

Evaluating the Crying Double Standard in American Politics

An honors thesis for the Department of Political Science

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ABSTRACT:

Today, many pundits and politicians alike argue that a “crying double standard” exists in contemporary politics, meaning that tears from men are perceived more positively than those from women. But is this claim true in the mind of the American voter, and if so, how does the context of the episode come into play? Through the analysis of data from a political psychology study of Tufts students as well as four case studies of prominent politicians who have publicly shed tears in the past 40 years, this thesis seeks to understand the relationship between, gender, context and voter reaction to crying on the campaign trail. I divide political tears into two categories, the overly emotional (“weeper”) and the compassionate. While my hypotheses predict that female “weeper” candidates and male compassionate candidates will be rated more highly than their counterparts, my statistical analysis finds that men are actually punished for compassionate tears while women are not, and that “weeper” are equally disliked, regardless of gender.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Over the past forty years of American politics, the act of publicly shedding tears during a campaign has morphed from a toxic mistake to an accepted, even expected, part of running for office, particularly among male candidates. While in 1972 Democratic presidential hopeful Edmund Muskie's watery eyes played a key role in derailing his primary bid, today's presidential candidates seem to search for teary opportunities, and the Speaker of the House John Boehner is as known for his waterworks as for his politics. But when it comes to women politicians, news-making episodes of crying are few, far between, and often exaggerated, for better or worse. Journalists and female politicians alike have pointed to this phenomenon, saying it indicates a crying double standard; as Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana put it in an interview, "When it happens to a man, it's a sign of tenderness, and when it happens to a woman, it's weakness" (Lovely, 2011, 2). But this assessment does not seem to apply to all cases. Hillary Clinton famously shed a tear the night before the New Hampshire primary, a race she was expected to lose. When the next evening found her victorious, many commentators decided her emotional moment deserved the credit (Healy, 2008).

But how do voters view the wet-eyed behavior of hopeful politicians, and does it have anything to do with gender? If our goal is to create a level playing field regardless of gender, we must understand how tears in the most prevalent campaign scenarios, those of compassionate proclamations and emotional exhaustion and frustration, are interpreted by the American voter through the lens of gender. Political science and psychology literature offer conflicting views on the salience of gender stereotypes in politics and how crying affects an audience's opinion, and very little research examining this topic exists. While the only scholarly work directly addressing the supposed crying double standard, by Deborah Jordan Brooks, finds no difference

in the treatment of male and female candidates who cry, the study looks at just one of the many different contexts in which politicians can and do cry on the campaign trail (2011). My research aims to add nuance to her initial foray into the subject of crying, politics, and gender.

As I examine the phenomenon of the crying double standard and evaluate where gender and tears intersect in the voter's decision-making process, I am guided by several research questions. At the most basic level, I need to determine how voters react when candidates cry, and how the gender of the candidate and the context of the tears affect this reaction. In my research, I define "voter reaction" as the voter's overall opinion and evaluation of the candidate after exposure an account of the incident, which can include elements from potential efficacy to likeability. Based on the results of the Brooks study as well as the literature on gender stereotypes in response to tears and in politics, I put forth the following hypothesis: when voters perceive the emotional display as overly emotional (the "weeper" condition), women will be evaluated relatively better than men, but when voters perceive the emotional display as compassionate, men will be evaluated relatively better than women. This hypothesis also relies crucially on Prentice and Carranza's definitions of prescriptive and proscriptive stereotypes, which hold that depending on the inherent positive or negative associations of a stereotyped trait, violating that stereotype will be either be especially praised or especially reprimanded (2002). These gender stereotype classifications will be explored in greater detail in chapter three of this thesis.

In order to evaluate this hypothesis, I conducted an experiment based on Brooks' model. Participants read an article about a male or female candidate crying either compassionately or in an overly emotional manner and then evaluate the candidate on a variety of characteristics. As a complement to the data collected through this experiment, I also conducted case studies of four

politicians who have cried publicly: former Senator Edmund Muskie, former Representative Patricia Schroeder, then-Senator Hillary Clinton, and Speaker of the House John Boehner.

This methodology also affords me the opportunity to evaluate other questions that add nuance to the role of crying in politics. Since the gender of a politician has in the past been shown to affect voters' opinions of his or her areas of policy expertise, I will also evaluate how a potentially gendered action like crying affects perceived strength on issues for men and women (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). I posit that tears might help male candidates on typically "women's" issues like poverty and education, but their effect on stereotypically male issues might be more complicated and will be further examined in the discussion of the relationship between gender and perceived policy expertise (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

In the following chapters, I examine in depth the current body of psychological and political literature relating to crying and gender stereotypes. Chapter Two focuses on previous forays into gender and politics, exploring how being a woman candidate in United States can be both an advantage and disadvantage and in what areas. This chapter finishes with a discussion of Brooks' work in depth and what it means for my own research. Chapter Three covers the relevant psychological research on crying and gender stereotypes and discusses their interactions. With Chapter Four, we move to the meat of my investigation of crying in politics with case studies of Muskie, Clinton, Boehner, and Schroeder. For each politician, I reconstruct each instance of tears and use information such as public opinion polls, electoral results, and media mentions to evaluate the emotional moment's impact. Chapter Six details my methodology for the experiment I conducted in the fall of 2012 at Tufts University, as well as how I expect my hypotheses to come across through the study data. The following chapter therefore details my results, using a variety of significance tests to examine the interaction of my compassionate and

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weeper conditions, candidate gender, and respondent gender. Finally, my conclusion in Chapter 7 will review the implications of my findings on American politics and political discourse and suggest courses for future research and improvements upon my research design.

CHAPTER 2: POLITICS AND GENDER LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The study of gender in politics is a growing field encompassing many voices that both converge and debate over the complex ways in which gender plays out on the American political stage. This literature review seeks to delve into some of these nuances, particularly those that provide clues to how we might expect crying in politics to play out by gender. After a brief review of the areas in which scholars have examined gender in politics, I discuss a series of studies on the effect of gendered character traits on perception of female candidates and the types of office and campaigns that (dis)advantage women and why, followed with a close examination of the research of Deborah Jordan Brooks.

In her article on political impressions, Kathleen M. McGraw takes a moment to review much of the current literature, though her overview misses findings from the last decade (2003). Women and men in politics are assumed to have the same stereotypic traits as the rest of the population – men are “assertive, tough, competent,” while women are “sensitive, warm, emotional” (McGraw, 2003, 402). McGraw also points to a study by scholars Huddy and Terkildsen, to be examined in more depth shortly, that shows that gender helps determine perceived competency in different policy areas; other research links gender to ideology and partisanship as well (2003). However, these political gender assumptions are not necessarily negative for women, and can sometimes be helpful (McGraw, 2003). Some circumstances favor women, while others present extra challenges; for example, female candidates may have the upper hand when social issues play a key role, but male candidates are probably advantaged at times when international politics are particularly important (McGraw, 2003). While these

tendencies seem to apply to the general population, McGraw also mentions research by Sanbonmatsu that shows that individual voters may be more inclined to support one gender over the other based on how stereotypes about male and female candidates align with their personal beliefs (2003). While brief, McGraw's overview offers a good first look at the nuances of gender stereotypes in politics.

Trait Stereotypes in Perception and Policy Expertise

I begin by examining these nuances in the above mentioned and often-cited work of Huddy and Terkildsen, who, based on observations of campaigns from the late 1980s and early 1990s of candidates seeking to portray themselves with character traits associated with the opposite gender, looked to study how these characterizations actually impact voters. The candidates' reasoning behind this framing is that today's voters' feel women are stronger on what Huddy and Terkildsen call "compassion issues," meaning "poverty, education, child-related, and health policy issues," but weaker on "big business, handling the military, [and] defense issues," while expecting reverse competencies from men (1993, 120). The scholars designed an experiment to evaluate whether these gendered character traits could mitigate the effects of inherent gender stereotypes. Participants read a brief description of either a male or female candidate described with either masculine or feminine character traits (meaning some participants read about a male candidate described with stereotypically feminine traits and vice versa), and then responded to questions invoking inferred qualities of that candidate, both personal and policy (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

Based on their analyses, Huddy and Terkildsen found that "the candidates' gender significantly influenced their perceived competency in both issue domains" (1993, 131). For example, female candidates were always seen as more competent on "women's issues," no

matter the descriptors used for either candidate (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). In fact, the female candidates possessing masculine traits were viewed as the most competent on women's issues.

After regressing the data, however, the scholars discovered that while evidence of inherent beliefs based on gender was present, the assigned character traits were "largely responsible for the most pervasive forms of political stereotyping" (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, 140).

Describing a male candidate with typically feminine traits improved his appraisal as adept on "compassion issues," and vice versa for female voters on typically "masculine" issues to a more significant degree than the candidate's gender (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

Another intriguing element of the experiment's results was that "typical masculine traits proved more beneficial to the hypothetical candidate than typical feminine traits" because they helped bolster a candidate's assumed capabilities with regards to the military and the economy as well as women's issues for women, whereas feminine traits only helped men with compassion issues, and not all of them (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, 141). The scholars therefore conclude that women candidates can successfully paint themselves in typically masculine colors without losing their femininity, which could be helpful as the office pursued is higher, since "male" leadership qualities are perceived as more essential to this level (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993).

While their results indicate that gender does not have as much of an impact as gendered character traits, the scholars feel inherent stereotypes might have some impact on the success of female Republicans; if they are seen as more liberal than they actually are, "voters [could] misperceive their political platform" (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993, 143).

Almost twenty years have passed since Huddy and Terkildsen's research was published, so it is difficult to tell from these results alone whether assumptions about policy competency still exist within the American electorate. While no scholar has exactly replicated their work,

other related research may give us reason to think their findings remain at least partially valid. Kathleen Dolan, for example, conducted a national survey in 2007 where voters indicated whether men or women “tended to be more assertive, compassionate, consensus-building, and ambitious, or whether there was no difference between them” and then asked them to rate their willingness to vote for a female president (2010, 74; 1993). Dolan’s survey found the respondents’ individual attribution of gender trait stereotypes did not impact their feelings on women in politics, which may conflict with Huddy and Terkildsen’s findings on the strength of the trait theory, though the former asked respondents to provide their opinions while the latter looked at how respondents processed information given about hypothetical candidates (2010; 1993). Methodological differences aside, Dolan’s work does not rule out the power of belief stereotypes. Additionally, it is still possible that an indirect exposure to behavior that makes one think of gender stereotypes, like crying, might in turn cue gendered policy competency expectations. Thus, my conjecture that crying might make a candidate seem more feminine and thereby boost appraisals of his or her competence on poverty and education while tempering his or her perceived abilities with the economy and defense is possible. There is, however, an important caveat to consider pertaining to whether the American public now accepts “compassionate crying” as a part of being a man in politics that could affect this prediction, one that will be addressed when we examine the growing acceptance of male tears in American culture.

Additionally, other political scientists have built off Huddy and Terkildsen’s work by examining not just how emphasizing masculine or feminine traits affects voters’ perceptions, but what effects the interplay of different gendered traits can have on a candidates’ approval and perception. Burns, Eberhardt, and Merolla chose to examine these interactions through a real-

life example of a female candidate who tried to combine feminine and masculine element into her public persona, 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin (2013). Using the 2008 election as a backdrop, the scholars conducted an experiment on Los Angeles residents in which they presented each participant with one of four experimental treatments in news-article format, or a control. One treatment, the “Palin as Mother” condition, sought “to portray Sarah Palin’s family background and highlight feminine qualities, thus reinforcing trait gender stereotypes,” while both the “Palin as Attacker” and “Palin on Issues” conditions took different approaches to evoking masculine traits, the former through painting Palin as “aggressive,” a masculine stereotype, the latter by emphasizing her conservative (and therefore more masculine) ideology (Burns et al., 2013, 5). To simultaneously emphasize male and female character traits, the scholars created a “Palin as Executive” treatment, which mixed policies and characterizations associated with both genders (Burns et al., 2013). The scholars found that the motherly Palin prompted respondents to identify her with more female character traits, and the “Palin as Attacker” condition scored highest in terms of masculine traits (Burns et al., 2013). In addition, regressions showed that for Republicans and independents, the higher the number of masculine and feminine traits “Palin as Executive” was perceived to embody, the more warmly respondents viewed her; for Democrats, “Palin as Executive” was seen most positively when the respondent saw her as more feminine than masculine (Burns et al., 2013). Besides providing continued confirmation of Huddy and Terkildsen’s findings, Burns, Eberhardt, and Merolla’s work demonstrates that implicit suggestions of character traits can also cue up related gender stereotypes. The use of crying in my study should therefore be expected to elicit similar reactions, especially because their sample and my own, while not wholly representative of the nation, probably contain similar distributions of ideology and income. While this study used a

known female candidate and my own presents hypothetical ones, one might also expect that a male candidate who evoked both male and female gender stereotypes through compassionate crying might be similarly well liked.

Expectations of Women Leaders and Real Life Results

Many of the challenges women face in politics can also be traced to conflicting expectations about the role of women in leadership, or what Jamieson calls “double binds” (1995). She outlines five of these double binds in her book, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership*, but her discussion of the “sameness/difference” and “femininity/competence” binds are particularly relevant to the experience of female politicians.

Jamieson characterizes the “sameness/difference” bind as a clash between two key philosophies of feminism (1995). Sameness argues that beyond reproductive differences, men and women are the same and should be treated as such, while difference puts forward that because women are different, they come with skills that mean they can do certain things better than men (Jamieson, 1995). Each of these arguments has been used to further women in some ways, but both have occasionally served to hinder women’s progress. In American politics, women sometimes can win by playing to the difference argument and portraying themselves as an alternative to politics as usual, but according to Jamieson, “women candidates are still perceived as less expert on those matters traditionally associated with the public sphere and more expert on those identified with the private,” meaning they are evaluated by the public based on sameness philosophy (1995, 106). In the same vein, women in politics “are expected to deal more efficiently than men at tasks allied to women’s traditional strengths – family matter consumer protection, and education” (Jamieson 1995, 115). In some situations, women are forced to choose between embracing the argument of their unique strengths that difference

theory espouses and proving they are as gifted universally as men and fighting those assumptions, based on the actual abilities of the candidate in question (Jamieson, 1995). These conflicting philosophies add an additional strategic issue that women candidates must straddle and process.

However, confusing standards do not mean that a concerted appeal to women will not be effective. Building off research demonstrating that women are viewed “as more competent than males on certain types of issues and less competent on others,” their strengths generally viewed as “compassion” and women’s issues, Herrnson, Lay and Stokes endeavored to see what happens when female politicians play into those stereotypes and appeal to groups with similar interests (2003, 245-246). Looking at the transition from the campaigns of female politicians in the 1980s, which focused on showing toughness, professionalism, and to some extent, masculinity, to the races of the early 1990s where women seemed to embrace feminine imagery, the scholars hypothesized appealing to female voters and running on a platform of stereotypically “women’s” issues would significantly increase a female candidate’s electoral chances (Herrnson et al., 2003).

The scholars used election data from a “nationwide sample of candidates who ran for statewide, U.S. House, state legislative, local or judicial offices between 1996 and 1998” to examine their hypothesis, selecting a pool of candidates that was representative of the number of men and women running for office nationally (Herrnson et al., 2003, 247). The data first indicated that women were significantly more likely to direct campaign efforts toward women or women’s and/or social groups, suggesting that “female politicians perceive that there is something unique about their candidacies and campaigns” simply because they are women (Herrnson et al., 2003, 248). Overall, the scholars found that women candidates of all levels who

targeted other women and relevant groups increased their chances of winning by eleven percent (Herrnson et al., 2003). The authors conclude that a good strategy for female politicians is to “turn voters’ dispositions toward gender into an asset rather than a liability;” since voters will see them through a lens of gender-based assumptions, the best option is to transform those assumptions into advantages (Herrnson et al., 2003, 251). While these results are encouraging for those hoping to see greater female representation in elected positions, these findings and subsequent outlook do imply that female candidates are likely to lack something voters seek in their elected officials when they do not use the “female” card.

