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Competent Enough, But Would You *Vote* for Her? Gender Stereotypes and Media Influences on Perceptions of Women Politicians

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Though research has demonstrated that media coverage of men and women politicians differ, fewer studies have examined the dual influence of gender stereotypes and types of media coverage in influencing public perceptions of women politicians. Study 1 ($N = 329$) examined how pre-existing attitudes toward women leaders and valence of media message impacted perceptions of a woman senator and evaluations of the media source. Study 2 ($N = 246$) explored how media focus on a woman politician's personality or ability impacted perceptions of her warmth/likability and competence. Results suggest the media has particular influence on judgments of women politicians' likability (the "competent but cold" effect), providing evidence that women politicians need to be vigilant in monitoring their media depictions.

> I don't want to sound like the old ball-and-chain guy, but Hillary Clinton cannot be elected President because . . . there's something about her vocal range. There's something about her voice that just drives me—it's not what she says, it's how she says it.
> -Glenn Beck (*The Glenn Beck Show*), March 15, 2007

> When she comes on television, I involuntarily cross my legs.
> -Tucker Carlson, MSNBC, referring to U.S. Presidential contender Hillary Clinton (as cited in Seelye & Bosman, June 13, 2008)

> It wasn't her appearance per se [that soured people on Sarah Palin]. It was the effect her appearance had on their perception of her competence and humanity. Those variables made people less likely to vote for her.
> -Nathan Heflick (as cited in Jacobs, 2009)

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Increasing diversity, including the rising numbers of women entering top-level leadership positions, is one of the most frequently cited shifts in the nature of workforce demographic issues (Powell & Graves, 2003). As a result, the interaction of gender and leadership issues warrants increasing attention as women advance into leadership roles at all levels of political, public, and private-sector organizations. In addition, exploring the factors that hinder and promote women's ascendance into top leadership positions is warranted, given women's continual underrepresentation in the highest elected offices in the United States. In a 2006 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2006) global survey of women's representation in legislative and executive branches of the world's governments, the U.S. ranks 69th in the world: 16.8% and 16.0%, respectively, of positions in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate are held by women (IPU, 2006).

A wide variety of factors may represent significant barriers to women's ascendance into higher leadership positions, including individual-level differences between men and women, organizational characteristics (e.g,. the unequal distribution of men and women "in the pipeline"), differential opportunities for promotion, tokenism, institutionalized discrimination, cultural stereotypes, sexist attitudes, and differential media coverage (for an overview, see Adler & Izraeli, 1994). The current research focuses on the interplay between two frequently cited barriers that may affect women politicians in particular: negative attitudes regarding women's effectiveness in leadership positions and media portrayals of women candidates.

In the political realm, the role of gender stereotypes is often singled out as an important influence on both perceptions of women's political leadership and actual voting behavior. Previous research has established that there are a number of perceived differences between men and women politicians, suggesting that voters ascribe different traits, competencies, behaviors, and political beliefs to men and women candidates (Koch, 1999, 2000). Koch (2000) found that voters use gender stereotypes to infer candidates' ideological orientation, which leads them to perceive female candidates as more liberal than they actually are. In addition to ideological orientation, Koch (2000) noted that "Experimental research suggests that gender may be used by citizens to infer candidates' issue positions, personality traits, and issue competencies" (p. 427).

More specifically, prior research has found that female candidates are stereotyped as better equipped to handle "compassion issues" (e.g., welfare, education), but are perceived as less competent as leaders, less experienced, and less knowledgeable than their male counterparts (Koch, 1999). However, in research on women candidates for the U.S. Senate, Koch found that women suffered with respect to ratings of experience and competence, but enjoyed an advantage for their perceived ability to handle social issues and

general leadership. Koch concluded that "Variation in citizens' appraisals of candidates on the basis of gender may result from a gendered pattern of campaign messages and media coverage" (p. 84). In the current study, we examine how media coverage may interact with voters' existing attitudes and stereotypes to influence ratings of female politicians.

Broader research on gender stereotypes has suggested that although men and women are often allied on political issues, the tendency to view the sexes as opposing forces, rather than as cooperative groups is prevalent in American society (e.g., gender polarization; Bem, 1993). Gender polarization may be more pronounced when perceivers hold attitudes that view women in terms of female stereotypes (e.g., childcare, work–family balance; Diekman, Eagly, & Kulesa, 2002). As a result, engaging in stereotype-disconfirming behaviors can act to enhance a woman's perceived suitability for nontraditional jobs (e.g., U.S. Senator). Further, because women politicians are perceived to be concerned about improving the status of women as a group, they may be perceived as supporting policies that further their gender's interests, rather than those of society as a whole (see Diekman et al., 2002). Other research has suggested that media coverage of women politicians plays a critical role in their ultimate success or failure on the campaign trail (Devitt, 2002). Despite interest in gender stereotypes and the influence of the media on the success of women candidates, very little research has actually examined the dual contribution of these barriers to subsequent perceptions of women in authority positions.

Gender Stereotypes and Women Politicians

Previous research in both management and political science has examined the effect of gender stereotypes on the success of women leaders and politicians. From the management side, there is a growing body of research that suggests gender stereotypes play a strong role in perceptions of women's leadership abilities. For example, Glick, Wilk, and Perreault's (1995) study of occupational stereotypes found that occupational images are primarily structured on two dimensions: prestige and gender. Although politicians were not included in the study, the results suggest that prestigious jobs are frequently associated with men and accompanying male stereotypes (e.g., strong, independent, competent, agentic). Indeed, research into perceptions of the masculinity–femininity of local, state, and national political offices suggests that all levels of political office are rated as more stereotypically masculine than feminine (Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989).

In addition, research spanning nearly four decades has revealed that masculine characteristics and tasks are rated as more important to political office, suggesting that "It may behoove women to develop attributes tradi-

tionally considered 'masculine' " (Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989, p. 83). Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) similarly found a preference for stereotypically male characteristics over stereotypically female characteristics (e.g., warm, empathic, communal) for leaders who occupy the highest levels of political office. Research has suggested that many women who hold political leadership positions tend to exhibit more stereotypically masculine characteristics, such as high self-confidence, dominance, and high levels of achievement (Bem, 1987; Constantini & Craik, 1972). As Dolan (2005) stated, "Generally, work on women candidates has shown that voters favor more 'male' traits in their elected leaders, which may lead them to choose men candidates over women" (p. 31; also see Dolan, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2004; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

Perhaps in response to these pressures, Dolan and Ford (1997) reported that contemporary women lawmakers have expanded their areas of activity, simultaneously "maintaining a concern for their gender while increasing their attention to 'nontraditional' areas" (p. 147). A more recent survey on Presidential leadership from Deloitte and Touche (2000) suggested that perceptions of the "maleness" of higher political office continues. In this survey, the public reported more confidence in men's ability to handle the most important Presidential issues that were identified, including law and order, which only 14% felt that a female President would do a better job; and foreign policy, with 45% of respondents expressing a preference for a male President and only 15% preferring a woman. Sanbonmatsu (2003) similarly found that individuals who believe that men are more emotionally suited to politics are also more likely to believe that men will lead more effectively in stereotypically male domains (e.g., crime, foreign affairs). More recently, Falk and Kenski (2006) found that people who said that terrorism, homeland security, or U.S. involvement in Iraq was the most important problem facing the nation were also more likely to say that a man would do a better job handling the issue as President.

Theoretical work on gender differences in perceptions of women leaders has suggested that manifested differences may vary by occupation or social realm, according to the extent of what Eagly and Johnson (1990) termed gender congeniality (also see Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). Eagly et al. defined *gender congeniality* as "the fit between gender roles and particular leadership roles" (p. 129). For example, in realms such as the military, leadership positions tend to be linked to stereotypically masculine characteristics and are, therefore, more congenial to men than women. Similarly, in realms such as education and nursing, leadership tends to be defined in more stereotypically feminine ways and is thus considered more congenial to women than men. Schein's (2001) work has suggested that people's beliefs about managers are more similar to their beliefs about men than women, suggesting

that managerial roles often are gender congenial for men. Research on gender and occupational stereotypes has demonstrated that political office is perceived as a predominantly masculine occupation, suggesting that the position of U.S. Senator is gender congenial for men (see Hedlund, Freeman, Hamm, & Stein, 1979; White, Kruczek, Brown, & White, 1989).

