

Based on the prediction of gender neutrality the following hypotheses are posited:

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be no policy areas in which men are perceived as superior.

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be no policy areas in which women are perceived as superior.

**Hypothesis 3:** Gender distinctions will not exist for those policy areas that are discussed in the text of the speech.

All three of these hypotheses formally follow from the assumption that gender is irrelevant to evaluation of candidates. As an alternative, it is possible to predict that gender schemata would still exist, but in more 'female friendly' versions than found in the United States. Assuming this underlying pattern I would expect Hypothesis 1 to be confirmed. The greater participation of women in the politics of Norway should decrease the strength of the positive male stereotypes and lead to a result which differs from the findings in the American experiments. I would expect Hypothesis 2 to be disconfirmed; this could occur if the greater participation of women weaker negative female stereotypes, but does not negatively affect the positive female stereotypes. Therefore, results consistent with the American findings could be expected. Finally, I would expect Hypothesis 3 to be confirmed. Hypothesis 3 assumes that if an issue is discussed, issue content will become significantly more salient than candidate gender and will overwhelm the use of the gender schema. This result shows up in all American studies and should certainly show up in these data.

**RESULTS**

Among the sample of 528 secondary students, 49.8 per cent (263 students) chose to read the speech by the Conservative candidate (Ingvald Sorvik or Ingrid Sorvik), while 50.2 per cent (265 students) chose the speech by the Labour party candidate (Alf

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Antonsen or Aud Antonsen). This close split did not occur by design. It indicates, however, just how competitive the two blocs are in Norwegian politics: 33% of the respondents identified the Conservative party as either their first or second choice if an election were held the next day, 33% per cent identified the Labour party as their number one or two choice, and 16 per cent were uncertain. The remainder were divided among the smaller parties. These results offer reassurance that, even though only two speeches were used, the large majority of respondents read a speech by a candidate they felt reasonably close to politically. Women comprised 59.5 per cent of the sample – greater than their percentage of the secondary education population. This probably indicates an undersampling of secondary vocational studies programmes dominated by men.

In considering the hypotheses, the reactions to the Conservative and the Labour party candidates can be treated as two separate tests. Accordingly, each data section first presents the results for the Conservative candidates and then for the Labour candidates.

**Overall Competence**

Respondents were asked three broad competence questions, addressing in turn how they believed this candidate would perform as a Member of Parliament (MP) and as prime minister, and how they evaluated the candidate’s ability to argue for his/her political views. The results are presented in Table 1. For the male and female Conservative candidates, respondents perceived no differences in their relative abilities as an MP or prime minister, but the male candidate was perceived to be superior in arguing for his policies.

On the Labour side, the picture is quite different. No statistical difference turns up in perceived ability to argue for one’s policies, but the female candidate (Aud) is evaluated as a better MP than the male candidate. Already there are indications that respondents are actively distinguishing on the basis of gender and, perhaps more surprisingly, gender schemata differ depending on the respondent’s political persuasion.
Table 2  Comparison of Conservative Party Candidates on Policy Competencies†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of candidate's ability to deal with.</th>
<th>Ingrid (female)</th>
<th>Ingvald (male)</th>
<th>T-test score</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.79**</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.49**</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy†</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.48**</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National economy†</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural development</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax policy‡</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment‡</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care‡</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.29</td>
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<td>Elderly care</td>
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<td>3.04</td>
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<td>Environmental policy</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care policy‡</td>
<td>2.54*</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s rights†</td>
<td>2.40**</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the 0.10 level, 2-tailed test.
**Significant at the 0.05 level, 2-tailed test.
†The following scale was used in the assessment: 1 = very competent; 2 = competent; 3 = somewhat competent; 4 = poor competency; 5 = incompetent; 6 = don’t know.
‡These issues were discussed in the text of the speech.
§The minimum number of responses.

Policy Competence

Tables 2 and 3 present the results comparing the candidates on policy competence. In both tables, the policies are split into three blocks: those policy areas where the male candidate is considered more competent (measured in statistical terms), those policy areas where the difference between the male and female candidate is insufficient to pass normal tests of statistical significance, and those policy areas where the female candidate is considered more competent. The policies are ordered from those where the man has the greatest comparative advantage to those where the woman has the greatest comparative advantage. The mean score is listed for each policy area for each candidate. The lower the number the more competent the candidate. The T-test scores refer to tests of the difference of means, using pooled estimates of the variance.