There are, however, other paradoxical requirements of women leaders that can affect their performance in the political sphere, bringing our attention back to the second of Jamieson’s relevant double binds, “femininity/competence” (1995). Jamieson defines the “femininity/competence” bind as “a bind that expects a woman to be feminine, then offers her a concept of femininity that ensures that as a feminine creature she cannot be mature or decisive” (1995, 120). Many of the characteristics society ascribes to leadership are stereotypically tied to masculinity, and women who try to incorporate encounter chiding for being too manly (Jamieson, 1995). In fact, “‘too’ and ‘not...enough’” are the parameters with which women leaders often find their actions classified; Jamieson states that “women are penalized both for deviating from the masculine norm and for appearing to be masculine” (1995, 121, 125). Jamieson also points out that ambition is seen as undesirable for a woman, which would pose a problem for any woman looking to get ahead in politics (1995). These binds are a part of the equation dictating women’s perception in the political playing field that is irrelevant for men; unlike their female counterparts, male candidates do not need to concern themselves with appearing masculine enough to be taken seriously, nor must they maintain a certain level of

femininity, though, as Huddy and Terkildsen point out, they might incorporate certain “feminine” traits into their public persona to reap their associated benefits (1993).

But again, there are examples of women holding a sizable advantage in major electoral contests that might make us reconsider the femininity/competence bind. Like many scholars in the 2006 cycle, Fridkin and Kenney examined the effects of incumbency on how gender stereotypes influence voters (2009, 306). Fridkin and Kenney predicted that incumbency would make gender stereotypes less influential because senators have their entire term to craft their image and message to constituents, but also saw the possibility that elected officials can reinforce stereotypes through their actions in office, increasing their salience in elections (Fridkin & Kenney, 2009). Controlling for other factors known to affect senate campaign appraisals, Fridkin and Kenney asked participants questions concerning gender-linked character traits and policy areas in twenty-eight senate races for that election cycle (2009).

Rather than finding either case they predicted, the scholars discovered that even when they controlled for outside factors, female incumbents had a significant advantage in almost all factors, even those stereotypically considered male territory (Fridkin & Kenney, 2009). The only trait for which neither gender was distinctly advantaged once other factors were controlled for was “experience.” Combining the data collected, Fridkin and Kenney looked at voters’ overall impressions of male versus female incumbents and found that “being a woman senator in the 2006 campaign cycle was a distinct advantage” (2009, 315). In short, no evidence of the advantages traditionally considered “male” was found (Fridkin & Kenney, 2009). To the scholars, it was unclear without further data from other elections whether women were just particularly favored in this election cycle or “if women senators, because of pre-existing stereotypes [...] enjoy a built-in advantage over male senators once in office” while female

challengers must endure a greater struggle (Fridkin & Kenney, 2009, 317). While one Senate election cycle is not sufficient to assume all women incumbents are always safer than their male colleagues, Fridkin and Kenney's research helps show that the role of gender stereotypes in today's political climate is complicated: sometimes they are present, and sometimes they positively or negatively affect women's chances, but when and how they will play a role is difficult to divine.

And yet, there does seem to be one office that women consistently struggle to penetrate: the Oval Office. Whether our dearth of women commanders in chief is related to gender is what Smith, Paul and Paul seek to determine through the analysis of two studies on the salience of gender in Senate and Presidential elections (2007). Rather than linking men to certain traits that align with leadership qualities and women with others unrelated to leadership, like some other scholars do, these three ascribe to the "gender-incongruity hypothesis," which "suggests that men running for high-level, powerful, authoritative positions are favored because these roles are (as a cause or consequence) male-dominated" (Smith et al., 2007, 226). In other words, an office may be viewed as male territory simply because few or no women have held it, and a "mismatch" (a woman in a male position) may cause bias and backlash (Smith et al., 2007). Because the presidency has been an exclusively male position throughout American history while the Senate has women members, Smith, Paul and Paul therefore hypothesize they will find gender bias when looking at candidates for a presidential race but none in a senate race (2007).

The scholars performed two experiments, one for each office. In both cases, undergraduate students were told they were evaluating a real potential candidate's chances at the office, and were presented with the résumé of a real congressperson widely agreed to be moderate (Smith et al., 2007). The researchers changed only the name and appropriate pronouns

in the résumé to reflect gender; some participants read about “Brian,” some about “Karen,” and in the presidential trial a gender-neutral name, “Terry,” was also included. The participants then rated the potential candidate on ability and motivation with a closed scale and, in the presidential trial, answered an open-ended question regarding their general impressions of the candidate.

As they predicted, the results from the Senate trial showed almost no difference in opinion between the male and female treatments, but a significant difference in the presidential trial (Smith et al., 2007). The male condition scored higher and more positively than the female condition, and “Terry,” the gender-neutral name, fell in the middle but more toward the male side, which the scholars reasoned was the result of the participants considering “a gender-neutral name [...] ‘male’ in the context of the role of President” (Smith et al., 2007, 230). From these findings, the scholars go on to posit that voters who might support a woman candidate might practice strategic voting in a primary and vote for the male candidate based on the belief that a female can’t win (Smith et al., 2007). They also suggest that public opinion polls hide this more private stereotype about women presidents because people do not want to appear discriminatory. This fairly recent evidence indicates that the electorate has not yet become blind to gender; despite strides toward unbiased decision-making, raising the stakes of an election, like a presidential one does, also raises the possibility that voters may discount an equally qualified female contender.

Emotion in Politics: Brooks’ Preliminary Foray

While all of these studies help paint a more comprehensive picture of the life of women in politics, none of them touch on how emotion in campaigns could influence perceptions of male and female candidates, in particular tears. Only one scholar has yet to study how crying plays with voters and the possibility of gender-based responses. In her forthcoming book, *He*

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Runs, She Runs, and a 2011 article entitled “Testing the Double Standard for Candidate Emotionality: Voter Reactions to the Tears and Anger of Male and Female Politicians,” Deborah Jordan Brooks deconstructs voter reactions to displays of anger and tears (2013). Here, I focus on her discussion of tears.

Noting, like I have, that crying has become more commonplace among men in politics, and that many feel women politicians are not entitled to the same freedom of emotional expression, Brooks designed an experiment to test voter reactions to an episode of campaign tears (2011). The study presented participants with a fake newspaper article about a congressperson described as moderate and bipartisan announcing his or her Senate bid (Brooks, 2011). In the two experimental conditions, one for each gender, the article also included mention of two similar instances in which the candidate cried publicly, while two control conditions did not (Brooks, 2011). Rather than predict one specific outcome, Brooks establishes three hypotheses for participants’ reactions to her crying conditions: women will fare better, men will fare better, or neither will be advantaged or disadvantaged by crying, citing different stereotype theories and business literatures to justify these respective possibilities (2013). Participants were then asked a series of questions in order to evaluate three measures of affect: “overall likeability, likely effectiveness in the Senate, and likely effectiveness as U.S. president about 10 years from now,” as well as on several personality traits (Brooks, 2011, 602). Brooks found that candidates that cried were rated more negatively overall than those that did not and were deemed more emotional, but that women were no more penalized than men for waterworks. She therefore takes these results to mean that claims of a crying double standard are overblown, and that tears are no more damaging to man’s campaign and reputation than a woman’s. Further, her control conditions showed no baseline advantage for male candidates on personality traits considered

masculine, perhaps indicating that respondents were not evaluating candidates based on stereotypes (2011).

Brooks' research is compelling in many ways, but does leave some key questions unanswered. First, her chosen examples of crying – a candidate tearing up over the unspecified “rigors of campaigning” and then about his or her legislative failures – are not truly reflective of the current crying trend among male politicians in the United States, the phenomenon that has sparked this debate (Brooks, 2011, Appendix A). Crying male candidates and politicians of late, like Speaker of the House John Boehner, have been in the news for waterworks not when their failings caught up with them, but when they used a moment of compassion to their advantage. Brooks acknowledges the existence of this type of public crying, which she calls “sympathetic crying,” but chose not to examine it because the goal of the book for which this study was undertaken was to reevaluate or debunk common assumptions on what hurts women candidates, and she was looking for a situation in which she felt the tears were mostly likely to elicit a specific gendered response from the participants, one that favored men and disadvantaged women (2013). Unlike non-sympathetic crying, the type she used in her study, sympathetic crying was excluded because Brooks felt that “sympathy-related tears could potentially have primarily positive effects” (2013, 19-20). But sympathetic crying, which I have labeled compassionate crying, should not be excluded from study because it is potentially beneficial to those who display it. The effects of these particular tears on campaigns based on candidate gender may be more complicated than simply “positive,” hence the need for further analysis.

Conclusion: Connecting the Dots

There is a wide and varied body of literature on the intersections of gender and politics, which examines everything from women's electoral chances and challenges to the areas in which

they are seen as most competent and how emotions affect their perceptions. But in comparing these various investigations into what it means to be a woman in politics, conflict in results is evident, as well as the question of changing societal norms between the late twentieth century and today and how such changes affect our perceptions of gender. While we have some reason to believe gender stereotypes are not as outwardly present as in the past, and that they can be positive for women, further research is needed to help refine the advantages of and pitfalls faced by women candidates today. My research should bring light to another piece of the continuously constructed and reconstructed puzzle of women and politics, giving specific information on how and if female candidates should express emotion in public.

One specific area where my study stands to make a significant contribution is in how gender, character traits, and policy expertise interact. Two of studies previously discussed, by Huddy and Terkildsen and Dolan, showed a tendency to associate the genders with different policy areas, a trend I expect will be present in my research as well, but contradicted one another on the effect of personality traits, as well as the method of measuring them. By creating an experiment in which personality traits are not assigned to candidates but implied through a behavior, crying, I provide a new method by which the effect of character traits on perceived policy expertise, as well as affect, could be measured.

Most importantly, I aim to fill a gap purposely left by Brooks in choosing not to examine compassionate crying, as mentioned earlier. While the lack of any baseline research on the issue of emotion in politics made finding any kind of starting point important, Brooks' choice to focus on non-sympathetic crying meant she could not fully evaluate the current trend of tears among American men in politics. Her choice leaves me room to pursue a study of compassionate crying that expects men to rate more highly than women in identical contexts. While Brooks' chosen

instance of crying does share similarities with my own overly emotional, or “weeper,” condition, there are two reasons why I believe my assertion that women will fare better in this condition than men remains valid. The first is that the scenario depicted in my treatment focuses on one specific and defined instance of tears, whereas Brooks’ treatment showcased two loosely related instances, one of campaign strain and one of personal failure. This combination could potentially muddle gender-related findings. The second is that, in comparing the “weeper” condition to the compassionate and evaluating the results in a study that includes more questions to respondents, new patterns and trends may appear that did not in Brooks’ original iteration.

CHAPTER 3: PSYCHOLOGY LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

While understanding the related research thus far on gender and politics is essential for moving forward, understanding the social psychology literature on crying and gender stereotypes is equally important. Gender stereotypes are well known, resilient, and often dictate our expectations of appropriate behavior from men and women, meaning they are important to consider when examining the little-explored role of emotion (and specifically tears) in politics. Additionally, an understanding of why adults cry and how those who see another’s tears react or interpret that behavior may shed light on public crying in political campaigns. In the following chapter, both of these areas will be explored from the perspective of social psychology.

Crying in adults

Crying, a physical response most associated with infancy and childhood, is not commonly thought of as a typical reaction among adults and is therefore noteworthy whether or

not one is running for political office. But why do adults cry, and how do people react to mature tears?

In adults, crying serves as a mode of communicating with others non-verbally. Crying is conventionally associated with negative emotions, though it can be a sign of positive ones, and is, according to psychotherapist Judith Kay Nelson, a method of “[asking] for, and [knowing] when to give, love and care” (2005, 6). Just as people are drawn to care for a bawling infant, adult crying evokes a caregiving response in others; it is an attachment behavior that seeks interpersonal interaction in order to restore a person’s emotional equilibrium (Nelson, 2005). By triggering this attachment response, the crier seeks comfort and support, as well as empathy, from those around him or her (Nelson, 2005). Since tears also discourage aggression from onlookers, those around someone who is crying may become less angry or critical when faced with tears (Kottler & Montgomery in Hendriks et al., 2008). One can see easily why a political candidate might shed tears; politics can be taxing and thankless, and a candidate might psychologically need to seek comfort and deter criticism.

When interacting with a crying person, people are more likely to offer “emotional support” than they would to “a noncrying person,” but there is a lot more besides sympathy going on beneath the surface (Hendriks et al., 2008, 35). Hendriks, Croon, and Vingerhoets’ study of human reactions to descriptions of crying in six different situations revealed that people are likely to assign negative characteristics to a crying person and help them out of self-interest rather than empathy (2008). While our natural response to an attachment behavior is to provide that person with care, such a response occurs as people surrounding the crier become upset and uncomfortable; they help so as to alleviate their own discomfort and sadness resulting from seeing someone else cry (Henriks et al., 2008). Their research also demonstrated that reactions

to tears are influenced by the positive or negative tone of the situation. Participants had more favorable attitudes about tears in unpleasant situations (attending a funeral, breaking a vase, “causing a car crash”) than in pleasant ones (winning the lottery, “awarding a colleague,” becoming a parent) (Henriks et al., 2008, 26). This finding indicates that crying context can play a role in human response and reaction. Adding the scrutiny to which politicians are subjected could in turn exacerbate the reactions of voters to different instances of tears.

Gender Stereotypes on Emotion and Gender Stereotype Theories

To better comprehend how human behavior in response to tears relates to societal conceptions of gender and gender bias, it is necessary to understand how we differentiate between and sometimes discriminate against men and women in American society. Therefore, I now examine those stereotypes and how they are used, also known as stereotype theory.

The work of psychologist Sandra Bem in the 1970s and 1980s established a scale of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny still in use today based on the “[internalization of] society’s sex-typed standards of desired behavior for men and women” (1974, 155). The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) was created by taking the input and ratings of one hundred participants on the social desirability for a man or a woman on two hundred traits and determining the difference in desirability between sexes for each trait (1974). Traits found to have a large difference between the desirability for men and the desirability for women earned a spot on the masculine list, vice versa for the feminine list, and traits for which there was no real difference for gender were considered neutral (Bem, 1974). These gender-desirable traits are so coveted in the different sexes that they end up being viewed as prescribed traits, elements that make someone masculine or feminine.

Unlike prescriptive stereotypes, which seek to tell us how men and women should or should not behave within the framework of cultural values, descriptive stereotypes make assumptions about the characteristics of a man or woman based on gender alone (López-Sáez & Lisbona, 2009). The difference between prescriptive or proscriptive and descriptive stereotypes is subtle but distinct, and can be best characterized with an example: according to a descriptive stereotype, women are inherently emotional; according to a prescriptive stereotype, women should be (or are allowed to be) more emotional than men. After a thorough evaluation of the relationship between prescriptive and descriptive stereotypes, scholars Mercedes López-Sáez and Ana Lisbona determined that the difference between these two types of stereotypes makes descriptive stereotypes harder to shake than prescriptive ones – while “repeated exposure to behaviors that do not match the stereotypes is an important source of modification for [...] prescriptive” stereotypes, people are still compelled “to classify men and women as belonging to two social groups, and for that purpose they will be forced to resort to differentiating descriptive traits” (2009, 371). When dealing with descriptive stereotypes, an example of someone contradicting the assumed trait would more likely lead to subtyping, or viewing the person contradicting the trait as an exception brought about by the circumstance, as “too atypical of the category” to be included (Rothbart & John, 1993, 44). The interaction of descriptive stereotypes and subtyping illustrates how women candidates, who are expected to be emotional due their gender, could suffer more from showing tears than a male counterpart, whose crying could be situationally subtyped.