As Eagly and Karau (2002) argued, perceived incongruity between the female gender role and typical leader roles tends to create prejudice toward women leaders in two primary forms: (a) less favorable evaluation of women's (than men's) potential for leadership because leadership ability is more stereotypical of men than of women; and (b) less favorable evaluations of women leaders because agentic behaviors are perceived as less desirable in women than in men. As a result, women candidates face a somewhat paradoxical challenge: While women candidates must communicate their efficacy as leaders, those who rely on agentic behaviors to demonstrate their leadership abilities may also turn voters away (Rudman, 1998).

According to leadership categorization theory (Maurer & Lord, 1991) and social role theory (Eagly, 1987), biases toward women in leadership positions stem from discrepancies between stereotypes about women and prototypical leadership behaviors. Forsyth, Heiney, and Wright's (1997) study of appraisals of women leaders affirmed both categorization and social role theory, suggesting that "perceptual repercussions are likely" (p. 102) if leaders act in ways that are inconsistent with leadership prototypes or sex-role stereotypes. In the political realm, there is substantial evidence to suggest that women in political roles have traditionally dealt with stereotypical evaluations based on their gender (e.g., Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Deber, 1982; Matland & King, 2002; Sigelman, Sigelman, & Fowler, 1987). Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) found that women in leadership positions were devalued relative to men when leadership was carried out in stereotypically masculine styles, particularly when that style was autocratic or directive. Perhaps even more relevant to the current study, the devaluation of women leaders was greater when they occupied male-dominated roles. In addition, Alexander and Andersen asserted that "When candidate information is sparse, gender role attitudes are consequential in the initial evaluation of lesser known women candidates" (p. 527).

It is important to note, however, that the increasing impact of the Internet and social networking sites may augment a wider dissemination of campaign information. In turn, this shift may allow female contenders to present a more nuanced view that potentially mitigates voters' reliance on gender-role attitudes. As campaigns incorporate more technology and more diverse communication outlets to reach voters, it thus becomes increasingly important to assess how different types of messages help shape attitudes toward women politicians.

Other research has demonstrated that women who occupy leadership positions or who are believed to be high in status often are perceived as competent, but lacking in warmth (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Research on stereotype violation has posited that counterstereotypical behavior (e.g., women occupying traditionally male occupations) often results in social sanctions and feelings of dislike toward the stereotype violator (e.g., Casad, 2007; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001). For example, job candidates who violate social stereotypes tend to be perceived negatively: Agentic women are perceived as competent but cold, whereas communal men are perceived as warm but incompetent (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Given this prior research, it follows that women politicians, as contenders for stereotypically male-dominated roles, are likely to be negatively perceived, particularly if individuals hold traditional attitudes about women in positions of political authority. Thus, we would expect that when presented with an unfamiliar woman politician, people use pre-existing attitudes toward women politicians as a whole to evaluate the particular politician's potential competence and likability, which may subtly disadvantage their candidacies. That is, a woman target is evaluated using within-group standards (Biernat, 2003).

> *Hypothesis 1*. The more negative are participants' attitudes toward women leaders, the less likable and competent the participants will perceive a woman politician.

Media Coverage

The significance of news coverage in political campaigns has been well established in previous research. For example, research has suggested that the news media influence consumers' perceptions of political candidates' images as either positive or negative, as well as voters' overall evaluations of candidates (e.g., Bennett, 2001; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). In an analysis of the 2006 elections in the United States, Canada, and Australia, Kittilson and Fridkin (2008) found that male candidates for all three samples received far more press coverage concerning stereotypical "male" issues (e.g., the economy, foreign policy) than did female candidates. Similarly, female candidates received far more press concerning stereotypical "female" issues (e.g., education, welfare). Finally, women candidates' traits were more often described in female gender-stereotyped language (e.g., gentle, warm, weak leader), whereas their male counterparts' traits were more often described in male gender-stereotyped language (e.g., effective, aggressive, strong leader).

Overall, women candidates and women politicians tend to receive less coverage than do men and to receive more coverage on women's issues, and are frequently portrayed as less viable candidates (Braden, 1996; Bystrom, Robertson, & Banwart, 2000; Devitt, 1999; Kahn, 1996; Kahn & Gordon, 1997; Witt, Paget, & Matthews, 1995).

Devitt's (2002) analysis of four 1998 gubernatorial races revealed similar evidence of a qualitative bias in newspaper coverage of men versus women candidates. Specifically, newspapers paid more attention to women candidates' personal characteristics (e.g., age, personality, attire) and devoted less coverage to outlining women candidates' stances on public policy issues (e.g., education, healthcare, taxes). As Braden (1996) noted, no matter how serious they are, women politicians are still "trivialized" by media coverage that focuses on "how they look or sound, what they wear, or how they style their hair" (p. 5; also see Norris, 1996).

The coverage of personality traits is particularly important to the success of a campaign, as stereotypical male traits tend to be associated with leadership competency, and voters tend to view these traits as more important for a candidate than stereotypical female traits (Jamieson, 1995). Because only a small proportion of voters have the opportunity to meet and interact with candidates personally, the majority of voters must rely on news coverage to form their opinions of the leadership potential of politicians in office. Thus, the relationship between politicians and the public is one of large social distance (Shamir, 1995), in which followers must rely heavily on verbal cues and secondary sources to evaluate a leader's effectiveness.

In addition to differential coverage of issues and traits, Kahn (1994) found that newspapers report personal information (e.g., attire, personality, appearance, marital status, parental status) more frequently for women candidates than for men candidates. In addition, men are more likely than are women to be identified by their occupation, experience, or accomplishments (Robinson & Saint-Jean, 1995). Carroll and Schreiber (1997) analyzed the press coverage of women members of Congress and concluded that the press rarely covered the Congresswomen as individuals, preferring to focus on their collective contributions as women legislators. Additional studies of women candidates have found that women are less likely than are men to have their positions on public policy issues covered by news media, despite the fact that women candidates are more likely than are men candidates to make issues a cornerstone of their campaigns (Devitt, 2002; Kahn, 1996; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991).

In sum, the media coverage of a leader may be influential in a number of ways. Tankard (2001) argued that the media have an important influence on how a story is framed, including potentially eliminating some perspectives or weakening particular arguments of a political candidate through news

coverage. Likewise, Jamieson (1995) concluded that women are more often subject to negative gender distinctions than are men, and that women are less likely to be described in gender-neutral terms than are their male counterparts. Witt et al. (1995) similarly found that the press tends to reinforce female stereotypes in covering women in politics.

Taken together, this research suggests that perceptions of women politicians may be strongly influenced by media representations of them, which tend to rely heavily on gender stereotypes, suggesting that women politicians may be particularly vulnerable to unfavorable press coverage. While we note that perceptions of all politicians (both male and female) will be influenced by positive and negative media, the fact that perceptions of women politicians are more closely linked to gender stereotypes suggests that voters may be more easily swayed by press coverage of a relatively unknown female candidate.

> *Hypothesis 2*. Participants' perceptions of a woman politician's likability and competence will be influenced by the valence of media they read, such that a positively framed article will lead to more favorable ratings, while a negatively framed article will lead to less favorable ratings.

Whereas the previously mentioned body of research has established the differential press coverage of men and women in political campaigns, the interaction of press coverage with voters' pre-existing attitudes has received relatively less attention. Specifically, media coverage may work to activate gender stereotypes (Hansen & Hansen, 1988). A growing number of studies (e.g., Hansen & Krygowski, 1994; Power, Murphy, & Coover, 1996) have demonstrated that once stereotypes are activated, they can have a powerful influence on people's later judgments. When applied to the realm of leadership, this suggests that how the media portrays women leaders may have important implications for later perceptions, and that the impact of the media's coverage may differ significantly, based on followers' pre-existing attitudes toward women in leadership positions.

> *Hypothesis 3*. The relationship between participants' attitudes toward women leaders and evaluations of a politician's likability and competence will be moderated by the valence of the coverage.

Specifically, when reading a negative article, participants with less favorable attitudes toward women politicians will rate the politician as significantly less likable and competent than will participants with more favorable attitudes toward women politicians. Likewise, when faced with a positive article,

participants with less favorable attitudes toward women politicians will rate the politician as somewhat less likable and competent than will participants with more favorable attitudes toward women politicians.