The results are quite striking; despite having read the exact same speech, respondents clearly distinguish between male and female candidates in a number of policy areas, rating the male candidate as more effective in one set of policies and the female candidate in another. The differences follow traditional gender stereotypes. More surprisingly, gender schemata appear sufficiently strong to affect competence evaluations even when an issue is discussed in the text of the speech. These results directly contradict the third hypothesis. Indeed they indicate that gender schemata, rather than playing a reduced role in Norway, play a more powerful role than in the United States. In all the American experiments, gender differences in competence ratings appeared only for policies not discussed in the speech.
As Table 2 shows, the male Conservative is considered significantly more qualified in the issues of defence, agriculture and foreign policy. All these issues are tied to traditional male stereotypes, with the Labour force and decision making in these fields traditionally dominated by men. The differences are not only statistically significant, they are substantively significant. On defence, the male candidate is evaluated as better than somewhat competent, while the female candidate is evaluated as approximately halfway between somewhat competent and poor competence. Especially significant is the difference on foreign policy. A full paragraph of the Conservative speech deals with the most significant foreign policy issue facing Norway today, and it urges that Norway apply to become a member of the European Community. Yet despite having said exactly the same thing, Ingrid is evaluated as less competent on foreign policy than Ingvard.

By examining the ‘middle’ policy areas, those for which the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, a pattern emerges. The policies higher up on the list, where Ingvard’s evaluation is better than Ingrid’s, represent more masculine policy areas, while policies near the bottom of this middle category represent more feminine policy areas.23

Finally, Ingrid is perceived to be more competent when it comes to women’s rights and children’s day care. The child care distinction shows up despite a full paragraph discussion in the speech about the need for greater public support for families with small children. Both issues for which Ingrid’s evaluation is superior to Ingvard’s fit the traditional stereotypes of areas in which women have a natural expertise.

Table 3 reports results for those respondents who chose the Labour party candidate’s speech. Despite the strong participation of Norwegian women over the past decade at the very highest echelons of political power, women are still perceived to be more competent in defence and in dealing with the economy. A positive bias towards the female candidate is found in several policy areas. Interestingly, the list is longer and more varied than for the Conservative female candidate. Once again, gender schemata appeared even when an issue was directly addressed in the speech. Although the Labour party speech discussed the economy extensively and mentioned defence and education indirectly, gender significantly affected the evaluations of competence for all these policies.

The Labour respondents perceived the female candidate as more competent in three traditional areas of female political activity: women’s rights, care for the elderly and education—al of which have shown up in similar American studies. There is, however, one glaring anomaly — agriculture. What is agriculture doing as an area of female expertise, especially when Conservative respondents gave the male candidate a statistically significant advantage over the female candidate in agricultural policy? Neither the Conservative nor the Labour party speech discusses agriculture, yet there is a radical difference in the interaction of gender and competence. For all other policies, Conservatives and Labour supporters are in substantial agreement on the ordering of comparative male and female advantage. The most plausible explanation for the anomaly in agriculture is that the present Labour party agricultural minister, Gunhild Øyangen, serves as a role model. Øyangen, who is female, appears to directly affect the gender schema for Labour supporters so that they no longer consider agriculture a male policy area.

The implications here are quite interesting. Øyangen has served as agriculture

23 These results do not meet standard statistical tests, but that may be partially caused by small sample size. The pattern found for these policies is consistent with the results for the other policies.
minister in both the previous (1986–9) and the current (November 1990–present) Labour party governments. She was at the centre of a political storm in 1991, when the system of corporatist representation broke down. After accusing farm interest groups of bargaining in bad faith, the government unilaterally imposed an agreement on the agricultural sector that substantially reduced subsidies below the government’s final offer. Øyangen’s public image was tough and decisive and she became fairly popular among consumers. Needless to say she is not well liked by farmers.