Many of the traits identified on the BSRI as desirably feminine imply emotional tendencies (“compassionate,” “eager to soothe hurt feelings,” “sensitive to the needs of others,” “tender,” “sympathetic”), yet the traits prescribed to men are either unrelated to emotion or seem

to imply an acceptance of aggressive or angry behavior (“independent,” “aggressive,” “assertive,” “strong personality,” “defends his own beliefs,” “competitive”) (Bem, 1974, 156).

While this research is close to forty years old, recent reevaluation of the scale has confirmed “the continued centrality of traditional definitions of femininity and masculinity” and has been expanded upon by Deborah Prentice and Erica Carranza in their version of prescriptive stereotype theory to include socially undesirable, or proscriptive, traits (2002, 270).

Prentice and Carranza have classified the stereotype that women are more emotional as a gender-relaxed proscriptive stereotype (2002). This means emotionality is a characteristic “generally low in social desirability but significantly higher in desirability in the target gender [...] [a flaw women] are allowed to have by virtue of their gender” (Prentice & Carranza, 2002, 271). This type of stereotype is one corner of Prentice & Carranza’s four-sided prescriptive stereotype system designed to classify where men and women are supposed to fall relative to the general desirability of a trait (2002). The opposite of a gender-relaxed proscriptive stereotype is a gender-intensified proscriptive stereotype, whose desirability is low in general “and even lower [...] for the target gender;” for men, “emotional” falls into this category (Prentice & Carranza, 2002, 271, 274). The scholars also reexamine and modify socially desirable traits as defined by the BSRI, dividing the desirable into gender-intensified prescriptive stereotypes and gender-relaxed prescriptive (2002). Gender-intensified prescriptive stereotypes are those where the trait in question is valued universally but even more so for that gender – in women an example would be “interest in children,” while “business sense” would be an intensified prescription for men (2002, 271, 273-274). When a stereotype is categorized as gender-relaxed prescriptive, the trait is regarded highly in general but is either not valued or simply not expected in that gender (2002). Whereas “interest in children” is a gender-intensified prescription for women, it is

gender-relaxed for men, just as “business sense” is relaxed for women. The relationship between these related but distinct categories is demonstrated visually in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 – Categories of Traits that Differ in Their Desirability for Women and Men ¹		
Trait Valence	More desirable for target gender than for people in general	Less desirable for target gender than for people in general
Socially Desirable	Gender-intensified prescriptions (interest in children for women)	Gender-relaxed prescriptions (interest in children for men)
Socially Undesirable	Gender-relaxed proscriptions (emotionality in women)	Gender-intensified proscriptions (emotionality for men)

Although not all traits are relaxed in one gender and intensified in the other, many of them are. According to these scholars’ results, there is a greater penalty for stepping outside of one’s prescriptive stereotype (when men are not self-reliant, or when women are not warm and kind) than there is for following a societal expectation; in fact, “evidence suggests that the only strong imperative is to avoid the other gender’s undesirable qualities,” and that exhibiting gender-relaxed prescriptions should not engender backlash (Prentice & Carranza, 2002, 270). The scholars go on in their discussion to posit that punishments will occur when an intensified prescription or proscription is violated (i.e. when men are emotional), but that they may be rewarded when violating a relaxed prescription (when men show compassion) especially if the

¹ Originally found in: Prentice, Deborah A. and Erica Carranza. 2002. "What Women should be, Shouldn't be, are Allowed to be, and Don't have to be: The Contents of Prescriptive Gender Stereotypes." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 26 (4): 269-281.

actor also shows that they are not violating any intensified prescriptions or proscriptions in their gender (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). This explanation is important to consider as we examine the reasons why male politicians are sometimes greatly penalized for crying that signals a loss of control and emotionality, but rewarded when their tears are compassionate and kind; tolerance of an “emotional” female politician can also be explained in this same vein (Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

Building on the potential for context to affect the perception of tears, Warner and Shields have taken this discussion even further to address the “paradoxical nature of manly tears,” a particular subset of male emotional stereotypes that they say comes from contemporary “heterosexual masculinity” and emphasizes “the expression of rationality and self-control” in male tears (2007, 110, 98-99). Their study, also involving a series of vignettes depicting different crying scenarios, demonstrated a difference between the evaluation of sad tears and angry tears when displayed by men and women because of the manly tear phenomenon (Warner & Shields, 2007). While the reactions to both men and women crying angrily were perceived as equally negative, “men [were] evaluated most positively in the sad, moist-eye context” (Warner & Shields, 2007, 110). Warner and Shields relate this dichotomy back to manly tears and the concurrent idea that men display their emotions more effectively and competently than women (2007). Reinforcing this explanation was a significant amount of speculation among some participants that read about the woman crying in the sad context – many seemed to believe her tears were insincere or “manipulated” (Warner & Shields, 2007, 111). This evaluation echoes a common perception of how female tears would be received in politics, since those who assert the existence of a crying double standard often imply that tears from the likes of Boehner, Obama, and others are somehow more legitimate than a woman’s would be.

Again, the psychological evidence of Warner and Shields points strongly to the relevance of context in examining instances of political crying with regards to gender, and there are parallels to be drawn between the scholars' examination of angry tears versus sad tears and gender and the different political contexts this study investigates, the compassionate condition we will examine being most analogous to Warner and Shields' sad tears. This acceptance of "manly tears" means we can expect different reactions (and most likely more positive ones) when male candidates cry. Additionally, if these tears are, as Warner and Shields believe, a new component of American masculinity, they may reinforce a male candidate's masculine image. In such a case, one should not expect tears to have a negative effect on perceived policy expertise in "masculine" policy areas, as was discussed in conjunction with Huddy and Terkildsen's research.

Conclusion and hypothesis formation

This foray into social psychology elucidates some important points. The first is that crying is designed to provoke a reaction from others, but does so in a fashion that is decidedly mixed. Rather than viewing another's tears in a wholly sympathetic light, crying makes others somewhat uncomfortable, and in different contexts can engender different reactions.

Additionally, the work of Warner and Shields has made clear that a person's response to another's tears can be tempered by the situation as well as the emotion perceived to motivate the observed (2007). The evaluation of crying is also linked to gender stereotypes, judging by the different responses to men and women "sad-crying" in Warner and Shields' experiment, particularly the suspicion cast on women in the study (2007). These investigations of tears demonstrate the importance of perceiving emotional motives for crying in making a judgment.

Gender stereotype theory adds to this discussion by explaining how this study's emotional contexts, emotionality and compassion, are interpreted in relation to gender.

Emotionality, according to Prentice and Carranza, is a gender-relaxed proscriptive stereotype for women, and since prescriptive stereotype theory holds that there is a greater penalty for stepping outside of one's stereotype than for conforming to it, women would come out on top consistently in the political crying game because, while negative, displaying emotion is an acceptable feminine trait (2002). According to this theory alone, the same thing could be said about compassion, which logically corresponds to the trait Prentice and Carranza identify as "warm & kind," a gender-relaxed prescriptive for men, meaning a positive characteristic on which they are allowed to fall short (2002, 274). However, the scholars point out the potential for rewards when one gender steps out of its conventional role to exhibit a gender-relaxed prescription like compassion (2002). Moreover, the crying double standard narrative may indicate that men who show compassion are subtyped rather than admonished for not being tough and stoic. Because of this, a female politician compassionately crying may end up looking worse than a male who does the same. Returning to the discussion of gender and politics in the previous chapter reminds us that, at least in politics, women still do encounter stereotypes, both advantageous and otherwise. This study therefore hypothesizes that in scenarios where the voter perceives the source of a candidate's tears as emotional instability, a male candidate will be more penalized for crying than a female candidate. However, when compassion is used to explain candidate crying, a female candidate will be more chastised.

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDIES

Introduction

In order to better explain the “lore” surrounding crying in politics and the crying double standard, in this chapter I have conducted four case studies of prominent politicians who have shed tears publically in the past forty years. The four politicians, two men and two women, that I will examine – Edmund Muskie, Patricia Schroeder, Hillary Clinton, and John Boehner – were selected because their teary moments garnered significant national attention, and because those moments have spurred conversation about gender norms in politics and/or had consequences for their political careers.

Since varying degrees of academic analysis have been conducted on these particular cases, and time period plays a role in the amount of sources available, the type of information in each case study will be different depending on what information is accessible. Using news coverage, academic analysis, and (when available) personal accounts of what happened, I construct an objective retelling of the incident and its surrounding factors. In order to analyze the effects of the incident, I use a number of factors as available. One factor I have incorporated, when applicable, is subsequent electoral results. Another possible factor is relevant poll data, available for three of the four, such as approval rating, likeability, effectiveness, and character traits.

Since the media are the main purveyor of stories from the campaign trail to the average American, the salience of a crying incident in the news can help explain the national reaction. Therefore, I have included media mentions in major print and television media sources in the days surrounding the incident (including *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *LA Times*, *ABC*, *NBC*, *CNN*) using LexisNexis. In order to judge the change in media

volume before and after the incident in question, I tally the number of times in a day these sources mentioned the name of the politician in question. I also compare this total number with the number of times per day these sources mentioned the name of the politician alongside one or more of the following phrases: “cry,” “tears,” “teary,” or “choked up.” These terms will help me determine the national media presence of this storyline, and how they may have shaped viewers’ and readers’ perceptions of the candidates. By looking at these four examples of contemporary political tears, this chapter will aide me to better understand the function and effects of crying in American politics, as well as the potential for gender to play a role in voter reaction. Through my analysis of these four crying cases, I find several overarching trends, including significant media coverage of the incident, the influence of prior knowledge of the candidate on public interpretation, and the possibility of different treatment based on gender.

Edmund Muskie

Edmund Muskie, Maine Democrat who had served as a Governor and Senator, entered the 1972 Democratic primary after a promising but unsuccessful bid as the vice presidential candidate alongside Hubert Humphrey. By all accounts, Muskie was considered “a front-runner for the nomination in early March” (Cook, 1976, 57). He was already well known nationally, and had a strong record as a Democratic governor in a traditionally Republican state, as well as an impressive Senate resume on the environment, the federal budget, and intergovernmental relations, with a “candidacy [...] designed to appeal to virtually all elements in the Democratic Party” (Cook, 1976, 57). Muskie had entered all of the primaries, and his campaign team did not expect anything less than fifty percent in New Hampshire, but he did encounter some trouble getting his message, “Trust Muskie,” to resonate with primary voters (Novak, 1974, 168; Cook,

1976). Nevertheless, “he won pluralities in the Iowa and Arizona caucuses” and was at one point scoring sixty-five percent in the New Hampshire polls (Cook, 1976, 57).

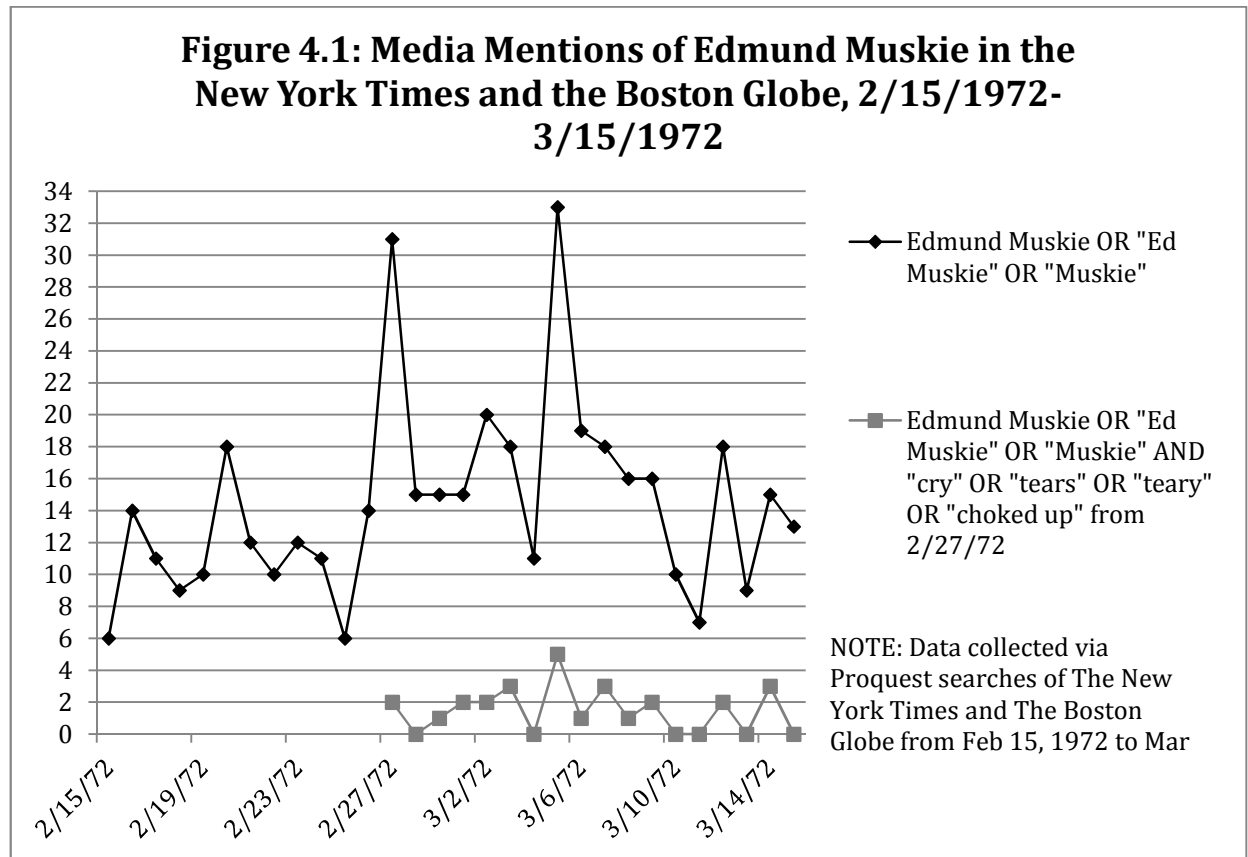
But two attacks in a row from *The Manchester Union Leader*, a local publication opposed to Muskie, brought the Senator out of his polite shell (Cook, 1976). The first was a reprint of a *Newsweek* story that profiled Jane Muskie, the candidate’s wife, describing her “drinking with journalists” and talking inappropriately (Novak, 1974, 170). Then on February 24th, the *Union Leader* chose to publish an anonymous, unauthenticated letter in which a Florida man recounted Muskie using the term Canuck, “a disparaging term for French-Americans, who make up a substantial minority” in New Hampshire (Cook, 1976, 57). This letter was revealed the following year as a fabrication by the Senate Watergate Committee, engineered by President Nixon’s sabotage team, but at the time it was the straw that broke the camel’s back, drawing Muskie out of the calm façade he had tried to project throughout the election (Cook, 1976). On March 26th, Muskie stood in the bed of a truck outside the journal’s office and denied the use of the slur while challenging publication editor William Loeb to “face him like a man” (Novak, 1974, 170). But as he denounced Loeb in front of reporters and television cameras, he paused, and “his face was contorted,” forcing him to turn his back to the cameras and leaving reporters wondering ““whether it was melted snow off his long nose, or tears”” (Novak, 1974, 170).

The episode garnered immediate negative reactions in the media and from the public. The accused editor fired back that Muskie was ““near hysterical”” (Novak, 1974, 171). James Michener, an employee of the Muskie campaign, found from that day onward voters he met confronted him with the question, ““Do you want a president who weeps?”” (1972, 4). In the aftermath of the incident, a poll “showed slippage of seventeen points” (Novak, 1974, 171). The negative coverage snowballed into media coverage of the New Hampshire results as a loss for

Muskie and a victory for McGovern, despite the fact that the former had a plurality of 47 percent and the latter earned only 38 percent (Apple, Mar 9, 1972; Novak, 1974). What seemed like a promising bid turned sour. Muskie came in fourth in the Florida primary, and though he won Illinois, he dropped out of the race on April 27th (Apple, Apr 27, 1972). In contemporary political discourse, Muskie is almost exclusively referenced as an example of a candidate who cried, all other elements of his political career wiped from memory.