It is important to note another potentially likely scenario: Voters who are faced with media representations that are inconsistent with their pre-existing attitudes about women leaders may also choose to discredit the source of the discrepant information, rather than confront an inconsistent message. For example, Wiebe and Korbel (2003) found that when presented with a threat to one's health, some individuals use tactics of defensive denial, choosing instead to ignore or question the message, rather than to address the health threat. Similarly, research on threat orientations has demonstrated that some people ignore or minimize potential threats by questioning the accuracy of the threatening information (e.g., Thompson & Schlehofer, 2008; Thompson, Schlehofer, & Bovin, 2006). Although this research has not been conducted in the political domain, taken together, these studies suggest that pre-existing beliefs are resistant to alteration by new, contradictory information.

Thus, it is reasonable to posit that when they are presented with media coverage that is incongruent with existing attitudes, people might not form attitude-incongruent perceptions of the target. Instead, people may develop a negative opinion of the source—that is, discredit the information presented—to maintain their pre-existing attitudes. It is again important to note that voters may discredit the source when faced with incongruent information about a multitude of issues, and this process may be relevant when reading media accounts of both male and female politicians. However, given previous research on the robustness of sex-role stereotypes, our focus here is on whether or not messages that contradict voters' pre-existing attitudes toward women are challenging enough that voters actually discredit the source. In other words, voters' preferences for existing sex-role stereotypes may lead them to mitigate the viability of disconfirming information when assessing a relatively unknown female candidate.

> *Hypothesis 4*. Participants who are faced with an article that challenges their attitudes toward women leaders will rate the media source significantly lower than will participants who are faced with an article that is consistent with their initial attitudes.

Political Affiliation

Finally, it is important to note that a number of recent studies have suggested that party affiliation is a strong predictor of individuals' assess-

ments of a political leader or political candidate. Pillai, Williams, Lowe, and Jung (2003) demonstrated that both leadership ratings and party identification are related to voting preference and choice and that, together, these variables can predict voting behaviors, such as candidate preference and selection. This replicates the findings of Pillai and Williams' (1998) study of the 1996 election, re-emphasizing the importance of leadership evaluations and party identification on voting behavior. Specifically, voters are likely to rate candidates with the same party affiliation more favorably and to ascribe positive leadership attributes (e.g., transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, leadership effectiveness) to candidates from their own party (also see Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2005; Pillai, Kohles, & Bligh, 2007).

One question that arises, however, concerns how people respond when leaders in their own political party are portrayed in an unfavorable light. In other words, how do people respond to negative information concerning candidates, particularly women candidates, from their own party? And further, does this relationship differ for those with more positive versus negative attitudes toward women politicians? Research has suggested that criticisms against one's in-group are perceived to be pernicious when given by out-group members. This motivates people to defend their in-group in several ways; for example, by criticizing the source of the information (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) or discounting the negative evaluation altogether (Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001).

This prior research may inform how people react when a leader of their own political party is cast in a negative light. Specifically, a participant's party identification may influence both the degree of attention and credence given to news media sources such that people may discredit media sources that portray their party's candidate negatively. Therefore, we hypothesize that the relationship between the valence of the newspaper article and evaluations of a woman politician will be moderated by party affiliation as follows:

> *Hypothesis 5a*. Participants who read a positive article about a woman politician of their own party will rate the politician's competence and likability significantly higher than will participants who read a positive article about a woman politician of the other party.
>
> *Hypothesis 5b*. Participants who read a negative article about a woman politician of the other party will rate the politician's competence and likability significantly lower than will participants who read a negative article about a politician of their own party.

Study 1

In this study, we explore attitudes toward women leaders and the valence of media coverage on perceptions of a woman politician, both separately and jointly. To test the hypotheses (Hypotheses 1–5b), the participants completed a questionnaire that contained a newspaper article about a female Senator. The article was either positive or negative in tone, and described either a Democrat or a Republican Senator.

Method

Participants

College students ($N = 341$; 172 women, 169 men) who were recruited from two state universities in southern California participated in the study. The participants were between the ages of 18 and 51 years ($M = 23.4$ years, $SD = 6.1$, $Mdn = 21$). The sample was primarily Caucasian (54.9%), with 20.2% Latino, 9.2% Asian or Pacific Islander, 4.3% Black/African American, 0.9% Native American, 7.1% multiracial, and 3.4% "other." Participants' political party affiliation was equally represented between Democrat (33.9%) and Republican (35.7%), with 18.5% listing their party affiliation as Independent and 11.9% as "other." Participants rated their liberalism an average of 3.55 ($SD = 1.23$) on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*very conservative*) to 6 (*very liberal*), indicating that they were somewhat liberal. Of the participants, 87% listed California as their home state.

Procedure

Participants completed a pre-questionnaire packet that included measures of participants' attitudes toward women political leaders. After completing the pre-questionnaire, participants read either a positively or negatively worded newspaper article about Senator Barbara Mikulski (a Democrat from Maryland), counterbalanced by political affiliation (Democrat or Republican). Manipulation checks indicated that participants were unaware that Mikulski was a Senator from Maryland and were unaware of her political party affiliation, thus allowing us to manipulate party affiliation successfully.

Our articles were adapted from an actual article that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* (Perry, 2002). Perry's article discussed conserving water and farming issues—topics that have been shown to be gender-neutral in previous research (Rahn, 1993; RePass, 1971; Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989)—and was

selected to control for impressions based on a "feminine" or a "masculine" political issue.[2] Aside from valence of the article, the referenced Senator was changed from a regional politician (Diane Feinstein, California) to one from another state to eliminate the influence of familiarity. For this same reason, participants were told that the article was from the *Washington Post*. The articles were pilot-tested to ensure valence equivalency.[3] After reading the article, the participants completed post-article measures of their attitudes toward the Senator described in the article. The post-article questionnaire also assessed participants' political party affiliation, political ideology, and political knowledge (based on Kathlene, 1989), and included manipulation checks.

Pre-Article Measures

To assess attitudes toward female leaders, participants completed a modified Gender Attitude Inventory (GAI), Female Political Leadership Subscale ($\alpha = .89$; Ashmore, Del Boca, & Bilder, 1995). The eight items on the inventory were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is "I would vote for a politically qualified woman to be Senator of the United States." Items were averaged to create a composite score.

Participants also completed four items from the Responding Desirably on Attitudes and Opinions scale (Schuessler, Hittle, & Cardascia, 1978) to assess social desirability. They were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with several statements (e.g., "To get along with people, one must put on an act") on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Participants' scores on these items were averaged into an overall index of their social desirability ($\alpha = .32$). Although this reliability was lower than desired, dropping items from the measure did not improve the reliability; thus, all of the items were retained. Finally, participants answered demographic questions, including their age, sex, state of residence, and race/ethnicity.

[2]Stereotypes of feminine and masculine political issues are prescriptive in nature, suggesting the issues on which women and men politicians ought to focus. Indeed, research has suggested that women politicians who focus on compassionate, feminine issues (e.g., poverty) are evaluated as more competent than are women politicians who focus on masculine issues (e.g., defense; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Similarly, men politicians are rated as more competent on masculine issues than on feminine issues (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

[3]Prior to conducting the study, a convenience sample of 80 individuals were presented with one of the articles (positive, $n = 45$; negative, $n = 35$) and asked to rate its valence on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely negative*) to 6 (*extremely positive*). The positively worded article had a mean rating of 4.92 ($SD = 0.87$), while the negatively worded article had a mean rating of 1.77 ($SD = 0.77$). An independent-sample t test indicated that the mean ratings of the articles were significantly different, $t(78) = 16.94$, $p < .001$.

Post-Article Measures

Respondents were asked to state the target's job (open-ended item) and her political party affiliation. They were then asked to rate the overall description of the article on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely negative*) to 7 (*extremely positive*) to ensure that the manipulations were effective and that the participants understood the article.

Perceptions of the target were assessed using adjectives that we adapted from Fiske et al.'s (2002) measures of warmth/likability and competence. The 15-item scale measures participants' perceptions of the referent on two dimensions: warmth/likability ($\alpha = .96$; a sample item is "How good-natured does Mikulski seem?") and competence ($\alpha = .89$; a sample item is "How efficient does Mikulski seem?"). The items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*).