The Øyangen example provides evidence that women serving in prominent public roles can and do serve as important role models and change perceptions. It appears, however, that ideological filters strongly moderate the role model effect. Even though Øyangen had been agriculture minister for five of the six years preceding the experiment, her service did not affect gender schemata for Conservatives. On reflection, this makes some sense. A strong Conservative partisan is likely to be sceptical of most Labour government policies. Thus, actions taken by a female minister, which opposition partisans believe are wrong, are not going to change their evaluations in the direction of increased competence for women. If anything, carrying out a ‘bad’ policy might provide confirming evidence for gender schemata about women’s limited competence in the area.

In comparing the Conservative and Labour respondents’ gender schemata, the schemata invoked by the Labour respondents appear more positive towards female candidates. The Conservative respondents rated the female candidate higher on only two policy areas (women’s rights and child day care). Child day care is obviously closely tied to child rearing, traditionally a woman’s role, and women’s issues directly involve a woman’s self-identity; neither issue implies much expertise beyond that of being a woman. The Labour party respondents gave women higher marks on education, agriculture, care of the elderly and women’s rights. Beyond doubling the number of issue areas where women are seen as more competent, the Labour responses also evidenced a difference in substance. While the Conservative schema identifies issues that involve women’s traditional roles, the Labour party schema grants women expertise beyond their innate traits.

Candidate Success

In the American experiments, respondents asked whether they would support a particular candidate do not differ in their support for a male or female candidate. When asked whether they believe that a candidate is likely to win the election, however, sharp divergences surface. Consistently, the male’s probability of winning is seen as significantly higher. Sapiro notes that this may simply be a case of respondents accurately estimating a women’s lower chances of being elected due to the various obstacles she must overcome that a male candidate does not face, including voter discrimination.

Again, the Norwegian case is an interesting one to examine. The large number of women in the Storting indicate that barriers are not insurmountable. Moreover, the electoral rules are such that if a person is nominated sufficiently high on either the Conservative or Labour party list he or she is guaranteed a seat in parliament. The crucial question then becomes whether one is nominated high enough on the party list.

24 Kahn, Does Being Male Help?; Leeper, ‘The Impact of Prejudice on Female Candidates’; Rosenwasser and Dean, ‘Gender Role and Political Office’; Sapiro, ‘If US Senator Baker Were a Woman’
TABLE 3  
Comparison of Labour Party Candidates on Policy Competencies†

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of candidate’s ability to deal with:</th>
<th>Aud (female)</th>
<th>Alf (male)</th>
<th>T-test score</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.18**</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National economy†</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.72**</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy†</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax policy</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care policy†</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural development</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment†</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>-1.17</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental policy†</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2.54*</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>-1.72</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>3.36*</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>-1.88</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elderly care</td>
<td>2.55**</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>-2.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s rights</td>
<td>2.71**</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>-2.26</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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</table>

N§ 101 108

*Significant at 0.10 level, 2-tailed test.
**Significant at 0.05 level, 2-tailed test.
†The following scale was used in the assessment: 1 = very competent; 2 = competent; 3 = somewhat competent; 4 = poor competency; 5 = incompetent; (8 = don’t know).
‡These issues were discussed in the text of the speech.

Several parties (including Labour) have approved affirmative action plans to ensure that at least 40 per cent (or 50 per cent) of their candidates are women. In light of the assumed unbiasedness of the respondents and the expectation that the electoral system does not discriminate against women, it is reasonable to expect the data to show women have the same probability of being nominated as men.

Table 4 presents results for the two samples on three questions: ‘Would you support this candidate?’, ‘Do you believe the candidate will be nominated by the party?’, and ‘What is your evaluation of the candidate’s vote getting ability?’ As displayed in Column 1, Labour party respondents exhibit no significant differences in willingness to support the male or female candidate, in perceived likelihood of being nominated, or in the candidate’s vote-winning abilities. Here, the Norwegian data differ from the American data. Those respondents who chose to read the Conservative speech, however, differ from their Labour counterparts and resemble the results from American respondents. While each candidate receives the same level of support, the male candidate is perceived to have a better chance of being nominated (p < 0.05).