Muskie's story has clearly left a visible mark on American political history and discourse, but we can also examine elements of the public reaction to the then-candidate's tears. One way to look at their effect is through media coverage surrounding the event. To that aim, I collected information through ProQuest database searches on the number of media mentions Edmund Muskie (or Ed Muskie) received between February 15, 1972, and March 15, 1972, a period including both his crying incident (February 27) and the New Hampshire primary (March 6), in both *The New York Times* and *The Boston Globe*, both newspapers with large readerships. As displayed in Figure 4.1, while the highest number of mentions Muskie received before his public tears is 18, on February 27 the two journals mentioned him a total of 31 times, a number only surpassed on March 5, the day before the primary election. It is also interesting to note that March 5 is also the day with the most media mentions of Muskie's emotional moment, 5 in total. This peak in mentions may indicate that Muskie's tears were a now part of the candidate's persona, and perhaps a factor in the decision process for those following the primary. Compared with the experiences of other candidates to follow, the number of media mentions Muskie received in this one-month period seems fairly low. Since fewer resources from the period are available, and journalistic norms before the advent of the 24-hour news cycle meant that fewer

stories on the same topics were produced, historical context must be therefore considered when evaluating the weight of these data.



Another glimpse into voters’ reactions is of course public opinion polling. Though polling was not nearly as extensive in the 1970s as it is today, a series of questions on general election scenarios can provide insight into how voters’ opinions on Muskie evolved. Many questions during the primary polling asked respondents to choose between Nixon, Muskie, and Wallace if the election were to take place that day; in the beginning of February, one such poll had Muskie and Nixon tied at 40% (Gallup Poll, Feb 1972). However, a poll taken over the end of February and the beginning of March, just after Muskie’s tears, showed the beginnings of a decline, with Muskie getting 35% to Nixon’s 47% (Harris Survey, Feb 1972). Two weeks later found Muskie with 29% in the same scenario (Nixon Poll, Mar 1972). While he did go back to

back to 35% in a Gallup poll conducted between March 24 and 27, this boost was probably related to his recent Illinois victory, and by April 21-24, just days before Muskie dropped out of the race, only 27% of respondents chose him, while Nixon maintained his 40% (Gallup Poll, Mar 1972; Gallup Poll, Apr 1972). Public opinion polls cannot explain why each respondent places his or her support behind a candidate at a particular moment in time. However, Muskie's decline in performance around and following his victory in New Hampshire suggests that at least some voters saw his tears as reason enough to take their support elsewhere – based on the principle of electoral momentum, a victory in an earlier race like New Hampshire can positively influence national public opinion and future contests (Butler, 2009).

Many factors contribute to the decline of a presidential primary candidate, but in Muskie's case it is apparent that crying was one of them. Muskie's behavior falls squarely in my "weeper" definition: his purpose in speaking out that snowy day was a personal one, and judging as best we can through news reporting at the time, the general public found this behavior inappropriate and not befitting a president (Michener, 1972). While public opinion polling in the 1970s rarely asked voters to comment on the character traits of political figures, we can gather from Michener's narrative that the many people who asked him if a president should weep were voicing their doubt in Muskie's leadership qualities and political strength (1972). This first modern example of public tears in politics made clear the public's discomfort with such displays, and that this unease could infect electoral results as well.

Hillary Clinton

Hillary Clinton's political history is practically common knowledge – after a prestigious law career, she entered the national political sphere as the wife of President Bill Clinton and transitioned from spouse to political actor when she ran for the open New York Senate seat at the

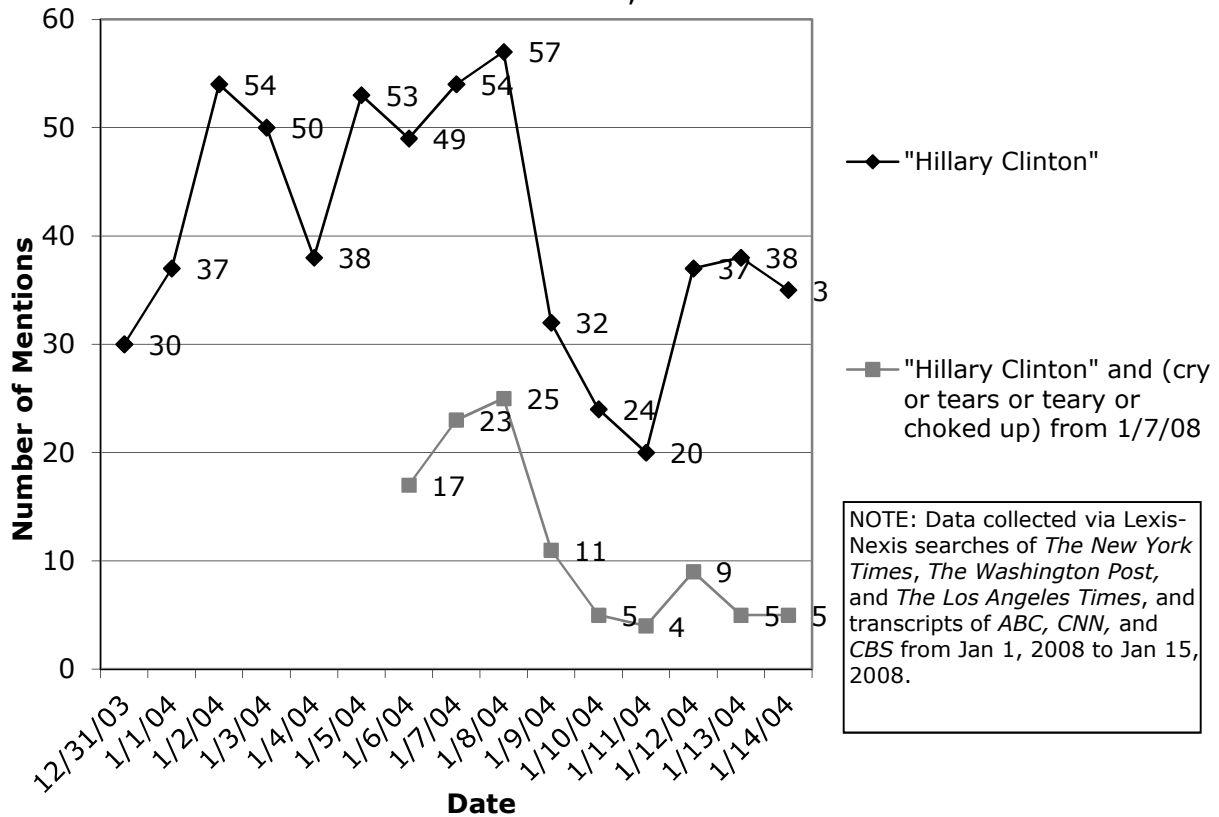
end of her husband's second term. In 2008, she entered the Democratic presidential primary, but while she was considered a true contender from the outset, media coverage often portrayed her as more of a "loser than a winner" when the primary races began (Lawrence & Rose, 2009, 186). She lost the Iowa caucus to eventual general election candidate Barack Obama, and was again trailing him in New Hampshire. The evening before the primary election, Hillary was answering questions from a group of women in a coffee shop, when one asked her, "How do you do it? [...] Who does your hair?" (Healy & Santora, 2008, 1). As Clinton responded to the question, she began to "speak haltingly," her voice cracked, and many reported her eyes filling with tears (Healy & Santora, 2008, 1). While she seemed in control enough to stay on message, Clinton told the crowd that her efforts on the political stage were "very personal," and that she was willing to go through the struggle of being a female politician because she feared the US would backslide due to poor leadership (Gutgold, 2009, 37). The next day found Clinton actually winning the primary election, despite initial polls.

The episode garnered extensive media attention. Initially, her tears were viewed as a potential gaffe, as news reports made reference to Pat Schroeder and the age-old stereotype that women are too emotionally fragile to handle the presidency (Lawrence & Rose, 2009). When it became clear, however, that Clinton had won the primary, her tears were awarded credit for the victory, saying that the display of emotion humanized the often stoic Clinton (Gutgold, 2009). While some posited the moment was a calculated political move, others thought that the display of frustration at "the pigeonhole she's been wedged into" was enough to win over women voters (Cummings, 2009). Clinton seemed to embrace this interpretation of her teary episode, later citing it as the moment when she "found her voice" (Gutgold, 2009, 36). In their book covering Clinton's campaign, scholars Regina Lawrence and Melody Rose point to this event as a prime

example of “the double binds faced by women in public life” (2009, 49). Purposefully or not, Clinton’s New Hampshire tears broke her carefully constructed emotional distance (which was probably built in the first place to ward off female stereotypes that she wasn’t “tough enough”) and exposed her to both criticism and praise (Lawrence & Rose, 2009).

Finding analysis of Clinton’s teary moment from an academic standpoint that does not talk about the episode through the media interpretation is difficult to do, but by looking at sheer media volume and opinion poll data from before and after can provide insight as to how the episode affected voters. Using Lexis-Nexis, I tabulated the number of mentions Clinton received from major print (*The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*) and television (*ABC*, *CBS*, and *CNN*) sources between January 1st, 2008 and January 15th, a timeframe that includes the Iowa caucus (January 3rd, 2008), Clinton’s coffee shop cry (evening of January 7th, 2008) and the New Hampshire primary (January 8th, 2008). These data are plotted in Figure 4.2 and can help to clarify the significance of this event.

Figure 4.2: Major Media Mentions of Hillary Clinton, January 1-15, 2008



Firstly, two of the three days on which Clinton receives the highest number of media mentions are the date of the New Hampshire primary, January 8, 2008 (54 mentions), and January 9, 2008 (57 mentions), the two days following her crying episode. Although the other date of high mentions is the day of the Iowa caucus, also at 54 mentions, even more information is revealed when we compare the eve of the Iowa caucus (January 2, 2008) and the eve of the New Hampshire primary (January 7, 2008). While on January 2, 2008, Clinton was mentioned only 37 times, January 7, 2008 found her mentioned 49 times by major media outlets, a major increase. Seventeen of those mentions also referenced her emotional moment, and on the following day, the day of the primary, her tears featured in almost 43 percent of her mentions in the press. In fact, from January 7 until January 13, 2008, a reference to the presidential hopeful's tears was found in at least 20 percent of her media mentions. These data concretely demonstrate

the media's preoccupation with Clinton's tears, and therefore that of voting-age readers and viewers. Two poll questions from the week following those tears further indicate popular concern about Clinton's media coverage. When asked if "the news media have been harder on Hillary Clinton, easier [...], or have they treated her the same as other candidates?" 51% percent of respondents chose "harder," compared to the only 5% who chose "easier," while 40% viewed her treatment as equal (CBS News/New York Times, 2008). A question asking if Clinton was being "held to a higher standard [...]" because she is a woman" also found a significant portion of those polled noticing bias towards Clinton. Thirty-three percent felt that she was being held to a higher standard, and while most (45%) saw her treatment as equal, when looking only at women's responses, the gap narrows to 35% and 42%, respectively (Pew Research Center, 2008).

We can also look more closely at the changes in opinion poll data before and after January 7, and the types of questions when Clinton significantly gained points in that timeframe. In a Fox Opinion Dynamics poll from mid-December, 2007, prior to the start of primary season, Clinton was rated favorably by 45% of respondents, with 4% more viewing her unfavorably (2007). But by January 9 and 10, two days after Clinton's tears made headlines, a comparable question from CNN and the Opinion Research Corporation showed her winning people over with 53% of respondents (2008a). When those interviewed were asked how they felt about Clinton in comparison to the other Democratic candidates, the change was equally dramatic. A poll taken of Democrats and Democratic "leaners" for their top choice of candidate between January 4 and 6, immediately beforehand, had Clinton neck and neck with Obama, each at 33% (Gallup/USA Today, 2008a). But in the week after the teary campaign stop, Clinton jumped to the top choice for 46% percent of the same category, seven points ahead of Obama, and among women earned

49% compared to Obama's 28% (Pew Research Center, 2008a). Another poll from the same "after" timeframe and respondent pool found Clinton at 45% and Obama at 33%, but Clinton pulling a full 50% of women polled (Gallup/USA Today, 2008b). An uptick in favorability the week following Clinton's victory is not unusual, since voters often become more enthusiastic about candidates as they succeed in primary contests (Butler, 2009). The fact that Clinton maintained that voter energy in spite of her tears demonstrates that the media's mixed evaluation of the event did not temper Democrats' support for Clinton's win. It is even plausible that her crying contributed to the strength of her lead in opinion.

Besides improving overall, Clinton showed some significant gains in particular character traits. When asked to choose between Obama, herself, and John Edwards in December 2007 on who was the most "honest and trustworthy," Clinton came in last with a mere 16%, but nearly doubled her score a month later in the wake of New Hampshire to 30% (Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, 2007; ABC News/Washington Post, 2008). Since crying is a relaxed proscriptive stereotype for women, it makes sense that once voters saw Clinton doing what, as a woman, she "should," they might also see her as more honest and trustworthy, another stereotypically feminine characteristic (Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

Brooks poses her own explanation for this boost in perceived honesty in her crying chapter (2013). Long a public figure, Brooks points out that Clinton already had a strong public persona of strength (2013). Since her results indicated that tears can improve voters' opinion of a candidate in areas "that appeared to be the biggest weaknesses for Clinton – especially compassion, honesty, and 'emotional,'" the scholar reasons that Clinton was able to capitalize on the positive elements of her emotional moment without jeopardizing her reputation in other important areas (Brooks, 2013, 31). Taking into account Brooks' logic as well as the aftereffects

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of the New Hampshire win can also help explain why Clinton's appearance as a "strong leader" jumped eight percentage points, from 39% to 47%, compared to the same adversaries between December and mid-January (Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, 2007; ABC News/Washington Post, 2008).

As a politician with a level of exposure to the American public matched by few, it is difficult to generalize Hillary Clinton's experience beyond the unique facts of her case. However, Clinton was able to capitalize on her early tears while Muskie could not, and it is possible that gender stereotypes played a role in her success. Both candidates got emotional while discussing a personal issue; Clinton even was compared initially to Muskie (Dowd, 2009). But once the primary results came in, the narrative shifted, as did public opinion polls, suggesting the episode made her more personable. This difference in reactions to two moments that were branded as similar at first indicates that other factors intervened, and gender could have easily been one.

John Boehner

Unlike the other examples of politicians who have cried in public, current Republican Speaker of the House and Ohio representative John Boehner is associated with crying not because he shed tears at one pivotal moment, but because he does so frequently in the public eye. While he had already been known around Congress for becoming emotional on the House floor – one example being "during a 2007 debate over a military spending bill, when he listed American priorities" – this tendency was brought to national attention at the end of the 2010 congressional election when Boehner sobbed during a speech on election night (Steinhauer, 2010, 1). One reporter recounted how the Congressman began crying as he told the audience, "I've spent my whole life chasing the American dream," and became more and more overcome with emotion as

he listed “all the bad jobs he had once had” (Steinhauer, 2010, 1). The transition from minority leader to speaker also found him shedding tears in another public forum, a interview on the program *60 Minutes* when talking with reporter Leslie Stahl (Reilly, 2010). In another reference to the American dream, the Republican representative talked about how “[he] can’t go to a school anymore” while on the campaign trail because he becomes overwhelmed thinking about “making sure these kids have a shot at the American dream,” all while becoming visibly and audibly emotional (Reilly, 2010, 1).