To assess perceptions of the media source, the participants were asked "What is your overall impression of the *Washington Post?*" The item was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very unfavorable*) to 7 (*very favorable*).

The questionnaire concluded with political questions. First, participants were asked to report their political party affiliation: Democrat, Republican, Independent, or "Other." To control for political knowledge, the participants completed the following political knowledge items:

1. Whether or not they voted in the last national election
2. Which political party currently has the most members in the U.S. Senate
3. The length of term of office for a U.S. Senator
4. The number of U.S. Senators
5. The percentage of U.S. Senators who are women

Participants' responses were dichotomously coded and were added together to create a knowledge score that ranged from 0 (no questions correct, not very knowledgeable) to 5 (all questions correct, very knowledgeable). The average knowledge score was 2.54 ($SD = 1.23$).

Results

Prior to testing the primary hypotheses, we analyzed the data to ensure that the participants understood and correctly perceived the manipulations. Participants who did not understand the article (as indicated by incorrect responses on the questions regarding the target's job or political party affiliation), or who misinterpreted the valence of the article were eliminated from the analyses (final $N = 329$).

Exploratory Analyses

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the variables are presented in Table 1. Exploratory analyses were performed to determine whether the manipulated variables were correlated with any of the pre- or post-article measures. Participants who received positively worded articles did not differ on pre-existing attitudes toward women leaders ($p > .10$) from participants who received negatively worded articles. Further, scores on pre- and post-article measures did not vary by participants' own political party affiliation or political knowledge (all ps $> .10$). However, social desirability was significantly and positively correlated with attitudes toward women politicians ($r = .15$, $p < .01$). Therefore, all hypothesis tests were conducted controlling for social desirability.

Hypothesis Tests

To address our primary hypotheses, we conducted hierarchical multiple regression analyses in which we entered participant sex, ethnicity/race, age, and political party into the first step of each analysis as control variables. All categorical control variables were dummy-coded according to procedures outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). In the second step of each analysis, we regressed the dependent variables onto the main effects of the predictor variables. In addition, we centered all predictor variables to have a mean of zero when we computed interactions that tested for hypothesized moderation, to avoid multicollinearity issues (e.g., Aiken & West, 1991).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that participants with more negative attitudes toward women leaders would perceive a woman politician more negatively in terms of perceived likability and competence. The relationship between attitudes toward women leaders and ratings of likability for the female Senator was not significant ($p > .05$). There was, however, a marginal relationship between attitudes toward female leaders and competence such that as participants' attitudes toward female leaders increased, ratings of competency increased ($\beta = .12$), $t(321) = 1.80$, $p < .08$.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that participants who read a negative newspaper article about a woman Senator would have a less favorable impression of her and would rate her as less likable and competent than would those who read a positive newspaper article. To address this hypothesis, we performed two separate analyses in which we regressed perceptions of the Senator's warmth and perceptions of the Senator's competence onto all control variables (Step 1 of each analysis) and article valence (Step 2 of each analysis). Article valence was coded whereby a 1 reflects a positive media article, and a 0 reflects a negative media article.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations: Studies 1 and 2

	Study 1		Study 2											
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	Difference	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Newspaper article	0.49	0.50	0.50	0.50	—	—	.08	.69***	.42***	−.05	−.03	−.02	.08	.35***
2. GAI	4.43	1.00	6.01	1.00	1.58***	.03	—	.07	.18**	−.21***	.15***	−.24	.01	.04
3. Warmth	4.42	1.42	4.52	1.29	0.10**	.74***	.09	—	.62***	−.01	−.02	−.05	.11*	.28***
4. Competence	4.91	0.99	4.93	1.01	0.02	.41***	.21***	.54***	—	−.13*	.09	−.20***	−.02	.26***
5. Republican	0.35	0.48	0.50	0.50	—	.02	−.25***	.02	−.06	—	−.53***	.07	.07	.01
6. Democrat	0.34	0.48	0.50	0.50	—	.11	.26***	.16**	.10	−.47***	—	−.21***	−.09	.08
7. Sex	0.49	0.50	0.26	0.44	—	.05	−.33***	.02	−.11	.10	−.16**	—	.02	−.01
8. Age	23.47	6.10	22.54	5.56	—	.03	−.08	.09	−.06	.16**	−.17**	.16**	—	−.08
9. Newspaper rating[a]	4.15	1.38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. $N = 329$ for Study 1; $N = 246$ for Study 2. Correlations for Study 1 appear above the diagonal, while correlations for Study 2 appear below the diagonal. Newspaper article: 1 = negative, 0 = positive; Republican: 1 = Republican, 0 = all other parties; Democrat: 1 = Democrat, 0 = all other parties; Sex: 1 = male, 0 = female. GAI = Gender Attitude Inventory (Ashmore et al., 1995). Difference = difference in mean level of warmth, competence, and GAI scores in Study 1 vs. Study 2.

[a]Study 1 only.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

The results indicate that ratings of warmth and competence were both impacted by the valence of the newspaper article. Overall, ratings of competence increased across article condition, such that there was evidence for higher competence in the positive article condition ($\beta = .42$), $t(321) = 8.44$, $p < .001$. Likewise, ratings of warmth increased across article condition, whereby in the positive article condition, there was evidence for higher ratings of warmth ($\beta = .68$), $t(321) = 16.71$, $p < .001$ (see Figures 1 and 2).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the relationship between article valence and participants' perceptions of the Senator's likability and competence would be moderated by their attitudes toward female leaders (i.e., responses to the GAI). For these analyses, we entered the control variables into the first step of the regression, the main effects of article valence and GAI into the second step, and the final step of each analysis included the GAI × Article Valence interaction. The results of these analyses do not support Hypothesis 3, as the relevant interactions were not significant ($ps > .10$).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that if the article was inconsistent with participants' attitudes toward female leaders, they might rate the newspaper source unfavorably. To explore this possibility, we regressed participants' impressions of the newspaper onto the control variables (Step 1), the main effects of GAI and article valence (Step 2), and the interaction of GAI × Article

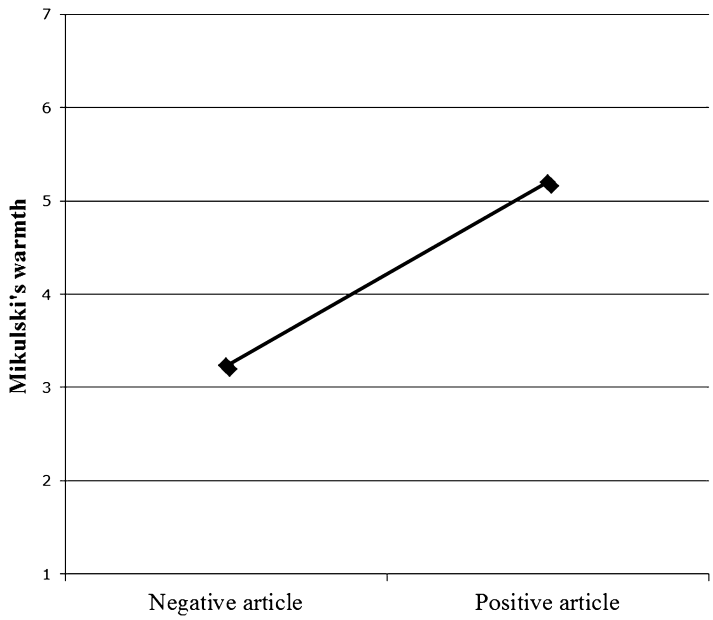

Figure 1. Perceived warmth of Senator Mikulski as a function of article valence: Study 1.