Further analysis reveals a quite surprising result. The second and third columns of Table 4 divide the sample according to gender. For the Labour party sample, the male and female respondents did not differ on any of these three measures. For the respondents who read the Conservative speech, however, a significant schism existed among the male and female respondents. Male respondents reported no difference in willingness to support, predictions of likelihood of being nominated, and evaluation of vote-getting potential. Female respondents were likewise equally willing to support the male or female candidate, but they did perceive a large difference in the likelihood of
<table>
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<th>Female respondents only</th>
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<td>Labour party supporters</td>
<td>Male respondents only</td>
<td>Female respondents only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor/good vote getter§</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>4.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†The scale used was: 1 = would never support; 2 = might support; 3 = would probably support; 4 = would definitely support.
‡The scale used was: 1 = no chance; 2 = small chance; 3 = decent chance; 4 = good chance; 5 = very good chance; 6 = certain to be nominated.
*Significant at the 0.10 level, 2-tailed t-test.
**Significant at the 0.05 level, 2-tailed t-test.
§The scale used was: 1 = poor vote getter; 7 = good vote getter.
being nominated and ability to garner votes. For both variables, the male candidate was assessed as superior.

These results can be interpreted in two radically different ways. First, Conservative women may perceive their party as dominated by men who create barriers to women's advancement. Not unlike the question of sexual harassment in an academic department, it is quite possible that large numbers of men may state a problem does not exist, while women may be acutely aware of it. In this situation, men would evaluate a woman's chance of being nominated as equal to a man's, whereas women would more accurately perceive the woman's chances to be less. The difference between the Conservative and Labour results would then rest on women on the left having raised men's consciousness and having eliminated existing barriers, while women on the right have yet to take up that cause.

Despite the attractiveness of this argument, the data seem to point in a different and more surprising direction. It may be that Conservative women (and not Conservative men) have a gender schema that considers women less talented in the political arena. Three important pieces of data support this idea. First, as Table 4 shows, the male respondents did not perceive any difference between the male and female Conservative candidates in their ability to win votes for the party. Women, however, did; they rated the man a better vote winner. Secondly, a separate set of questions asking about candidate traits (table not shown) finds that men rate the candidates equal in terms of qualifications, 4.83 against 4.84 on a seven-point scale, moving from poorly qualified to well qualified. Conservative women, however, rate the male candidate better qualified - 5.21 against 4.44 (p < 0.01) on the same scale. Finally, going back to the Table 1 finding that the male Conservative candidate is considered better able to argue for his policies, reanalysis of the data discloses that male respondents perceive no difference between Ingrid and Ingvald on this question (3.17 against 3.13 on a six-point scale), but female respondents rate Ingvald substantially better in his ability to argue, 2.88 against 3.69 (p < 0.01).

The apparent antipathy that Conservative women display towards the female candidate is puzzling. One possible explanation is that women who have little interest in politics may have very simple and very traditional gender schemas associated with politics, while politically interested women draw on a much richer background of information and have more differentiated gender schemata. Some data support this suggestion. Looking only at the data for 'Conservative women', important differences appear between those who scored low on an 'interest in politics' scale and those who scored moderate or high. Those women who read the Conservative speech and categorized themselves as having little interest in politics evaluated the female candidate below the male candidate on ability to win votes, likelihood of being nominated, ability to argue for her policies and on being well qualified. Those women with moderate or high political interest still gave the man an advantage in being able to win votes, but perceived no difference in likelihood of being nominated, ability to argue for party policy and on being well qualified.

DISCUSSION

Returning to the hypotheses, the policy competence results leave little doubt - candidate gender affects the perception of a candidate's abilities. The first hypothesis, that no policy areas would surface for which men would be evaluated as more competent,
must be rejected for both sets of respondents. Men held an advantage in two important policy areas – foreign policy and dealing with the economy; these areas have never appeared in the American experiments. In addition, the second hypothesis, that no policy area would surface for which women were seen as being more competent, must be rejected for both sets of respondents. Women were rated superior on several policy issues. The third hypothesis, that gender schema effects would not appear for policies directly discussed in the speeches must also be rejected. For both the Conservative and Labour candidates, gender effects appear even when an issue was discussed in the speech.

In surveying these results it is clear that gender schemata are at least as common, and apparently stronger, among this sample as among the several American samples which have participated in similar experiments. That gender differences continued to appear, even when the policy area had been discussed extensively in the candidate’s speech is strong evidence that gender schemata are more powerful in the evaluation of political actors in Norway than in the United States. These results are a compelling indication that broad representation of women does not eliminate the use of gender schemata. Having women in positions of political power has not lead to a gender neutral perspective on political leaders in Norway.