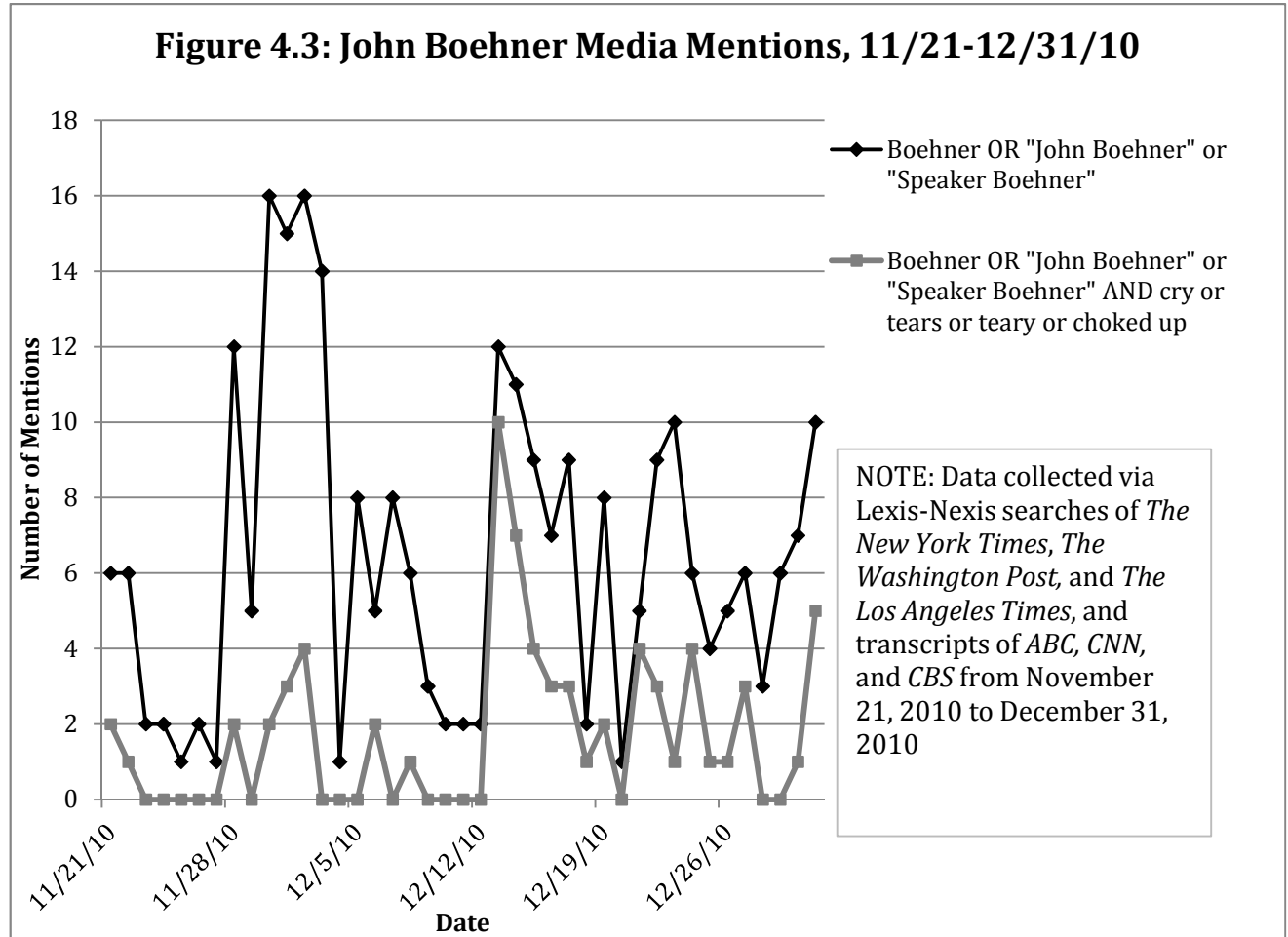
One of the most interesting aspects of Boehner’s teary tendencies is the response of female politicians. Democratic congresswoman and former Speaker of the House herself Nancy Pelosi stated in an interview that “When it comes to politics – no, I don’t cry [...] if you’re professional, then you deal with it professionally” (Goldman, 2010, 1). Democratic Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu agreed, saying “When it happens to a man, it’s a sign of tenderness, and when it happens to a woman, it’s weakness — it’s still such a double standard” (Lovely, 2011, 2). But women Democrats are not alone in voicing this view; some female Republican politicians agree. Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison told reporters in an interview that “I’m sure if I got up there and did a speech and I started breaking down and cried about how important it is to me that our children and our grandchildren are provided great opportunities, I’m sure I would be knocked a little bit for that” (Lovely, 2011, 2).

Despite the critiques of female colleagues, Boehner’s tears do not seem to have impeded his career. Though it is impossible to calculate the role his wet-eyed reputation played in his election to the House, Boehner is the current Speaker of the House, a role that holds significant power and prestige. Looking at polling data during and following the 2010 election, which propelled Boehner into the role of Speaker, suggests that his subsequent tears did not shake

Americans' beliefs about his suitability for the job. In the second half of October of 2010, polls showed Boehner evenly splitting respondents who knew of him between favorable and unfavorable opinions: Gallup saw 27% favorable and 31% unfavorable to CNN's 25% favorable and 26% unfavorable (Gallup, 2010a; CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, 2010a). A Gallup poll immediately following the election of November 2 showed movement of public opinion in his favor with an increase of 7 percentage points (2010b). Boehner's teary appearance on *60 Minutes* on December 12th did not stop the upward trend, as a mid-December poll put him at 36% favorable (CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, 2010b). By January, multiple polls said over 40% of Americans held a favorable opinion of the incoming Speaker (Gallup, 2011; CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, 2011).

The level of media exposure given to the Speaker's *60 Minutes* interview, demonstrated in Figure 4.3, combined with these polling data, implies that the general public was aware of Boehner's crying episode but did not respond negatively. While the Speaker's previous teary moments were mentioned occasionally in the weeks leading up to his appearance on the news program, the vast majority of discussion of the Congressman focused on other things. However, on December 13th, the day following the interview, Figure 4.3 shows that 10 out of the Speaker's 12 mentions also included references to tears. Mentions of crying continued to be prevalent through the end of December 2010, but were mostly lower in proportion than the three days immediately following the interview. On December 31st, crying was part of half of Boehner's mentions, as demonstrated in Figure 4.3. This uptick is explained in part by the day: several of the sources aired 2010 retrospectives on December 31st, and the Speaker and his tears were included in a few as memorable political moments. These data indicate that while Boehner's emotional moment garnered media attention and was remembered after the fact, the Speaker did

not become publically unpopular because of his reputation for tears.



Speaker Boehner, like any high-profile politician, carries a political history with him, but unlike others, his persona has long included tears. His particular brand of tears falls most aptly in what I have termed compassionate crying, and in spite of some disparaging remarks from colleagues and pundits, Boehner continues to be a power player. Combining the information from polling and media mentions, it is even possible to conjecture that the Speaker's teary reputation may give him a small boost. Since many public voices responded to Boehner's emotionality by positing that women could not publicly cry in the same way, Boehner's success may signify that voters reward his behavior in part because his tears engage a gender-relaxed prescriptive stereotype (Prentice & Carrenza, 2002).

Patricia Schroeder

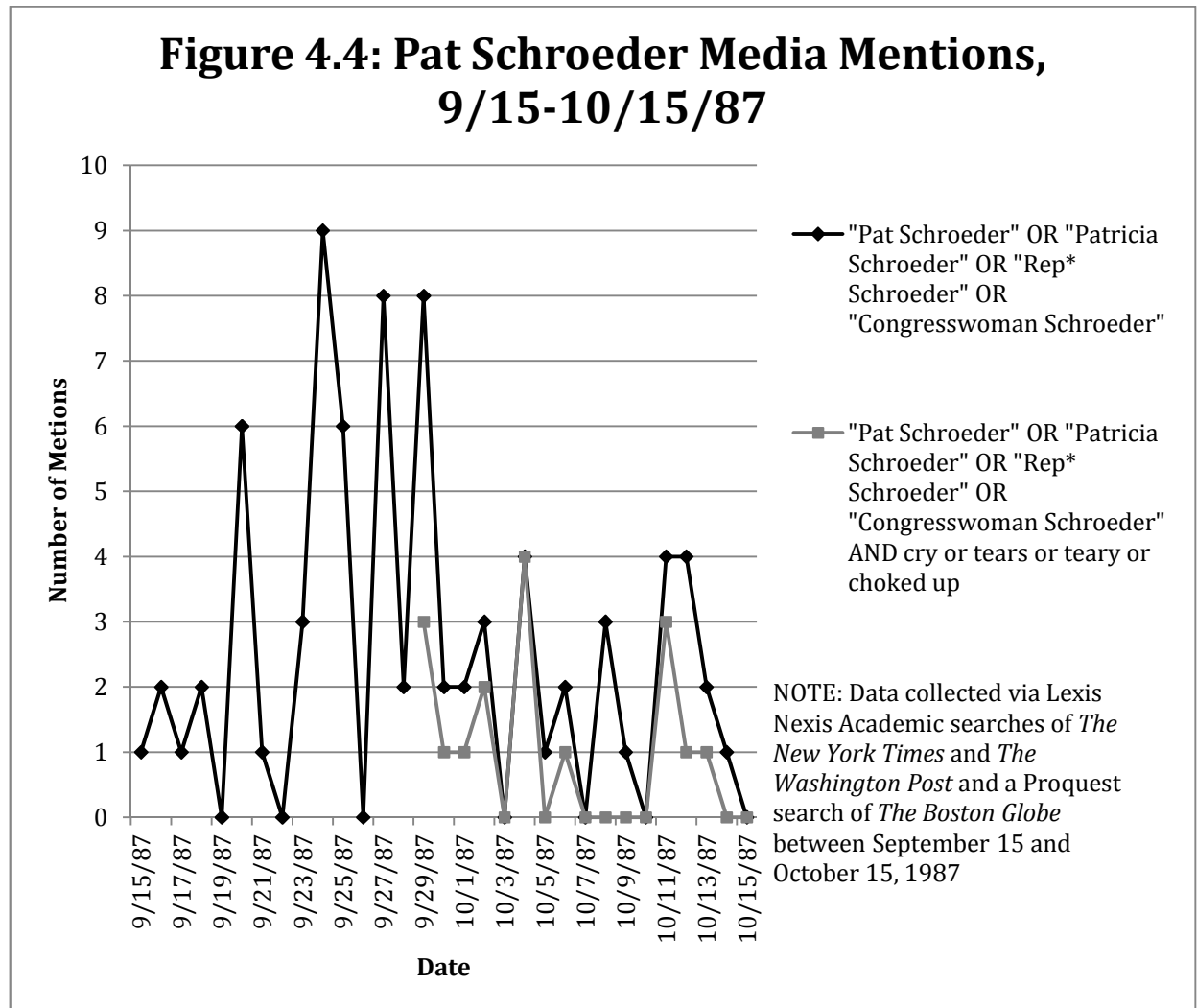
By her own account, Democrat Patricia Schroeder, a high-ranking Coloradan congresswoman, started her exploratory presidential campaign after scandal derailed the campaign of then-Senator Gary Hart, which she had co-chaired (Schroeder, 1998). Known for championing family issues while also serving on the House Armed Services Committee and being extremely knowledgeable about military affairs, the congresswoman traveled the country during the summer of 1987 with the hope of raising enough funds to launch a viable campaign (Ferraro, 1990; Schroeder, 1998). In her autobiography, Schroeder describes moments during her travels when gender and sexism surfaced as issues. She knew that her campaign would “be a hook for political pundits to appraise the progress of women” and worried about wearing the same outfit more than once in front of the press (Schroeder, 1998, 179). She also encountered questions from voters that brought up gender, like “does your husband know you’re running?” and “why are you running as a woman?” (Schroeder, 1998, 179-180).

After a few months, however, Schroeder felt she could not conduct a viable campaign with the financial support she had raised thus far (1998). On September 29th, she took the stage in Denver to announce her decision not to run (Schroeder, 1998). Upon hearing the Congresswoman’s decision, the crowd of supporters reacted audibly with what Schroeder described as a “groan” (Weinraub, 1987, 1). This reaction in turn prompted Schroeder to become emotional, and as she put it, “those seventeen seconds [of tears] were treated like a total breakdown” in the media (1998, 185). News articles described the congresswoman as “[fighting] to regain her composure,” and “tearful” (Farrell, 1987, 1; Weinraub, 1987, 1). In an article with the lead-in “She cried,” *New York Times* reporter Bernard Weinraub cited women in particular who reacted negatively, fearing that Schroeder had reinforced gender stereotypes

(1987, 1). Schroeder herself felt the flak, saying “some writers went so far as to say that my tears had dampened all hopes for women in presidential politics for the rest of the century,” and that this perspective sometimes came from other women (Schroeder, 1998, 185). Like Muskie, Schroeder was the brunt of comments indicating that her tears made her too weak to have her finger on the button (Schroeder, 1995). Not all responses were negative, however; some expressed sympathy for her tears, or even understanding (Weinraub, 1987). Though more anecdotal than empirical, these examples of backlash from women could indicate what Brooks in her study called distancing from a collective threat (in this case, to the political reputation of women by Schroeder’s tears) (2011). Schroeder continues to be referenced today when crying resurfaces in political life (Lovely, 2011; Hu, 2011).

Because she dropped out before the Democratic primary, no polling information exists from after her withdrawal, thereby making comparison of public opinion before and after impossible. Nevertheless, we can also look at the number of media mentions Schroeder received from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Boston Globe* between September 15 and October 15, compiled in Figure 4.4. While the limited number of sources available means that the number of media mentions Schroeder received is lower than some of the other politicians examined, Figure 4.4 makes it clear that September 29th, the day of the congresswoman’s announcement and tears, had the second highest number of media mentions. On that day, a third of the articles regarding Schroeder referenced her crying. Through October 13th, Representative Schroeder’s tears made appearances in the news; notably, her emotional moment was part of all of her media mentions on October 4th. Her continued appearance in the media many days after her decision not to run was announced along with the continued discussion of her tears may

imply a preoccupation with Schroeder’s tears, since her actual exploratory campaign lasted only a few months and there were still many committed candidates in the primary race.



Like Clinton and Muskie, Schroeder’s tears fall in the “weeper” category, and appear to have been branded as such by the American public. Much of the reaction she encountered in the media referenced the alleged damage Schroeder did to women in politics (attested to by other women) by publically shedding tears. Though this case is far less airtight in terms of empirical evidence in comparison to the others, what we do have indicates that the moment captured public attention and has been well remembered in the narrative of crying, gender and politics.

Schroeder's experience leaves open the possibility of gender bias, particularly in the distancing reaction of other women.

Conclusion

Thorough examinations of four high profile politicians cannot characterize all past and future responses to tears from the American public; however, the experiences of Muskie, Clinton, Boehner, and Schroeder do share common trends and implications. One of these commonalities is a media preoccupation with tears. Data on media mentions for all four politicians show the media continuing to discuss each emotional moment for weeks after it occurred, and perhaps past the point at which the public would have been interested otherwise. In the case of Boehner, this possibility seems most realistic, as his favorability continued its slow increase between November 2010 and January 2011, despite repeated discussion on television and in print of his two teary episodes.

Additionally, my research indicates the impact political figure's public reputations can have on Americans' interpretations of crying. Muskie and Schroeder were both branded as weak for their "weeper"-style, overly emotional tears (Muskie's win in New Hampshire was even viewed as a loss), while Clinton, well known in politics for her toughness, suffered no such criticism. In fact, some polls showed her gaining percentage points on "strength" after her emotional moment. These differing reactions to a candidate's character traits after similar teary episodes reveals that crying does not erase a politician's public persona, but rather interacts with other considerations and information, which can sometimes turn tears into a boon.