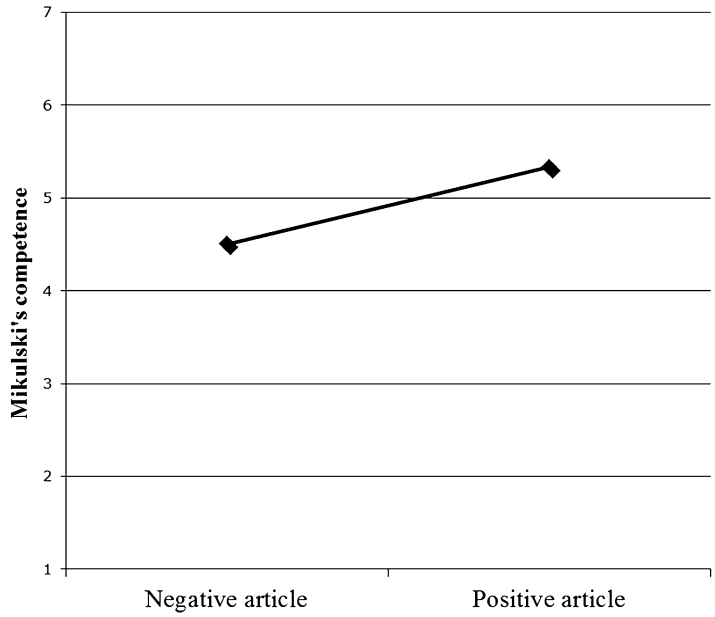

Figure 2. Perceived competence of Senator Mikulski as a function of article valence: Study 1.

Valence (Step 3). As shown in Table 2, there was a main effect of article valence ($\beta = .36$), $t(321) = 6.80$, $p < .001$, such that ratings of the newspaper increased across article conditions, where ratings were higher for positive articles than for negative articles. Furthermore, the interaction was significant ($\beta = .29$), $t(321) = 3.28$, $p < .001$. This interaction is displayed in Figure 3.

Among participants who were presented with a negative article, there was a trend that indicated as attitudes toward women leaders decreased, the favorability of the newspaper source increased ($r = -.17$, $p < .11$). When they were presented with a positive article, as attitudes toward female leaders increased, participants' ratings of the newspaper also increased ($r = .21$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, these correlations differed significantly ($z = 3.51$, $p < .001$), suggesting that participants discredited the newspaper source if the article did not match their pre-existing attitude toward women leaders, thus supporting Hypothesis 4.

Hypotheses 5a and 5b predicted that participants who read an article about a Senator from their own political party would rate her more favorably than would participants who read an article about a Senator from the opposing party. Further, we expected that article valence would moderate this

Table 2

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Article Valence and Attitudes Toward Female Leaders Predicting Rating of a Newspaper Source

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β	*p*
Step 1: Controls				
Sex	−.02	.15	−.01	.92
Age	−.02	.01	−.08	.16
Republican	.21	.19	.07	.28
Democrat	.41	.20	.14	.04
Ethnicity/race				
African American	−.30	.43	−.04	.49
Asian/Pacific Islander	−.14	.34	−.03	.69
Caucasian	.20	.25	.07	.43
Hispanic	.23	.28	.07	.41
Social desirability	.05	.09	.03	.59
Step 2: Main effects				
Article valence (V)	.98	.14	.36	< .001
Attitude toward female leaders (GAI)	.02	.08	.01	.83
Step 3: Interaction				
V × GAI	.47	.14	.22	.001

Note. $N = 333$. Sex: 1 = female, 0 = male; Republican: 1 = Republican, 0 = all other parties; Democrat: 1 = Democrat, 0 = all other parties. GAI = Gender Attitude Inventory (Ashmore et al., 1995). $R^2 = .03$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .12$ for Step 2 ($p < .001$); $DR^2 = .03$ ($p = .001$).

relationship. To test these hypotheses, we constructed a 2 × 2 × 2 interaction between article valence, participants' political party (0 = Democrat; 1 = Republican), and the Senator's political party (0 = Democrat; 1 = Republican). Only data from the 227 participants who self-identified as Democrat or Republican were included in these analyses.

The data do not support Hypotheses 5a or 5b. Participants did not differ in their ratings of the Senator's likability and competence based on their party affiliation or the Senator's party affiliation ($ps > .10$). Further, the three-way interactions were not significant ($ps > .10$). As the previous analyses demonstrated, the valence of the newspaper article was a significant

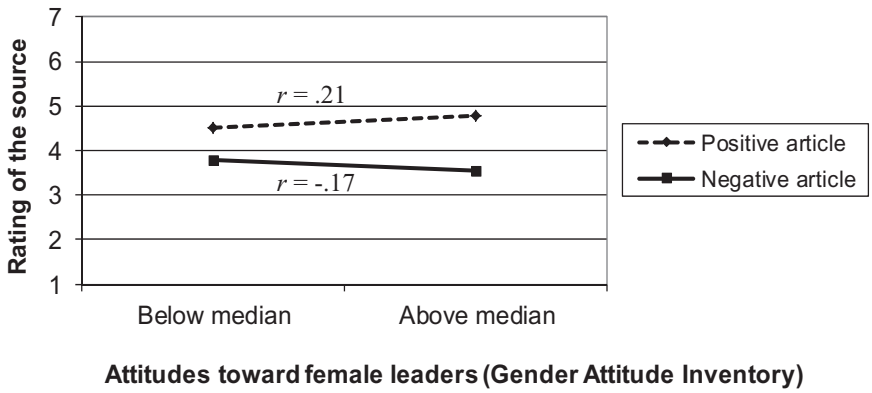

Figure 3. Interactive effect of attitudes toward women leaders and article valence on impressions of the newspaper source: Study 1. *Note.* Correlations significantly differed at $p < .01$.

predictor of ratings of both likability and competence (ps $< .001$), regardless of whether or not the Senator was portrayed as a member of a participant's own political party.

Discussion

In this study, we examined the separate and joint effects of media coverage and attitudes toward women political leaders on perceptions of a woman Senator. Overall, the findings support our predictions. First, results indicate that attitudes toward female leaders are predictive of competency ratings—although not likability ratings—of the female Senator. Such results may be explained by stereotype content, where perceptions of warmth and likability are tied to traditional women stereotypes (e.g., stereotypes of female homemakers), and perceptions of competence are tied to stereotypical perceptions of leaders (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002). Thus, attitudes toward female leaders may be predictive of competency, but not warmth, as a result of a female Senator occupying a nontraditional gender role that, by definition, necessitates high levels of competence (Fiske et al., 2002).

Our findings also emphasize that pre-existing attitudes toward women political leaders strongly predict people's perceptions of a woman politician. The more positive were participants' pre-existing attitudes toward women political leaders, the more favorably they viewed a particular woman politician. In addition, valence of media coverage strongly influences perceptions

of women political leaders: Reading a positively framed newspaper article of a woman politician led to perceiving her more favorably than did reading a negatively framed newspaper article, underscoring the important impact of the media on voter perceptions.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings was that these two variables did not interact. That is, although both holding stereotypical attitudes toward women politicians and reading negative media coverage predicted unfavorable perceptions of a woman politician, the findings were not less pronounced for people with negative attitudes who read positive media coverage. Rather, the results strongly suggest that participants discredited information that contradicted their pre-existing attitudes. This is an interesting finding that mirrors research conducted across a variety of domains on belief persistence (Nisbett & Ross, 1980).

Interestingly, our results also suggest that perceptions of the Senator's warmth and competence were virtually unaffected by political party, which stands in contrast to previous research on the marked influence of party affiliation in perceptions of politicians. For example, Skitka and Robideau (1997) provided strong evidence that participants are most likely to vote along party lines, even if a candidate's platform is somewhat inconsistent with their own party's policies. Participants only stepped across party lines to vote for a member of the opposing party when their own candidate presented a platform that was completely inconsistent with their own party's platform.

Our results might differ because participants were not asked whether they would vote for the Senator described in the article. Further, unlike Skitka and Robideau's (1997) work, we would expect that participants knew relatively little or nothing at all about the target, Barbara Mikulski (including her overall adherence to party norms and policies), as she is a Congresswoman in a state on the opposite coast. The valence of the article may strongly influence participants' perceptions of a Senator, even more markedly than party affiliation, given the participants' lack of knowledge about a Senator.

Study 2

In Study 2, we seek to explore further how the valence of the media impacts perceptions of a woman Senator's warmth and competence in light of different types of media coverage. As noted previously, research (e.g., Devitt, 2002; Kahn, 1994) suggests that media coverage of women politicians tends to focus on different themes, such as clothing/appearance and personality traits, whereas coverage of male candidates more often

highlights stances on issues and leadership ability. In addition, previous research on stereotype violation and backlash has suggested that women in traditionally male occupations may be subject to social sanctions and feelings of dislike as violators of traditional gender stereotypes (e.g., Casad, 2007; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001). This finding may be particularly true for those who hold unfavorable attitudes toward women politicians. Perceptions of women as competent are associated with emotions of hostility, envy, and dislike toward such women (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007; Fiske et al., 2002), suggesting that female leaders tend to be perceived as high in competence, but low in warmth (Fiske et al., 2002).