Neither party shows a convergence towards schemata where gender does not affect the evaluation of candidates. The results also fail to provide any support for the alternative hypothesis that Norway would at least exhibit more ‘female friendly’ gender schemata than those found in the United States. The schemata identified for respondents reading the Conservative speech are especially traditional, and show little evidence of women being perceived as political equals. The Labour schemata are more positive, but still see a woman candidate as less competent on a pair of crucial issues, the economy and foreign policy.

**Implications**

*An Alternative Paradigm*

The results presented here have interesting implications for a couple of debates in the political science literature. One of those debates has to do with the way female politicians are perceived by the public. The second is the issue of why the Scandinavian countries have such high levels of representation of women.

In developing the hypotheses presented earlier in this Note, Norwegian political culture was hypothesized to have moved to a gender-neutral paradigm of gender equality. The normative paradigm is one where gender is simply an irrelevant factor and gender schemata are not invoked when thinking about political candidates. The data clearly indicate this has not happened for this sample of Norwegians. One interpretation of these results is that as long as women are seen as less competent in crucial areas such as the economy and foreign policy they will be seen as weaker political leaders. There is, however, an alternative paradigm which needs to be considered. A different-but-equal paradigm suggests that rather than moving towards perceiving men and women as equally competent in all policy areas, there are distinct differences between the sexes in their areas of competence, but that each set is valued.

The earliest demands for greater equality in representation among Norwegian

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25 Bem, 'Gender Schema Theory'.
women emphasized the need for a gender-neutral equality with women having the same right to be represented as men. There was an emphasis on representation being equal in order to prove that the system was fair. Equal representation was seen as having an important symbolic effect as proof that women were full and complete citizens.26 Over
time the arguments for representation have changed. Norwegian feminists have become
more explicit in arguing that women stand for a different politics, women represent
different values, and bring different areas of competence to politics.27

This alternative paradigm emphasizes women as being more competent in policy
areas concerned with nurturing and family issues, based on their role as carers.25
In many ways it is not radically different from traditional gender stereotypes, but
with the important proviso that women’s areas of expertise are of equal importance to
men’s areas of expertise. From this perspective it is not surprising that gender schemata
exist, the concept of women’s special expertise has been actively promoted by women
activists. The crucial assumption is that while voters perceive differences in com-
petence, these do not disavantage women, because women’s areas of expertise are
valued as highly as men’s areas of expertise. This different-but-equal explanation
would see the results presented, not as a failure to reach a gender neutral state, but as
a confirmation of women being seen as representing something different in politics.

One crucial question for future research is whether the issues that are emphasized by
women are just as important as those where men are seen as having superior expertise.
One way to test this hypothesis is to see if there are significant differences between
American and Norwegian politics on which issues are considered important. This may
affect the perception of women’s relevance to the political arena. It is possible that
women are considered more competent in similar policy areas in Norway and the
United States, but these issues are perceived as being of greater importance in Norway
than in the United States.29

The Issue of Representation

These results are also important because they provide us with reasons to question the
common assumption that the Scandinavian countries’ leading position in terms of
representation of women is caused by their being more progressive on issues of gender
equality. A number of authors have suggested progressive political culture is an impor-
tant part of the explanation for the prominent position of women in Scandinavian poli-
ts.30

These data do not paint a particularly progressive picture of the Norwegian polity.

26 Jill M. Bystrødtzen, ‘Influence of Women’s Culture on Public Politics in Norway’, in Jill M. Bystrødtzen,
27 Bystrødtzen, ‘Influence of Women’s Culture on Public Politics in Norway’; Anne Krogsrud, ‘Kvinnelige
29 One obvious criticism of this suggestion is that the causality runs not from issue importance to women’s
strength, but from women’s strength to issues. That is, issues such as child day care and care for the elderly first
become important when women start to be represented in substantial numbers in legislative bodies.
30 Popa Norris; Women’s Legislative Participation in Western Europe’. Western European Politics, 8 (1985),
See, however, Torild Svard and Elina Haavio-Mannila, ‘Equality Between the Sexes – Myth or Reality in
Certainly the respondents who read the Conservative party speech follow very traditional patterns of gender association. Yet the Conservative party is far from a male-dominated party. The Conservative party’s parliamentary delegation is 30 per cent female; more than 40 per cent of the last Conservative–Centre cabinet was female; and their present party leader is a woman. While the schemata used by those who read the Labour party’s speech appear to be more positive, the picture is hardly overwhelming. Women are perceived as less competent on the vital issue of the country’s economy and most of the areas of female competence are traditional female policy areas. The Labour schemata looks positive only when compared with the Conservatives. The predominant schemata found among the Labour respondents, for example, is arguably less positive towards women than those found in similar experiments done in the United States.