Finally, these case studies leave open the possibility of gender bias in how voters react to candidate tears. The experience of Edmund Muskie fits fairly well into my "weeper" hypothesis that male candidate will be particularly punished for breaking the gender-intensified proscription

on tears. That being said, the female examples of “weeper” crying examined here, Schroeder and Clinton, neither confirm nor reject the other half of my hypothesis that female “weepers” are not as intensely chastised. While all three politicians were Democratic primary hopefuls, their similarities end there. Schroeder never officially entered the race, and while it appears that the reactions to her tears were somewhat negative, there is little means by which to compare the two. As for Clinton’s “tear-delivered” victory, it is difficult to separate her gender from her reputation as a tough leader and the enthusiasm for her win in the subsequent reaction of voters. Similarly, Boehner’s compassionate crying seems to have little effect on his rising political star, which fits with my hypothesis that compassionate crying can benefit male candidates. The problem here is that we have no female candidate with whom to compare him; no woman politician has publically shed tears in a compassionate manner, or at least in an instance that resulted in national news coverage. The dearth of comparable female candidates and the general lack of conclusive answers to the crying double standard reveal the need for other methods of addressing this question in American politics.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

To evaluate how voters react when candidates cry in relation to the context of the tears and the gender of the voter, I have put forth two hypotheses formulated from my review of the literature on gender stereotypes in politics and psychology, as well as the social psychological perspective on crying. In order to evaluate these hypotheses, I conducted a study in the fall of 2012 in which participants read one of six different versions of the same fictional article about a congressperson announcing the decision to run for Senate. In the control condition, the article simply provided some background information about the candidate and described him or her as moderate, but in the two experimental conditions, the headline was changed and an additional paragraph inserted describing how he or she cried, either in an overly emotional manner (the “weeper” condition) or in a compassionate manner. Each article had a version for both genders (“Karen” or “Kevin” Bailey); Table 2 visually illustrates the different possibilities and designates the four possible experimental treatments with the letters A through D. Over the course of the fall of 2012, 228 Tufts University undergraduates and community members participated in this study. These participants were randomly recruited either through solicitations in Tufts political science classes or at a table in the Mayer Campus Center and offered a chance to win one of five \$25 gift cards to the university bookstore, Amazon.com, or iTunes in return for their time.

Table 2: Experimental Conditions			
	Control	“Weeper” Candidate Condition	Compassionate Candidate Condition
Male Candidate		A	C
Female Candidate		B	D

My first hypothesis is that when voters perceive a candidate’s display of tears as overly emotional (the “weeper” condition), they will evaluate this candidate more negatively than the control, but women will be evaluated relatively better than men, meaning on average condition A will be rated more highly than condition B. For this study, my definition of overly emotional/”weeper” crying is a candidate who publicly sheds tears over a source of personal stress, a personal issue, or a personal failure, and does so in a manner the average viewer would consider inappropriate.

The second hypothesis that I posit is that when voters perceive a display of tears as compassionate, men will be evaluated relatively better than women. Overall, I expect the difference between genders to be more pronounced than that of the “weeper” condition; while I expect compassionate “Karen” Bailey (condition C) to fare about as well as the control groups, which I expect to get middling evaluations, I predict that compassionate “Kevin” Bailey (condition D) will be the most highly evaluated condition overall. My working definition of compassionate crying in this study is a candidate who publicly sheds tears over an issue or phenomenon that does not currently affect the candidate personally, but that the average American voter might consider important. This hypothesis will be evaluated in the same manner as the previous one, except that the treatment article read by participants will discuss crying in a compassionate manner (conditions C and D) rather than an overly emotional one.

After reading the article, all participants answered questions relating to their opinions on the candidate, with all responses selected from a seven-point scale. Participants judged the candidate’s “overall favorability,” “likely effectiveness in the Senate,” and “likely effectiveness

as U.S. President about 10 years from now” in this manner, as well as whether the phrases “strong leadership,” “honest,” and “someone you would probably enjoy talking to” accurately describe the candidate in question. All of these questions serve as measures of approval and favorability. The candidates were also evaluated in terms of emotional dichotomies, seven-point scales where 1 represents a word or phrase and 7 represents its opposite. Participants marked which term better suited the candidate in question for the following pairs: emotional vs. unemotional, calm vs. angry, appropriate vs. inappropriate, caring vs. uncaring, and weak vs. strong. These dichotomies allow respondents to evaluate the candidates in terms of several potentially gender character traits. Participants were also asked to evaluate whether the candidate’s behavior corresponds more with his or her “personal characteristics” (1) or “the difficulty of the situation” (7), allowing me to measure the degree to which they think the candidate is a typical example of male or female politicians.

To empirically measure how “weeper” condition tears or compassionate tears and candidate gender influence voter affect, I will start by statistically comparing the mean responses to the above questions for each experimental condition to both each other and the control condition in order to determine if the different crying contexts elicit different reactions from each other as well as the control. For example, I will compare the difference in the mean “honesty” rating across the control, “weeper,” and compassionate conditions through regressions. I will also calculate the difference in means between the male and female versions of each condition, and in turn compare that difference between the three conditions to evaluate existence and significance of any gender bias. Returning to the example of the “honesty” question, I will calculate the difference in means between “Karen Bailey” and “Kevin Bailey” in the control, compassionate, and “weeper” conditions, and then compare those differences across conditions.

Another question I seek to evaluate is how a potentially gendered action like crying affects perceived strength on issues for men and women. After reading the control or treatment articles, participants will also be asked to rate candidates on how prepared they would be to handle the issues of “economy” and “defense,” two typically masculine policy issues, and “education” and “poverty,” two typically feminine policy issues, again on a seven-point scale where a rating of 1 means “not at all prepared” and 7 means “extremely prepared.” I posit that tears might help male candidates on typically “women’s” issues like poverty and education, but their effect on stereotypically male issues might be more complicated. While traditional gender stereotypes discourage male displays of emotion and therefore might temper a candidate’s ratings on defense and the economy, if society has become more accepting of “manly tears,” it may be that crying stints only enhance a man’s perceived competence on typically female issues without negatively affecting his performance on male issues. Like with the previous hypotheses, I will compare the difference in means between Kevin and Karen Bailey’s ratings on policy area expertise within each condition, and then compare those differences across all three conditions.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter, I put my hypotheses to the test by analyzing the data collected through a study of the Tufts University community. I rely on both regression analysis and difference in means t-tests, and while clear differences between the respondents' reactions to both the "weeper" and compassionate conditions and candidate gender have emerged, they do not align perfectly with my expected outcomes. Most notably, my compassionate condition indicates that the male compassionate candidate treatment was punished for crying, and that male participants in particular did not respond well to male tears. This chapter will explore the data in depth by discussing the differences between the two conditions, the effects of candidate gender, the impact of respondent gender, and the impact of these factors on perceived policy expertise, before discussing their combined implications and relationship to my hypotheses in the conclusion.

Characterizing the Data

228 members of the Tufts community participated in the study during the fall of 2012. Each of the 91 male and 137 female respondents was randomly assigned to one of the six treatments. The median respondent age was 20, with the over 95% of respondents falling in between 18 and 22. The respondents were distributed among the treatments according to Table 6.1:

Table 6.1: Experimental Conditions			
	Control	"Weeper" Candidate Condition	Compassionate Candidate Condition
Male Candidate	36	32	38
Female Candidate	39	49	34

Control Comparison – How Do Weepers and Compassionate Criers Line up?

When regressed in comparison to one of the control treatments, the experimental conditions were viewed more negatively in most circumstances. Table 6.2 shows the regression coefficients of the weeper and compassionate conditions when compared to the female candidate control (i.e., the female candidate control is the omitted category).² With the exception of “caring vs. uncaring” trait dichotomy discussed in depth later, a negative coefficient in Table 6.2 signifies that the experimental treatment in question was viewed more negatively than the control treatment.

As evidenced by Table 6.2, it was the weeper candidate conditions that elicited the greatest response differences from the control. The vast majority of coefficients for the weeper condition are significant. They are also more extreme, regardless of sign, than the compassionate condition. These data indicate that *overly emotional tears and compassionate tears do evoke different reactions from voting-age Americans*. The following sections discuss some of the more noteworthy findings for specific dependent variables in greater depth.

Approval and Favorability

Of the questions designed to measure “approval and favorability,” in the first three rows of Table 6.2, likely effectiveness as a president generated the most negative reactions for the weeper candidate conditions from participants, as well as for the compassionate male candidate. For the female weeper candidate, overly emotional tears decreased respondents’ confidence in the candidate as a future president by nearly a full point, a substantial effect on a 7-point scale.

² For consistency’s sake, all regression coefficients in this analysis are in relation to the female candidate control treatment. I ran many of the regressions in relation to the male candidate control but found the vast majority of the coefficients to differ from those from the female candidate control by only hundredths of a point or even smaller, indicating the difference was simply statistical noise. The interchangeability of these treatments is underlined by the fact that none of the regressions showed the male candidate control with a significant coefficient.

Table 6.2: Summary Regression Results								
Candidate Treatments								
	Weeper Female		Weeper Male		Compassionate Female		Compassionate Male	
	Coeff.	p-value	Coeff.	p-value	Coeff.	p-value	Coeff.	p-value
Effective President	-0.956**	0.000	-0.623**	0.02	-0.142	0.588	-0.541**	0.034
Strong Leader	-0.009	0.972	0.002	0.995	0.447*	0.099	0.012	0.965
Honest	0.870**	0.000	0.579**	0.019	0.347	0.152	0.062	0.791
Uncaring	-0.902**	0.023	-0.783*	0.077	-0.689	0.111	0.229	0.583
Calm	-1.032**	0.000	-0.940**	0.000	-0.888	0.000	-1.043**	0.000
Strong	-1.072**	0.000	-1.406**	0.000	-0.287	0.305	-0.604**	0.027
Unemotional	-1.891**	0.000	-1.629**	0.000	-1.564**	0.000	-0.512	0.18
Appropriate	-1.688**	0.000	-1.570**	0.000	-1.110**	0.002	-1.114**	0.000
Poverty	0.507*	0.054	0.127	0.667	0.238	0.407	0.016	0.954
**.								
*: .05 < p ≤ .1 p ≤ .05								
Trait Dichotomy variables should be interpreted as follows: 1="Caring," 7="Uncaring"; 1="Angry," 7="Calm"; 1="Weak," 7="Strong"; 1="Emotional," 7="Unemotional"; 1="Inappropriate," 7="Appropriate."								

However, the strongest positive coefficients were for both the male and female weeper candidates when respondents rated how well the word “honest” applied to the candidate. Both weeper treatments have p-values of less than .05, with the female weeper candidate rating slightly higher than the male weeper candidate in comparison to the control. This result is consistent with (and even slightly stronger than) Brooks’ findings, in which her crying conditions rated .3 points higher on average than the control (2011). This consistency is logical since the weeper condition most closely resembles her original crying condition (Brooks, 2011). Such

results indicate that emotionality could positively impact whether voters perceive the candidate in question to be “honest,” a characteristic that is important to many.

The last favorability measure that yielded a significant coefficient, albeit with a p-value of .099, was the respondents’ perception of “strong leadership;” the female compassionate candidate (as shown in Table 6.2) received a modest boost of just under half a point for her tears in comparison with the control.

None of the other approval and favorability metrics – “overall favorability,” “likely effectiveness as a Senator,” and perception as “someone you’d probably enjoy talking to,” – yielded any significant coefficients in comparison to the control, and are thus not included in Table 6.2.

What do these factors mean when processed as a whole for each crying condition? Firstly, tears, particularly those that convey emotionality, are not wise for someone eyeing the presidency. At the same time, a “weeper” is also more likely to be seen as an honest politician, which could certainly be advantageous for some. Taken together, this information indicates that the political outcome of a “weeper” moment in the real world might depend on the reputation of the candidate in question, as well as the spin of the resulting media coverage. As Brooks discusses in her book, a candidate known for a steely demeanor, like Hillary Clinton, might benefit from an “honest” display of emotion, but the same teary moment could be more dangerous for a candidate without that tough exterior, especially if the media latches onto the sound bite, as was the case for Muskie and Schroeder (2013). These results also indicate that compassionate criers of either gender are only moderately affected by such behavior in the eyes of voters. That only the female compassionate candidate experienced positive effects to her

perception as a “strong leader” also indicates the possibility that a gender difference exists, which will be discussed in further depth momentarily.

Trait Dichotomies

The series of questions that asked participants to rate the candidate on a scale running between two opposing traits saw the most dramatic differences between the experimental and control conditions. Again, the weeper condition elicited extremely strong responses from participants: for all five trait dichotomies (Caring versus Uncaring, Angry versus Calm, Weak versus Strong, Emotional versus Unemotional, and Inappropriate versus Appropriate), all of the coefficients for both “weeper” treatments were negative and significant, most at $p=0.00$, with the exception of “Caring versus Uncaring”. As evidenced in Table 6.2, the compassionate conditions did not elicit such strong reactions, and they had larger p-values.

One example that most clearly demonstrates the response difference between the two conditions would be the regression coefficients that resulted when the respondents were asked to determine whether the candidate was “weak” (1) or “strong” (7). As the “strong” row in Table 6.2 demonstrates, the “weeper” treatments are each approximately .8 points “weaker” than the compassionate treatments, respectively, and the difference between “weeper” and compassionate female candidates might be even larger, considering that the latter’s coefficient was not significantly different from the control. While none of the other measures showed such an extreme difference, the majority of Table 2 continues the trend of more negative ratings for the weeper condition; for example, the questions that asked respondents to judge whether the candidate acted “inappropriately” or “appropriately,” the female “weeper” candidate received a rating approximately .58 points more inappropriate than the female compassionate candidate, and the male “weeper” a rating .45 points more inappropriate his compassionate counterpart.

These findings speak to the risks of overly emotional crying. Politicians who have “weeper” moments may portray themselves as much weaker, more emotional, and more inappropriate than those who shed tears compassionately.

Two exceptions to this pattern are present. All treatments were within .15 points of a coefficient of -1 in relation to the control for the “angry-calm” dichotomy, indicating that the type of tears exhibited had little effect on that measure; since neither condition showcased a “calm” candidate, this similarity is understandable. However, both weeper candidates were rated as significantly more caring than the control, another commonality with Brooks’ data (because of the coding of that particular question, negative coefficients mean the respondents saw the candidate as closer to “caring” than “uncaring”), while neither compassionate candidate had a significant coefficient (2011).

While these traits are not as strongly linked to voters’ actions as approval and favorability measures, they add further weight to the analysis of the approval and favorability measures. Combined with the negative effects the “weeper” condition had on respondents’ perceptions of future presidential potential, the condition’s more pronounced characterization as weak, emotional, and inappropriate indicates this type of crying is riskier than compassionate crying. However, the evidence that the “weepers” were seen as more caring than the compassionate criers reminds us that voters’ preconceptions about certain candidates and media attention can potentially shift attention from the negative to the positive, if limited, effects of overly emotional tears. The Hillary Clinton example again seems apt because her reputation as a strong and tough political figure, as Brooks posits, may have helped neutralize any concerns that she might be too “weak” for the job while allowing her to benefit from the boost in her perception as “caring” and “honest” (2013).

Comparing within Experimental Conditions

In addition to regressing each dependent variable in comparison with the control condition, two-way t-tests were used to measure the difference in average response between the male and female candidate treatments in each condition. The mean response for each question for weeper Kevin Bailey was compared with that of weeper Karen Bailey, and the same was done for the compassionate Kevin and Karen Bailey. Using a t-test approach for these treatments allows me to uncover any significant gender-related differences in mean participant response.

Weeper Candidates Comparison

The series of t-tests comparing male and female weepers failed to yield any significant values. From the data collected in this study, respondents reacted uniformly to the overly emotional display of tears, regardless of candidate gender. From these results, it seems evident that candidate gender does not increase or temper the mostly negative effects of a “weeper” moment, as discussed in the previous section. Again, the results here mimic Brooks’ findings, since she concluded there was no difference between Kevin and Karen Bailey in her study (2011).