Overall, this research has suggested that women in high-status leadership roles may be rated as competent, but at the price of being perceived as lacking in warmth and likability (Fiske et al., 2002; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001). This phenomenon was recently illustrated in the public discussion surrounding Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's candidacy for U.S. President, in which Clinton was portrayed as competent for the position, yet cold and even a she-devil (as cited in Seelye & Bosman, 2008). In contrast, vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin often was portrayed as warm and likable, yet incompetent in terms of leadership ability.

In line with previous research, we explore the extent to which both the valence and attributional focus of a media message can influence whether a female politician is perceived as cold and competent, or in accordance with traditional female stereotypes of incompetence and likability. Specifically, we predict that when media messages focus on women politicians' abilities, people are more likely to use this information to evaluate a politician's competence. In contrast, when the focus is on women leaders' personalities, people are more likely to view this information as relevant in evaluating a politician's warmth. In combination with the valence of the media source, women politicians may be perceived as more warm or competent, depending on the content of the message.

To assess directly the impact of different types of media coverage, in Study 2 we varied both the valence (positive and negative) and the focus (ability or personality) of the article. Specifically, we hypothesize that media coverage that focuses on the Senator's ability may activate the competent woman stereotype, resulting in perceptions of her as competent, yet relatively cold when the coverage is negative, as it puts a negative spin on the Senator's personality trait of warmth and reinforces the cold-yet-competent stereotype. In addition, we seek to assess whether positive media coverage focused on a Senator's personality will activate traditional female stereotypes, resulting in perceptions of the Senator as warm and relatively

competent when the article is positive, but both less warm and less competent when the article is negative.

> *Hypothesis 6*. Participants who read a negative article will rate the Senator as more competent than warm, particularly when the article focuses on the Senator's ability.
>
> *Hypothesis 7*. Participants who read a positive article will rate the Senator as more warm than competent, particularly when the article focuses on the Senator's personality.

As in Study 1, the participants in Study 2 completed measures of their attitudes toward women leaders; read either a positively or negatively worded newspaper article about a woman Senator, who was either a Democrat or a Republican; and then rated the Senator's warmth/likability and competence. Additionally, the newspaper article focused on the Senator's personality characteristics or her ability as a Senator. Thus, there were four conditions: a positive, ability-focused article; a positive, personality-focused article; a negative, ability-focused article; and a negative, personality-focused article. Finally, to ensure further that the participants were unfamiliar with the target politician, the article in Study 2 described a fictitious female Senator: Senator Sandra Stevens. The news source was changed to a fictitious paper, the *Grand Valley Press*, as we did not explore whether the participants discounted the news source.

Method

Participants

College students ($N = 306$; 223 women, 83 men) from two southern California universities participated in this study. The participants were between the ages of 18 and 56 years ($M = 22.7$ years, $SD = 6.4$, $Mdn = 21$). Participants were primarily Caucasian (41.9%), with 21.8% Latino, 14.9% Asian or Pacific Islander, 7.9% Black/African American, 1.7% Native American, 7.6% multiracial, and 4.2% "other." The participants' political affiliation was primarily Democrat (45.6%). In addition, Republicans made up 20.3% of the sample, followed by 22.0% of participants who listed their party affiliation as Independent, and 12.1% who identified themselves as "other." The majority of participants rated their liberalism as 4.17 ($SD = 1.17$) on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*very conservative*) to 6 (*very liberal*), indicating that they were somewhat liberal.

Gender Attitude Inventory (GAI), Female Political Leadership Subscale ($\alpha = .89$; Ashmore, Del Boca, & Bilder, 1995).

Measures

As in Study 1, the participants completed the GAI: Female Political Leadership Subscale ($\alpha = .88$; Ashmore et al., 1995; Fiske et al., 2002). Cronbach's alphas were .94, .90, and .28 for the measures of warmth, competence, and social desirability. Although the four-item social desirability scale's reliability was lower than desired, omitting items did not improve reliability; thus, all of the items were retained. Across the four-item test of political knowledge, Study 2 participants' average knowledge score was 2.25 ($SD = 1.25$), which is less than 50% correct responses and is similar to the level for Study 1 participants.

Procedure

Study 2 utilized the same procedure as in Study 1. The article was similar with four exceptions: (a) the newspaper article featured a fictitious Senator (Senator Sandra Stevens); (b) the newspaper article was attributed to a fictitious paper, the *Grand Valley Press*; (c) the participants were not asked to rate the newspaper source; and (d) the newspaper article focused on the senator's ability (i.e., "given Stevens' ability . . .") or her personality (i.e., "given Stevens' personality . . .").

As in Study 1, after they read the article, the respondents were asked to state the target's job (open-ended item), her political party affiliation, and to rate the overall valence of the article. Additionally, participants rated the extent to which the article focused on the Senator's personality on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*totally about her personality*) to 5 (*totally about her ability*).

As expected, 92.7% of participants in the personality-focused condition reported that the article focused completely on the Senator's personality, whereas 88.1% of participants in the ability-focused condition reported that the article focused completely on the Senator's ability. Finally, as in Study 1, participants who did not understand the article (as indicated by incorrect responses on the questions regarding the target's job or political party affiliation), who misinterpreted the valence of the article, or who misinterpreted the focus of the article (i.e., ability or personality) were eliminated from analyses (final $N = 246$).

Results

Exploratory Analyses

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the variables are presented in Table 1. Exploratory analyses were again performed to determine

whether the manipulated variables were correlated with any of the pre- or post-article measures. Participants who received positively worded articles did not differ on pre-existing attitudes toward women leaders ($p > .10$) from participants who received negatively worded articles. Further, scores on pre- and post-article measures did not vary by participants' own political party affiliation or political knowledge (all $ps > .10$). However, social desirability was significantly and positively correlated with attitudes toward women politicians ($r = -.14$, $p < .05$). Therefore, all hypothesis tests were conducted controlling for social desirability.

Replication of Study 1 Findings

Once again, attitudes toward female leaders predicted participants' perceptions of the Senator's competence, such that as attitudes toward female leaders increased, ratings of the Senator's competence increased ($\beta = .18$), $t(236) = 6.90$, $p < .01$. We also replicated Study 1's findings for article valence predicting perceptions of warmth and competence. Specifically, ratings of competence increased across article conditions, whereby higher ratings of competence were associated with a positive article ($\beta = .42$), $t(236) = 7.65$, $p < .001$. Likewise, ratings of warmth were more favorable when participants read a positive, rather than a negative article ($\beta = .73$), $t(236) = 18.10$, $p < .001$ (see Figures 4 and 5).

In Study 1, our results did not support Hypothesis 3 (that the relationship between article valence and participants' perceptions of the Senator's likability and competence would be moderated by their attitudes toward female leaders). The Study 2 results corroborate this null finding that the relationship between valence of the article and GAI scores did not interact to predict perceptions of warmth and competence ($ps > .10$). The results from Study 2 provide additional support for our findings in Study 1 that in a context in which participants had relatively little information regarding the Senator's platform or policy decisions, party affiliation was not a significant predictor of either warmth or competence, such that participants did not rate a Senator of their own party more favorably than a Senator of the opposing party ($ps > .10$).

Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 6 predicted that participants would rate the Senator as more competent than warm when the article focused on her ability, whereas Hypothesis 7 predicted that participants would rate the Senator as more

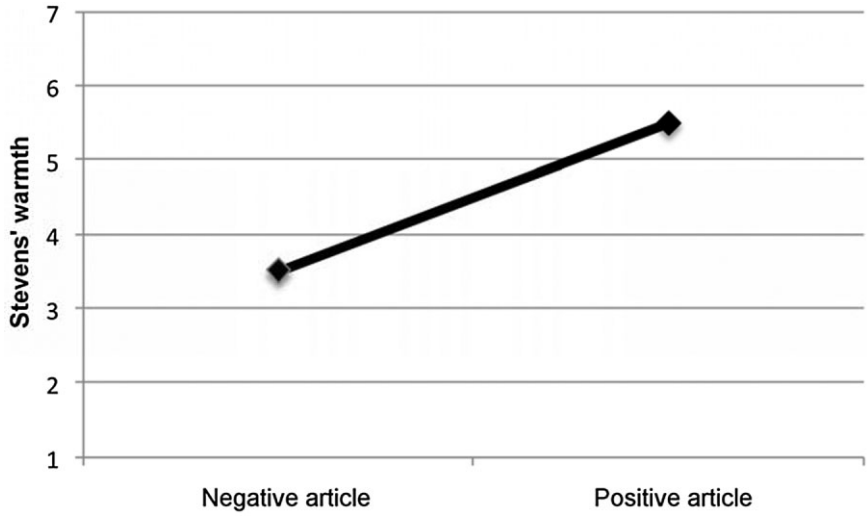

Figure 4. Perceived warmth of the Senator as a function of article valence: Study 2.

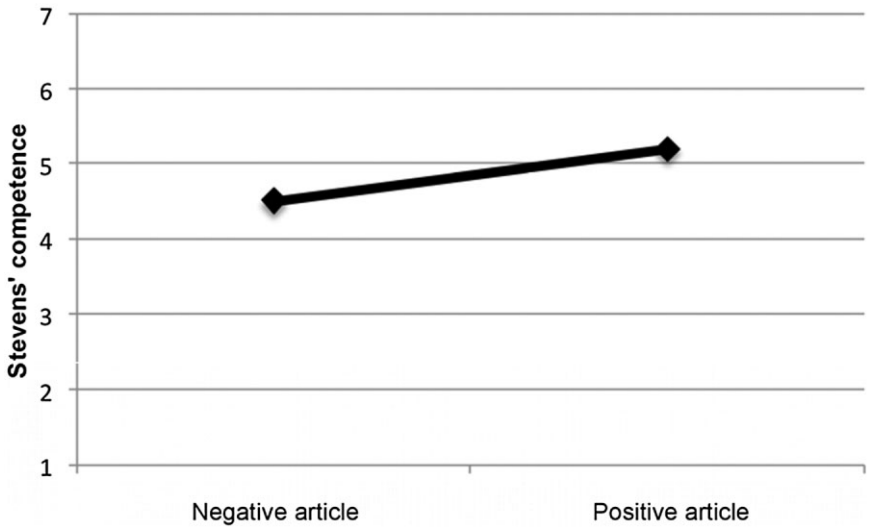

Figure 5. Perceived competence of the Senator as a function of article valence: Study 2.

Table 3

ANOVA for Ratings of Senator Stevens

Source	*df*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between-subjects				
Article valence (V)	1	258.79	.467	< .001
Article focus (F)	1	6.10	.020	.014
V × F	1	12.15	.040	.001
Subject within-group error	246	(1.06)		
Within-subjects				
Rating (R)	1	53.85	.154	< .001
R × V	1	90.36	.234	< .001
R × F	1	< 1	.001	.891
R × V × F	1	13.43	.044	< .001
W × S within-group error				

Note. Rating = ratings of warmth and competence. Value in parentheses represents *MSE*. All analyses assume sphericity.

warm than competent when the article focused on her personality. Warmth and competence were compared using a 2 (Within-Subjects Factors: warmth vs. competence) × 2 (Article Valence: positive vs. negative) × 2 (Article Focus: ability vs. personality) mixed ANOVA. Prior to hypothesis testing, data screening techniques demonstrated that the data met assumptions of ANOVA, thus all analyses presented are untransformed. We anticipated a three-way interaction, whereby there would be a two-way interaction between article valence and warmth/competence for those who read the personality article, and only a main effect of warmth/competence for those who read the ability article.

Main effects (as shown in Table 3) indicate that Senator Stevens was rated higher in competence than warmth. Additionally, participants who read a positive-valence article rated the Senator higher in both competence and warmth than did participants who read a negative-valence article. Finally, those who read a personality-focused article rated the Senator higher in both competence and warmth. These main effects are qualified by the predicted three-way interaction.

As predicted, there was a significant three-way interaction between type of rating (warmth vs. competence), focus of the article (personality vs. ability), and article valence (positive vs. negative), $F(1, 246) = 13.43$, $p < .001$,

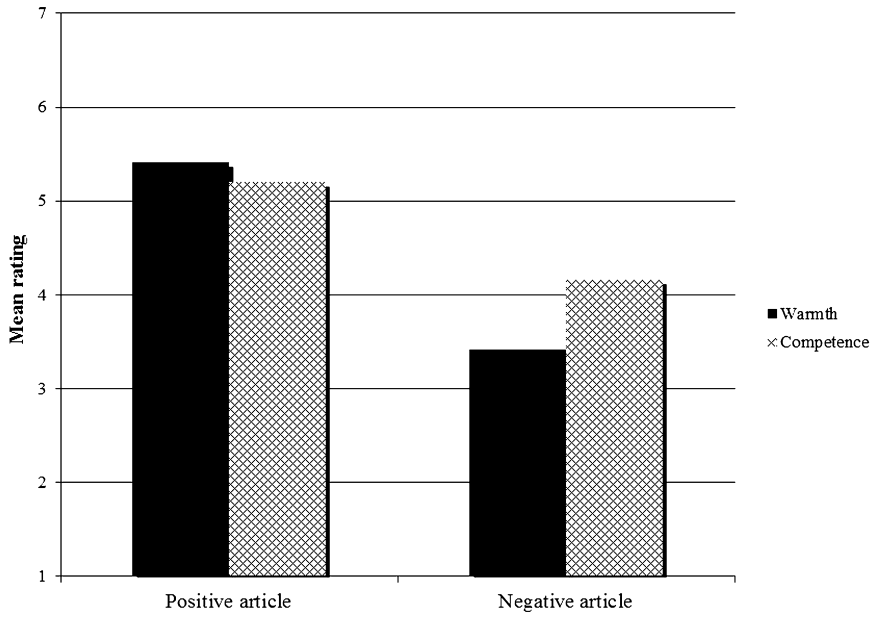

Figure 6. Mean perceptions of the Senator's warmth and competence in the ability-focused article: Study 2.

$\eta^2 = .04$. Simple effects analyses clarify the interaction. In support of Hypothesis 6, participants who read a positive, ability-focused article rated the Senator as relatively equal in competence ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 0.82$) and warmth ($M = 5.41$, $SD = 0.71$), $F < 1$. However, those who read a negative, ability-focused article rated the Senator higher in competence ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.05$) than in warmth ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.04$), $F(1, 74) = 27.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .271$ (see Figures 6 and 7).

In support of Hypothesis 7, simple effects analyses show that participants who read the personality-focused article rated the Senator as slightly more warm ($M = 5.52$, $SD = 0.72$) than competent ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 0.78$) when the article had a positive valence, $F(1, 75) = 10.66$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .12$. However, participants rated her as both far less competent ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.90$) and far less warm ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.94$) if the article had a negative valence, $F(1, 73) = 91.66$, $\eta^2 = .557$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

Study 2's results demonstrate additional support for our hypotheses. The woman Senator was viewed as more competent than warm when the media

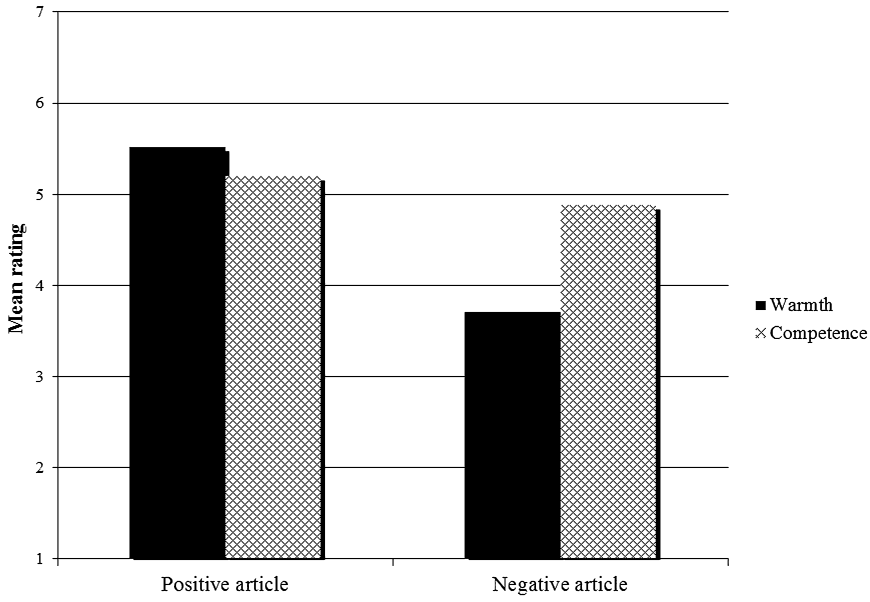

Figure 7. Mean perceptions of the Senator's warmth and competence in the personality-focused article: Study 2.

message was negatively framed and focused on her personality. The results imply that such messages may elicit envious prejudice (Fiske et al., 2002). Specifically, when media messages focus on a female Senator's leadership abilities, people scrutinize her actions for competence. As she is a politician and in a high-level leadership position, she will likely be deemed competent. However, because the media message has a negative valence, people are more likely to perceive her as cold.