While this evidence is insufficient to prove that political culture is not a crucial part of the explanation for women’s prominent position in Norwegian politics, it does cast doubt on the assertion. I would submit that a more fruitful explanation for women’s strength in Norwegian politics lies in studying the institutional structure of the electoral system.

Much of the recent work designed to explain women’s prominent role in Norway has emphasized the electoral structure. The party list voting system, coupled with electoral rules which make it effectively impossible for voters to alter decisions about which candidates will represent the party, has meant that crucial decisions determining the Storting’s representativeness are made at the county nominating caucuses. In several parties, women’s groups have been able to lobby effectively at the central party level to have quotas instituted which have insured county nominating caucuses provide substantial representation to women. In virtually all parties women have actively participated in county nominating caucuses. To the degree that women act as a coherent interest group with legitimate interests inside the county nominating conventions, they are able to receive substantial representation. Because of the party-oriented nature of people’s voting, once success is attained within the party structure, gains in parliamentary representation have occurred relatively quickly. The electoral system, rather than political culture, seems to be a more likely candidate for explaining the impressive gains of Scandinavian women in terms of representation.

CONCLUSION

In reconsidering this experiment, there is a need, as with all experiments, to be concerned with external validity. Even though the sample was carefully chosen, it is just one sample. There is a need for replications to see if similar results are obtained from other samples. In addition, the experimental results suggest a number of other topics for future research. Discovering markedly different gender schemata across the political spectrum is an important finding that deserves further illumination; an obvious follow-up question is whether supporters of leftist parties have consistently more positive

evaluations of women, or is this a uniquely Scandinavian perspective? Further tests in other countries where women have had substantial political power could be run to test whether the gender schemata tend towards a traditional pattern, the gender-neutral paradigm, or towards the different-but-equal paradigm. Experiments in other countries would be especially desirable to help map out and identify differences of political culture with respect to gender across countries.

In the Norwegian context, one question deserving closer scrutiny is whether causality runs from gender schemata to political parties; that is, do people with positive evaluations of women in politics naturally drift towards Labour, or does an effect also flow from political party to gender schema? In other words, does being an active Labour party supporter make one evaluate female politicians more positively? Finally, as already noted, it would be useful to follow up the different-but-equal paradigm by seeing if it is supported in public opinion data on the importance of various issue areas.

APPENDIX 1: SPEECH GIVEN BY CANDIDATE SOERVIK, AT CONSERVATIVE PARTY NOMINATION MEETING

We Conservatives thrive best when we have responsibility, with the right to take the initiative, and with governmental authority. If we return to government, we can steer a new course — away from more regulation and more state power, in the direction of a society with greater freedom and personal responsibility. To get there it is important to have a clear outline of the party’s course – a non-socialist course based on the party’s programme and tradition. The Conservative party is a value-conserving party, and we must clearly show this in our policies. The Conservatives must work actively to put a brake on state expenditure, to cut taxation and to create new growth and new stable employment opportunities.

We must have an investment-led recovery in the private sector of our economy. To ensure this we must have trust and stability. Stable growth cannot be created by an ever-increasing use of public funds. The price is too high. It is high because inflation will grow, because interest rates will start to rise, because Norway’s oil dependence will increase once again. It will be high because long-term unemployment will be higher in the long run than it would be if there were a strong emphasis on investment-led growth in the private sector of our economy. The Conservative party takes a clear stand against solving the capital investment problems of banks and business through state investment. Failure to have a solid base in private business, and the obviously serious crisis we are in, can only be turned around through increased profitability.

It is also essential to give Norwegian business interests the best possible opportunity of participating in the dynamic developments represented by the EC’s inner market. This would have a positive effect on Norway’s unemployment rate and economy. The Conservatives have great ambitions for Norway in Europe, ambitions of political influence, ambitions of participating where the new power centre in the world economy is being developed. If Norway is to be a participant in the decisions which will determine Europe’s future, Norway must become a member of the European Community. The Conservative’s goal must be crystal clear — only full EC membership is good enough.