Compassionate Candidates Comparison

The most striking result of the compassion condition t-tests, exhibited in table 6.3, was their uniformity. While not all of the dependent variables showed a significant difference between the means of the male and female compassionate candidates, many of them did, and in all but one the female compassionate candidate was rated more positively. For example, when asked if the candidate would be an effective senator, compassionate Karen Bailey rated about .45 points higher on the 7-point scale than her male counterpart. Participants’ responses on overall

favorability, perception as a “strong leader,” and potential as an effective president in 10 years all rated compassionate Karen Bailey about .4 points higher than the compassionate male candidate, as evidenced in Table 6.3. All of these values indicate a positive reaction to the compassionate tears of the female candidate. While the difference in means for “effective president” is just slightly short of significance at $p=.1058$, this information is important in light of Smith, Paul and Paul’s fairly recent finding that women face an inherent disadvantage when it comes to the presidency based on gender (2007). That the female candidate was rated comparably, and perhaps better, than the male candidate in the compassionate crying condition despite previous evidence of an innate obstacle for women makes this information noteworthy.

Table 6.3: Summary T-test Results				
	Female Control Treatment	Compassionate Treatments		
	Control Average	Compassionate Female Average	Compassionate Male Average	Male and Female candidate difference p-value
Overall Favorability	5.179	5.221	4.842	0.0790
Effective Senator	5.0256	5.176	4.711	0.0347
Effective President	4.436	4.294	3.895	0.1058
Strong Leader	4.4356	4.882	4.447	0.0675
Someone You'd Enjoy Talking to	5.359	5.647	5.026	0.0473
Uncaring	3.718	3.029	3.947	0.0597
Unemotional	4.564	3.000	4.053	0.0236
Defense	4.359	4.676	3.974	0.0144
"Uncaring" variable values: 1="Caring"; 7="Uncaring"				
"Unemotional" variable values: 1="Emotional"; 7="Unemotional"				

Additionally, compassionate Karen Bailey was seen as approximately .62 points more likely to be “someone you’d enjoy talking to” than the male candidate and almost a full point more “caring.” Taken together, these factors indicate that Karen Bailey’s compassionate tears cast her in a more sympathetic and personable light than Kevin Bailey under the same conditions. These data show a consistent advantage for the female compassionate crier. Strengthening the nature of this advantage are the dependent variables themselves – overall favorability, senate effectiveness, and future presidential effectiveness are all measures that can directly influence voter choices, meaning the compassionate female candidate’s consistent outranking of her male counterpart could translate into electoral consequences.

The one dependent variable for which the male compassionate condition came out on top was the “emotional vs. unemotional” trait dichotomy. The difference between the two means was substantial, as the male compassionate candidate was rated more unemotional than the compassionate female by just over a point. While this difference is consistent with gender stereotypes, which hold that women are by nature more emotional, it does not appear to weigh negatively on the compassionate female candidate in other areas, as the previously discussed data suggest. Indeed, being emotional, though classified by Prentice and Carranza as low in social desirability, does have more than one interpretation and is not an inherently negative quality (2002). The relative fluidity of this term makes it possible that some respondents viewed compassionate Karen Bailey’s emotional display in a positive light.

The next logical question to ask concerns the source of the compassionate female candidate’s statistical advantage; it could be the result of a positive reaction to the compassionate female candidate, but it also could be that respondents were punishing the compassionate male candidate. Comparing the means of these treatments to the mean of the control for each variable,

as is done in Table 6.3, helps reveal that the advantage is a mix of both. Since the control and compassionate female candidate means are separated by only around .1 points on overall favorability, senate effectiveness, and presidential effectiveness, it appears participants felt compassionate tears made Kevin Bailey less fit for elected office. These three dependent variables are noteworthy because they are the most directly correlated to electoral decision-making. The moderate “punishment” of the compassionate male candidate’s tears exhibited here could make a difference in a close election. For most of the other variables, the discrepancy between the compassionate male treatment and the control persists, but the female compassionate candidate’s mean is slightly above the control’s – perception as a “strong leader” or “someone you’d enjoy talking to” are examples of this trend. It is important to keep in mind that some of the advantages compassionate Karen Bailey enjoyed over the control in this dataset were not statistically significant (for instance, on “someone you’d enjoy talking to”), but some, like perception as a “strong leader” were (see Table 6.2). These factors combine to reveal a situation that is actually quite advantageous to a female candidate: at worst, her compassionate tears will have no effect on key measures like favorability and effectiveness, while at best they could give her an extra edge. What is clear, however, is that male candidates are punished for equivalent behavior.

Respondent Gender – Is There Evidence of Distancing from a Collective Threat?

Another possible gender-related reaction to the various tears presented in this experiment is specific to the respondent gender. Many scholars previously have observed that members of stereotyped groups often move to “distance” themselves from a particular group member whose behavior reinforces negative stereotypes (Brooks 2011). In order to emphasize that this “collective threat” is not representative of the group as a whole, in-group members will react

more harshly to the undesirable behavior than out-group members (Brooks 2011). In her study, Brooks found that the female respondents “seem to hold female candidates to a higher standard than male candidates [...] with respect to crying,” but male respondents did have milder negative reactions to the male candidate’s tears (2011, 609). The following section will examine whether the male and female respondents in this study sought to distance themselves from the behavior they disliked in the compassionate or “weeper” condition. I will examine several regression coefficients separated by respondent gender, as shown in Tables 6.4 and 6.5, compared with the coefficients for the treatment as a whole. The independent variables in these tables, treatment and respondent gender, are listed in the columns and sub-columns, and their values show regression coefficients in relation to the control condition. The dependent variables appear in the rows, though only those measures with significant coefficients were included here.

Table 6.4: Summary Regression Results by Respondent Gender						
Candidate Treatments						
	Weeper Female			Weeper Male		
	Male respondents	Female respondents	Total Sample	Male respondents	Female respondents	Total Sample
Effective President	-1.112**	-.847**	-0.957**	-1.245**	-0.255	-0.623**
Honest	0.494	1.159**	0.870**	-0.049	1.009**	0.579**
Caring-Uncaring	-1.238**	-0.643	-0.902**	-0.750	-0.763	-0.783*
Angry-Calm	-1.045**	-1.026**	-1.032**	-0.985**	-0.928**	-0.940**
Weak-Strong	-1.143**	-1.020**	-1.072**	-1.667**	-1.249**	-1.406**
Emotional-Unemotional	-1.048*	-2.536**	-1.891**	-1.333**	-1.895**	-1.629**
Inappropriate-Appropriate	-1.842**	-1.552**	-1.688**	-2.083**	-1.199**	-1.570**
Poverty	-0.036	0.922**	0.507*	-0.275	0.426	0.127
*: .05 < p ≤ .1 **: p ≤ .05						
Trait Dichotomy variables should be interpreted as follows: 1="Caring," 7="Uncaring"; 1="Angry," 7="Calm"; 1="Weak," 7="Strong"; 1="Emotional," 7="Unemotional"; 1="Inappropriate," 7="Appropriate."						

Female Respondents

If a distancing reaction were present among the female respondents, we would see that those respondents in a female candidate treatment have more negative coefficients than the total sample for that treatment. However, the distancing reaction Brooks observed from her female respondents is largely absent from this sample – few differences exist between the female respondents and the total treatment samples. For both the weeper and compassionate conditions, the differences between the female respondent coefficient and the total sample coefficient were mostly small and inconsequential, and few of them indicated an especially negative reaction on the part of the women participants. As Table 6.4 shows, there were only three examples of dependent variables from the female “weeper” treatment where the difference between the female respondents’ coefficient and the total sample coefficient was greater than an absolute value of .2: perception as “honest,” “emotional vs. unemotional,” and issue expertise on “poverty.” But two of these instances – the honest and poverty variables – showed the female respondents reacting more positively than the sample as a whole, a result that indicates the opposite of a distancing tendency. Female respondents did find the female weeper candidate about .6 points more emotional than the sample as a whole. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, being emotional is not an inherently negative characteristic. Since female respondents gave the more emotional rating for both weeper treatments and the female compassionate candidate (the compassionate male had no significant coefficients), it is also possible that the gap speaks more to differences in how genders interpret emotions than a collective threat reaction.

Looking at the female respondents in the female compassionate treatment yields similar conclusions. Again, the same three variables show a difference in coefficient values between the

female respondents and the sample total and in the same directions, as shown in Table 6.5. On the “angry vs. calm” trait dichotomy, female respondents did find compassionate Karen Bailey slightly angrier than the total sample, with a difference of .2 points between them. Additionally, the female respondents found compassionate Karen Bailey’s tears made her more likely to be “someone you’d enjoy talking to” than the control condition, giving her nearly three-quarters of a point boost. While not exactly identical to the female weeper treatment, the data in the female compassionate treatment does not imply a pronounced distancing reaction from female respondents.

Table 6.5: Summary Regression Results by Respondent Gender						
Candidate Treatments						
	Compassionate Female			Compassionate Male		
	Male respondents	Female respondents	Total Sample	Male respondents	Female respondents	Total Sample
Effective President	-0.104	-0.169	-0.142	-0.412	-0.629*	-0.541**
Honest	-0.091	0.671**	0.347	-0.639*	0.561*	0.062
Someone You'd Enjoy Talking to	-0.376	0.725*	0.288	-.863*	0.034	-0.333
Caring-Uncaring	-1.000	-0.452	-0.689	-0.800	0.935*	0.229
Angry-Calm	-1.158**	-.740**	-0.940**	-1.369**	-.846**	-1.043**
Weak-Strong	-0.867**	-0.186	-0.287	-0.867**	-0.439	-0.604**
Emotional-Unemotional	-1.154*	-1.905*	-1.564**	-0.667	-0.478	-0.512
Inappropriate-Appropriate	-1.846**	-0.457	-1.110**	-1.867**	-0.583	-1.114**
*: .05 < p ≤ .1 **: p ≤ .05						
Trait Dichotomy variables should be interpreted as follows: 1="Caring," 7="Uncaring"; 1="Angry," 7="Calm"; 1="Weak," 7="Strong"; 1="Emotional," 7="Unemotional"; 1="Inappropriate," 7="Appropriate."						

Male Respondents

Unlike the female respondents, male respondents in this study had clear reactions to the tears of Kevin Bailey, in both overly the emotional and compassionate conditions. In the male “weeper” candidate, the male respondent coefficient for “effective president,” at -1.245, is about twice as negative as that of the total sample, which indicates that the male respondent reaction was largely responsible for the total sample’s coefficient. Whereas the lack of support for the female “weeper” candidate’s presidential ambitions was approximately equal parts male and female, the same behavior from a male candidate resulted in backlash from the male “weeper” candidate’s men. Male respondents in the “weeper” male treatment also felt that the candidate’s behavior was more inappropriate than the sample as a whole; Table 6.4 shows a difference of just over half a point between the two. This difference may relate to the perception of a collective threat, since the male respondents went out of their way to demonstrate how out of place they felt the “weeper’s” behavior was. The male “weeper” candidate was viewed as slightly weaker (about .26 points) by the male respondents as well. Although there are many other variables for which male and female responses to the “weeper” male were comparable, the fact that these few provoked an even more extreme reaction from male respondents may be because those respondents felt Kevin Bailey’s emotionality threatened their image.

The male compassionate candidate suffered a similar appraisal by male respondents, but in slightly different areas. Male participants felt that compassionate Kevin Bailey was about .86 points less appealing to talk to (as evidenced in Table 6.5) than the control and is the only significant coefficient for that variable. This reaction could be borne of a desire among the male respondents to dissociate from the behavior exhibited in the treatment. Similarly, male respondents found the male compassionate treatment to be less “honest” than the control, while female respondents actually found the compassionate male candidate to be about half a point

more honest. These reactions cancel out in the total coefficient, but indicate a specifically male respondent backlash. Like in the “weeper” male treatment, male respondents found compassionate Kevin Bailey’s tears to be more inappropriate than the sample total, this time with a difference of about .85 points, another strong indicator of attempted distancing. Finally, male respondents saw the compassionate male candidate as slightly angrier than the sample total (the difference was just .32 points). This milder reaction might be because the male participants felt the behavior described in the compassionate male treatment was indicative of more intense feelings. Overall, these data point to a distancing effort on the part of the male respondents in both treatments.

Policy Expertise

In addition to the variables examined by Brooks in her original study, this experiment also included measures to evaluate how overly emotional or compassionate tears influenced respondents’ opinions on the policy expertise of the candidate in question. Based on Huddy and Terkildsen’s finding that describing a candidate with stereotypically masculine or feminine character traits affected his or her perceived competence on assumed “masculine” and “feminine” issues, this study asked participants to rate the candidate’s expertise on defense and the economy (typically “masculine” issues) and poverty and education (typically “feminine” issues) (1993). The following section explores the two variables, poverty and defense, that yielded significant results as shown in Tables 6.2 and 6.3, respectively.

According to Table 6.2, the female “weeper” candidate received a moderate boost of about .5 points in perceived expertise on poverty in comparison to the control treatment. While the male “weeper” candidate did not demonstrate the same advantage in comparison to the control, a t-test between the two treatments’ averages found the p-value of the difference in

means was $p=.1574$, just short of significance; the female “weeper” candidate outranked her male counterpart. Because of the inconsistency between regression coefficients and t-tests, I can only posit a plausible explanation for the moderate edge of the female “weeper” over the male, one that must be taken with a grain of salt. It is possible that, like in Huddy and Terkildsen’s observations on descriptive traits, behavior confirming a gender stereotype (“women are emotional”) may in turn cue assumptions about female politicians on issues like poverty. This line of thought is supported by the fact that “weeper” Karen Bailey was seen as the most emotional of all the hypothetical candidates, as seen in Table 6.2. However, further research would be necessary to give this explanation greater weight.

On the other hand, the t-test results for the defense variable are clearly substantive. As Table 6.3 shows, the difference between the male and female compassionate candidates had the lowest p-value at $p=.0144$. Compassionate Karen Bailey was rated .7 points higher than compassionate Kevin Bailey, and just over .3 points better than the control mean. It appears that, like for some of the other dependent variables, the male compassionate candidate was punished for his tears in terms of defense expertise, while the female compassionate candidate saw a small reward on this issue. However, this advantage is somewhat at odds with the explanation for the poverty expertise proposed above, since defense is a stereotypically “masculine” issue. The answer to this conflicting information therefore may lie in the “punishment” of the compassionate male candidate. Compassionate Kevin Bailey’s disadvantage may be the result of his failure to conform to a masculine gender norm, a failure that radiates out to his “masculine” political identity.

Combined, these two examples demonstrate the potential political consequences of gendered behavior. When a female candidate wept, she was rewarded in her own gender-

designated area of expertise, and when a male candidate showed compassion through tears, he suffered in defense, where previous research tells us he should have an automatic advantage (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). These data indicate that Warner and Shields' "manly tears" exception has yet to touch politics. While these points of interest alone are not definitive, the results do point to a need for further research on how actions implying gender stereotypes, like crying, can influence a candidate's perceived strengths.

Conclusion

Overall, my data have come together to make several key points. First, overly emotional and compassionate crying are distinct categories that elicit different voter responses. Rather than reacting uniformly to the "weeper" and compassionate conditions, study participants were much harsher on the "weepers," except when it came to their honesty and their levels of caring. Such discrepancies between the two conditions clearly contradict those who recently have asserted that today's men in politics emerge unscathed from all teary moments while women suffer for the same actions, since both weeper candidates received equal "punishments" from respondents. These results also introduced important caveats to how different genres of crying are interpreted. Compassionate tears provoke milder reactions from voters, but a well-played "weeper" moment can turn into a potent political tool for the right candidate.