Conversely, when a media message focuses on a female politician's personality, viewers scrutinize her personality for warmth. If the message is positively framed, our findings suggest that she is deemed warm and is judged in line with traditional female stereotypes (i.e., less competent in relation to warmth). If the media message is negatively framed, she may be deemed cold, unlikable, and less competent, despite the fact that the coverage has no direct relevance to her leadership ability or personality traits.

The findings suggest that both the tone and the focus of a media message may contribute to an overall negative evaluation of a woman politician, and that negative media messages may be a double-edged sword for a woman in that critiques of her ability also contribute to markedly lower ratings of her likability. Overall, our results highlight that the focus of the message in

combination with its valence does shape differential perceptions of women politicians, which may, in turn, impact voting behaviors, leadership ratings, confidence votes, decisions to donate campaign dollars, and other important political behaviors.

General Discussion

Overall, the findings of these two studies have significant implications for the media campaigns of women political candidates. First, women politicians may need to be more vigilant than men in monitoring and proactively counterbalancing how the media depicts them. Our results suggest that the media has particular influence on the public's judgments of women politicians' likability, which is likely because of their portrayal as congruent or incongruent with gender roles (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly et al., 1995).

In the present research, the main effect of article valence on likability had a larger effect size than did the main effect of valence on competence. Our findings thus support consistent results (e.g., Eckes, 2002; Fiske et al., 2002) that women in positions of authority are often rated as competent, but are not liked because their authority positions violate feminine gender roles (e.g., men dominate authority positions; also see Casad, 2007; Fiske et al., 2002).

Female politicians' campaigns and media watchdogs alike should take particular care to ensure that the presentation of female politicians moves beyond stereotype-confirming information, as the tone of a media message and the tendency to focus on feminine traits and personality factors may subtly (or not so subtly) bias voters against women candidates for political office. The quotes from cable media outlets that opened this article suggest that candid statements regarding the likability of female candidates continue to be prevalent in the coverage of women politicians. Such statements will likely continue to create a double bind for female candidates in communicating their likability and competence for public office.

It is also important to note the potential implications of our null findings across both studies concerning the irrelevance of party affiliation. It is a consistent, often taken-for-granted fact that party affiliation is strongly linked to perceptions of a candidate's transformational leadership and effectiveness, as well as intended voting behaviors (e.g., Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004; Bligh et al., 2005; Pillai et al., 2003, 2007; Pillai & Williams, 1998). The fact that party affiliation was irrelevant in both of our studies thus warrants additional examination.

One interpretation of this finding is that in a context in which a female politician is relatively unknown, gender stereotypes may, in essence, trump

party stereotypes. As a recent example, Sarah Palin's bid for the U.S. vice presidency on the Republican ticket was thought to be a strategy "aimed squarely at female voters" (Duffy, 2008), mainly Democratically leaning Clinton supporters. Palin herself alluded to this approach in her declaration that "the women of America aren't finished yet" (as cited in Duffy, 2008). Though Palin's candidacy was ultimately unsuccessful, our findings suggest that pre-existing attitudes toward women politicians may be as important as party affiliation in determining voting behaviors when women are on the ballot, at least when presented with unfamiliar women politicians.

On the other hand, it is important to point out that our findings may also be partially a result of the fact that college students may not have strong, fully developed political identities along party lines. Research from the last two national elections suggests that college students are a particularly active segment of the voting public. Niemi and Hanmer's (2004) study of 1,200 college students in the 2004 national election found that 77% of college students in their sample voted. In the 2008 Presidential election, an estimated 23 million Americans under the age of 30 voted (3.4 million more than in 2004). Of these younger voters, 70% were either in college or had completed college (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2008). Our sample of college students, however, scored relatively low on political knowledge.[4] This may indicate a lack of interest in and knowledge of political parties. People with low political knowledge and little interest in politics may not be vested in their political parties; thus, party affiliation may be less influential on voting decisions for such individuals. As a result, our study participants may also have had less prominent in-group/out-group distinctions according to stated affiliations than registered party voters.

However, recent Gallup polls in the U.S. have shown that "party support can change rather dramatically in a relatively short period of time" (Jones, 2009, p. A1), and other research has demonstrated the significant role of party affiliation in college students' intended voting behaviors (e.g., Bligh et al., 2005; Pillai, Stites Doe, Grewal, & Meindl, 1997; Pillai & Williams, 1998; Pillai et al., 2003). Thus, we argue that this latter explanation should not undermine the potential implications of our findings, as American voters in general may also mirror the potentially weak party affiliations in our sample. The role of gender stereotypes both within and across political party lines warrants additional examination, as women from both parties increasingly become candidates for the highest political offices.

[4]On average, participants in Study 1 scored 2.5 on our 5-point political knowledge scale, and 27.7% indicated that they did not vote in the last election; while participants in Study 2 scored an average of 2.6 on political knowledge, and 54.7% indicated that they did not vote in the last election.

Future research should also continue to explore the interactive effects of media coverage, attitudes regarding women in authority positions, likability of media sources, and targets' and perceivers' political affiliations. The 2008 Presidential election—and the resulting media coverage of Hillary Clinton's and Sarah Palin's campaigns—provides particularly fertile ground for research in these areas. Our findings would be strengthened by national samples, a variety of media outlets, and a direct comparison of women and men candidates, allowing us to explore further the relationship between media content, outlets, and valence for both women and men candidates across the political spectrum (52% of Californians leaned Democratic in the 2008 election; see Jones, 2009). While we did not directly compare our results to perceptions of men politicians, this limitation is somewhat mitigated, given the extensive previous research on women and men leaders that has reported similar findings (e.g., Eagly et al., 1995; Eckes, 2002; Fiske et al., 2002). However, future work might include direct comparisons, in addition to examining the dual contribution of perceptions of warmth and competence as applied to actual voter behaviors and decisions, or ratings of a female politician's effectiveness once in office.

Finally, our studies focused on only two primary aspects of media representation. Future work may expand on these two dimensions to test empirically the impact of focusing on women politicians' appearance, such as hair and clothing (e.g., Hillary Clinton's pantsuits), or commentators' opinions and the use of chauvinistic language in representing women candidates. Recent experimental research has suggested that focusing on a woman's appearance promotes reduced perceptions of competence (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). It is unclear the extent to which positive references to a candidate's appearance, such as Palin's "sex appeal" as the "cougar in chief" (as cited in Jacobs, 2009), and negative references, such as Clinton's "old-lady-Senator suits" (as cited in Jacobs, 2009) and "robot-like behavior" (e.g., Romano, 2006, p. 1) interact with pre-existing gender stereotypes and focus on personality or ability to impact voter behaviors.

Cable news commentator Glenn Beck described Presidential contender Hillary Clinton as "like the stereotypical—excuse the expression—she's the stereotypical bitch, you know what I mean?" (*The Glenn Beck Show*, March 15, 2007, M. B. B., 2007). Our results suggest that such a portrayal of a woman politician will enhance perceptions of her as competent but cold, and may result in her being disliked and not trusted. In an increasingly media-driven society in which negative comments concerning both men and women politicians abound, future research and dialogue are necessary to help women politicians counter these messages and avoid becoming just another stereotype.

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