The Conservatives are also concerned about the problems of families with small children. Our suggestion of giving each family with a small child a cash support payment of 10,000 kroner [approximately $1,500], will mean a real improvement in
such families' economic situation, it will give them a better opportunity of reducing their daily hours of work a little bit, of having slightly longer maternity leave or of reducing the overtime they work. Public expenditure would not give the parents of small children one more hour to care for their children; our cash support payment gives them that opportunity.

Most people are concerned that hospitals should be more efficient, and that the waiting time for essential therapeutic care be reduced. People are not concerned about whether the public sector owns, controls or directs all health services. They are concerned about getting high quality health care when they need it. Therefore those of us in the Conservative party believe that it is sensible and good public policy to ensure there is a private supplement to a high quality public offering in the health sector. The Labour party wants to turn back to old policies about steering and socialization and laws denying the right to private practice; that would lead to increased queues and a more difficult situation for many in their daily life.

It is the liberal and the conservative parties – and not the libertarian or socialist parties – who will be the guiding principal for the 1990s in Europe, both in the East and the West. We must use the market as far as the market can work, but we must also show the willingness to ensure a social distribution of resources which harmonizes well with our broad agreement on social responsibility and a safety net which no one shall fall through. The Conservatives are the leading proponent of this view.

APPENDIX 2: SPEECH GIVEN BY CANDIDATE ANTONSEN, AT LABOUR PARTY NOMINATION MEETING

The cold war is over. Large parts of the world are changing rapidly. A secure future for Norway depends upon European and international co-operation finding mutual solutions to the many challenges the world has before it. A new Europe is being shaped. The Nordic countries are a part of the diversity of European culture. We have developed a societal model built on democracy, social responsibility and protection of the environment. Along with the other Nordic countries, Norway must work to ensure that these values can be given a central place in the Europe of the future. Peace, security and arms reduction must be the foundation in the new Europe, where we can create a new order based on security together.

The new challenges create great demands for innovative thinking, political will and political steering nationally and internationally. There are now great possibilities of developing a good life for all if we can harness human insight to preserve nature's own variety and richness.

The Labour party will build on the most important elements in the Norwegian cultural heritage. Charity, solidarity and the individual's inviolability are the ethical starting point for the Labour party's economic and cultural goals. Instead of the 'colder society', where community and care is pushed aside for a one-sided emphasis on competition and efficiency, the Labour party desires to maintain and renew the welfare state. The Labour party's programme must put employment, environment and children to the fore simultaneously with action to ensure a fairer division of goods.

Children need care and security. Here, we must take greater collective responsibility. Therefore we must strengthen the care options and expand the number of day care places. The Labour party would recommend 20,000 new day care places this year, increased maternity leave and a substantial increase in the Children's Ombudsman programme to help those children who today suffer a serious lack of care.
The primary task of our economic policy is to create the basis for increased employment both in the short and long run so that work for all can be ensured. It is especially important to ensure work or educational opportunities for young people. The Labour party is willing to work closely with our economic partners. We must push a policy which ensures low inflation, an improved competitive advantage, a stable krone, and as low interest rates as these other conditions allow. Not least, investment must be strengthened in Norwegian businesses and banks, so that we have a safer basis for new investment and new jobs. We must look at the opportunities through which the state directly or indirectly may play a more active role here. Both the relevant laws, such as the Stock Law and the Working Environment Laws, and the collective bargaining agreements must be used to give the authorities and workers influence over economic development. In addition, Statoil must receive increased opportunities to participate as a minority owner in other Norwegian firms.

Let me, finally, emphasize the important challenges which we find in the area of the environment. It is not enough to slow down the unfortunate developments in just one environmental area. We need a more comprehensive environmental policy, a policy which can tackle our environmental problems in a positive manner. Therefore the Labour party must push for broad agreement and a comprehensive environmental policy which will permeate society. Environmental taxes must be combined with measures on a broad front to get a change in consumer use and behavioural patterns. Public transport must be developed as an alternative to the use of the private motor vehicle. We must think long term if we are going to secure our own future.