While I expected to find clear distinctions in reaction to these different crying contexts, and that overly emotional tears would be more politically dangerous, my hypotheses regarding gender biases within the conditions were not as on point. Rather than rewarding a male politician for the display of a gender-relaxed prescription (compassion) as Prentice and Carranza suggested might happen, the respondents instead focused on the gender-intensified proscription of being emotional, and this violation of norms greatly influenced their responses (2002). Male

participants in particular found the emotionality of the compassionate male candidate to be an electoral turn-off, and the similarities between the distancing effects observed in the “weeper” and compassionate male candidates speaks to this. On the other hand, the female compassionate candidate received a moderate boost in some areas, like leadership, for fulfilling a gender-relaxed proscription (emotional) and a gender-intensified prescription (compassionate) (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). This application of female gender stereotypes may have even evoked other political stereotypes, as implied by the moderate boost the female “weeper” candidate received on poverty.

Like with any experiment, this study faces issues of external validity. It is possible that the Tufts environment attracts community members who are more liberal and less diverse than the nation as whole. Additionally, the age range available for sampling at a university is understandably much narrower and younger than the general population. Besides the pitfalls of sampling from a college population, the use of fictional candidates with no identifiers, for example, partisanship, is also somewhat problematic. Voters usually have prior knowledge of a candidate before he or she cries publically, or can infer one from indicators such as party. My discussion has mentioned already the ability of prior information to alter how tears are received by American voters through analysis of Clinton’s 2008 episode, but it is possible that other types of previous knowledge can produce results that differ from those seen here. While these are worthy considerations, the results of this analysis nonetheless demonstrate an important piece of the puzzle that is crying in American politics with relation to gender.

This analysis strongly supports the existence of a gender bias in compassionate campaign tears, the most common contemporary form of political tears, but in the opposite direction of what the pundits proclaim. While overly emotional tears are generally detrimental regardless of

candidate gender, the gender stereotypes called up by compassionate tears actually help women and hinder men across the board politically. The findings of my experiment in turn compliment the real-life studies of women in electoral contests conducted by Herrnson, Lay and Stokes, and Fridkin and Kenney discussed in chapter 2, showing that there are many different ways in which being a woman can affect one's political success. My hypotheses were constructed with the public's assumptions in mind, but this study shows that the common advice that a female politician could not publically cry like Speaker Boehner and get away with it, rather than preventing an embarrassing and politically damaging moment for women hopefuls, may actually impede them from cashing in on a beneficial public display of emotion.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

How do American voters react when candidates cry? And is this reaction affected by (1) the candidates' gender and (2) the context of those tears? These are the questions I sought to answer in my research, which included many sources as well as the conventional wisdom of journalists and politicians alike. After reviewing Brooks' work and the political tears of the recent past, I saw a clear differentiation between the type of crying Brooks examined and what politicians like Boehner were exhibiting. Because women are advantaged in some political contexts and disadvantaged in others, I felt it was likely the same could be true in different crying contexts. This suspicion was supported by Prentice and Carranza's examination of the different classifications of gender stereotypes, as well as Warner and Shields' foray into the paradigm of "manly tears," which together indicated a growing acceptance of male crying as well as the potential for men to be rewarded disproportionately when demonstrating empathy or compassion (2002; 2007). Since many of the often-referenced moments of political crying showcased tears in a sympathetic light and came from men, I therefore took the route of conventional wisdom and posited these circumstances were more beneficial to men than women; looking Muskie, Schroeder, and Hillary Clinton together, as well as society's general tolerance of emotionality from women, it seemed no stretch that in this scenario women would find a more understanding, albeit disapproving, audience.

While my hypotheses were far from perfect, it is clear from my data that "weepers" and compassionate criers elicit different reactions from the electorate. The "weeper" candidates received scores on almost all of the measures that were lower than the control and the compassionate candidates. Additionally, both "weeper" treatments were seen as more honest than the control, while the compassionate conditions experienced no such benefit. These

distinctions highlight the separateness of these two contexts, as compassionate provoked generally milder reactions while “weeper” tears elicited a harsher response except with regard to honesty.

What was also evident was that the voters punished the compassionate male candidate, while his female counterpart was consistently in line with the control (if not rewarded). Rather than finding, as I predicted, that participants were impressed by Kevin Bailey’s ability to show compassion, the respondents appear to have interpreted his tears as a breach of the masculine necessity of strength and stoicism and a foray into the feminine territory of emotionality. A closer look at these results revealed that it was the male respondents in particular who felt this behavior was unacceptable, a trend also present for men in the “weeper” male treatment. These results indicate that “manly tears” are not yet as pervasive in American society as Warner and Shields thought; at a minimum, this sample did not view crying as masculine, especially the men. Because college-age Americans tend to be more left leaning than the voter population as a whole, it is likely that a more representative sample would show even more pronounced punishments for the compassionate male candidate. Overall, these results speak to the existence of gender bias in crying, but not the crying double standard of today’s political discourse.

Given a larger timeframe and greater resources, the most significant change I would make to this study would be the format of my manipulation. While reading a short newspaper article is convenient and cost-effective, reading about crying can be very different than seeing actual tears. The physicality of crying might cue up different emotions and responses from voters. Moreover, teary moments from politicians that make the news are often recorded and televised – news channels often replay these clips, and are a source for many about the newest member to the crying caucus. Because of these considerations, using a video clip, either of

fictional candidates or real politicians, as the experimental treatment would probably evoke more polarized reactions from participants, which would show up more forcefully in their responses.

Additionally, while it was helpful to be able to compare my data to Brooks' analysis directly, it would have been helpful in retrospect to include other metrics, perhaps replacing some of hers. One example would be adding a question where participants rated how likely they would be to vote for the candidate in the treatment, since several questions hinted at the idea, but none directly measured it. In order to get a clearer glimpse into how participants interpreted the candidates' tears along gender lines, it might have been interesting to have respondents evaluate a series of gendered character traits, for example, affectionate and understanding as feminine traits, dominant and assertive as masculine traits. While these measures could help clarify exactly how respondents felt about the candidates and why, some of Brooks' independent variables that I included were not necessarily relevant to my research questions. For example, Brooks included the trait dichotomy "calm-angry" because her original design also examined how voters responded to anger from male and female politicians (2011). Because my experiment only examined tears, this metric was not really relevant, a fact attested to by the data collected.

Based on my findings, it might also be worthwhile to recreate this study with candidates who were assigned a party identification, particularly for the compassionate crying condition, since participants in that condition already demonstrated a desire to punish men. Like with Burns, Merolla, and Eberhardt's different frames for Sarah Palin, it is possible that the party of the candidate influences both how feminine or masculine he or she appears, and how favorably members of the same or opposite party view the candidate (2013). These changes could add

nuance to my findings, and illuminate some of the unexplained elements of crying in American politics.

Finally, my study did not address the possibility that the tears politicians shed in public might not be genuine. Episodes such as Clinton's sometimes face speculation about the sincerity of the emotion expressed, which can in turn alter how the public perceives them. While this study was unable to address that issue, examining how much voters "buy" crying from their politicians could be an interesting avenue of future research.

Given the discrepancy between the espoused crying double standard and the gender differences my data show, we must also examine why the expectation of a crying double standard exists, particularly if my research shows that compassionate crying is actually disadvantageous for men, not women. The answer probably lies with the media. As my case studies showed, even prior to the advent of the 24-hour news cycle tears made a splash on the national stage, and were discussed long after they had dried. As the need to fill airtime grows, so does the amount of time news outlets devote to discussing tears; Boehner and Clinton illustrate this point particularly well. Despite the dearth of evidence to support this claim, the news media pushed the narrative that tears in politics are only acceptable from men. The fact is, as I noted earlier, that there are almost no comparable examples of female tears in American politics. Compassionate crying has been a facet of political life in the US since Ronald Reagan, yet the list of tearful female politicians includes only Schroeder and Clinton, women who exhibited emotion in a way that few would call compassionate. Perhaps women who are normally effusive in private life have steeled themselves against public tears because of pundits and colleagues who speculate about their detrimental effects. However, my analysis suggests that the media's warnings to women are unfounded, no matter the crying context – "weeper" politicians are

equally disliked, regardless of gender, and compassionate male politicians are perhaps the ones who should exhibit restraint.

The media in turn plays a role in what I have identified as the most powerful factor for turning a crying episode in one's favor, a politician's public persona. Images of politicians constructed by the media and their campaign teams are our chief source of information about the true personalities of the politicians themselves, and therefore how tears are incorporated into that image. Hillary Clinton would not have had a reputation for toughness and strength without news outlets that emphasized that element of her personality. Understanding the interconnectivity of media presentation and political reputation, I turn briefly to one of today's most prominent "criers," President Barack Obama. During his presidency, Obama has cried publically several times. He famously became emotional when speaking in North Carolina the day before the 2008 election, when he announced the death of his maternal grandmother (Stein, 2008). Most recently, he choked up when thanking members of his reelection campaign, an episode videotaped and spread around the internet, and he wiped away tears when addressing the nation after the Newtown shooting in December. These instances fall closer to the definition of compassionate crying, which my analysis tells us is disadvantageous to male politicians; however, Obama's public persona may shape how the media processes his effusiveness. As a candidate whose platform and slogans evoked hope and change and emphasized his desire to make the US better for all Americans, it is possible that Obama framed himself as a compassionate politician, and that the media followed suit. Obama is also known, however, for his cool and collected demeanor, particularly in legislative dealings and debates. It is also possible, therefore, that his tears have helped to temper that image in a Clinton-esque manner, revealing a more human side to a normally composed public figure.

Obama's tears and the puzzling way in which they are incorporated into his image is just one example of the confusing connections this study finds between the media and the voters' interpretation of tears in politics. If the media's purpose is to interpret world and political events for its readers, one would expect its reaction to tears in politics to align with the public's. Yet my study demonstrates a clear disconnect, perhaps even a contradiction, between the public and the media on how gender affects the interpretation of compassionate tears. This paradox may indicate greater discord between the information processors and information consumers as society's gender norms adapt and morph. At the very least, my research demonstrates the need to further challenge the assumptions about women in politics put forth by the media: if news analysts misinterpret the impact of tears for women candidates, they may have missed the mark elsewhere, too, allowing our true gender biases to fly under the radar.

APPENDIX A: TREATMENT ARTICLES

Male Control:

Congressman Bailey Announces Senate Bid

The Associated Press <http://www.hosted.ap.org/dyanmic/stories/us/senate=bailey>

Congressman Kevin Bailey officially announced this week that he would seek a U. S. Senate seat in the 2012 election cycle, vying for an opening created by a retirement.

As a member of the House of Representatives, Congressman Bailey is known on the hill and off for his focus on bipartisanship, a fact that has made the congressman popular among voters and a contender for the Senate. “I don’t look for the party line, I look for solutions that will benefit the state and the nation,” says Congressman Bailey. As he completes his second term, the Congressman is “generally considered one of last bastions of moderate politics in the House, a centrist who consistently looks for bipartisan solutions,” according to Terry Hughes of the non-partisan Wilson Institute for American Politics.

In his nearly four years as a member of the House, Congressman Bailey has seen both success and challenges on the legislative front. His co-sponsorship of a bill on small-business loans helped boost small business openings in the state within the last year, and he recently helped to pass several laws to improve statewide infrastructure. Congressman Bailey’s bill on federal bureaucracy streamlining, however, failed to pass in the House this year, and the congressman’s recent proposal on military spending in Afghanistan garnered little support.

Kira Hessekiel

Female Control:

Congresswoman Bailey Announces Senate Bid

The Associated Press <http://www.hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/us/senate=bailey>

Congresswoman Karen Bailey officially announced this week that she would seek a U. S. Senate seat in the 2012 election cycle, vying for an opening created by a retirement.

As a member of the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Bailey is known on the hill and off for her focus on bipartisanship, a fact that has made the Congresswoman popular among voters and a contender for the Senate. “I don’t look for the party line, I look for solutions that will benefit the state and the nation,” says Congresswoman Bailey. As she completes her second term, the Congresswoman is “generally considered one of last bastions of moderate politics in the House, a centrist who consistently looks for bipartisan solutions,” according to Terry Hughes of the non-partisan Wilson Institute for American Politics.

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Kira Hessekiel

Male Weeper:

Congressman Bailey Tears Up on Campaign Trail, Cries Over Election Strain

The Associated Press <http://www.hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/us/senate=bailey>

Congressman Kevin Bailey officially announced this week that he would seek a U. S. Senate seat in the 2012 election cycle, vying for an opening created by a retirement.

The announcement has been overshadowed by other events, however. Earlier this week, Representative Bailey cried at a press conference while discussing the rigors of campaigning. With tears in his eyes, he addressed reporters and constituents, saying, “between the grueling schedule and constant criticism, it isn’t easy.” The congressman’s office declined to comment on the incident.

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Male Compassionate:

Congressman Bailey Tears Up on Campaign Trail, Cries Over Belief in American Dream

The Associated Press <http://www.hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/us/senate=bailey>

Congressman Kevin Bailey officially announced this week that he would seek a U. S. Senate seat in the 2012 election cycle, vying for an opening created by a retirement.

The announcement has been overshadowed by other events, however. Earlier this week, Representative Bailey cried while giving a speech at a press conference. With tears in his eyes, he stated that his motivation for public service came from “a desire to see future generations achieve the American Dream like I did.” The congressman’s office declined to comment on the incident

As a member of the House of Representatives, Congressman Bailey is known on the hill and off for his focus on bipartisanship, a fact that has made the congressman popular among voters and a contender for the Senate. “I don’t look for the party line, I look for solutions that will benefit the state and the nation,” says Congressman Bailey. As he completes his second term, the Congressman is “generally considered one of last bastions of moderate politics in the House, a centrist who consistently looks for bipartisan solutions,” according to Terry Hughes of the non-partisan Wilson Institute for American Politics.

In his nearly four years as a member of the House, Congressman Bailey has seen both success and challenges on the legislative front. His co-sponsorship of a bill on small-business loans helped boost small business openings in the state within the last year, and he recently helped to pass several laws to improve statewide infrastructure. Congressman Bailey’s bill on federal bureaucracy streamlining, however, failed to pass in the House this year, and the congressman’s recent proposal on military spending in Afghanistan garnered little support.

Kira Hessekiel

Female Compassionate:

Congresswoman Bailey Tears Up on Campaign Trail, Cries Over Belief in American Dream

The Associated Press <http://www.hosted.ap.org/dyanmic/stories/us/senate=bailey>

Congresswoman Karen Bailey officially announced this week that she would seek a U. S. Senate seat in the 2012 election cycle, vying for an opening created by a retirement.

The announcement has been overshadowed by other events, however. Earlier this week, Representative Bailey cried while giving a speech at a press conference. With tears in her eyes, she stated that her motivation for public service came from “a desire to see future generations achieve the American Dream like I did.” The congresswoman’s office declined to comment on the incident.

As a member of the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Bailey is known on the hill and off for her focus on bipartisanship, a fact that has made the Congresswoman popular among voters and a contender for the Senate. “I don’t look for the party line, I look for solutions that will benefit the state and the nation,” says Congresswoman Bailey. As she completes her second term, the Congresswoman is “generally considered one of last bastions of moderate politics in the House, a centrist who consistently looks for bipartisan solutions,” according to Terry Hughes of the non-partisan Wilson Institute for American Politics.

In her nearly four years as a member of the House, Congresswoman Bailey has seen both success and challenges on the legislative front. Her co-sponsorship of a bill on small-business loans helped boost small business openings in the state within the last year, and she recently helped to pass several laws to improve statewide infrastructure. Congresswoman Bailey’s bill on federal bureaucracy streamlining, however, failed to pass in the House this year, and the Congresswoman’s recent proposal on military spending in Afghanistan garnered little support.

APPENDIX B: EXPERIMENT QUESTIONS

FOR RESEARCH USE ONLY
ID#:

Study Response Questions

Please respond to these questions as honestly as you can based on the article you just read.

Circle your responses.

Q1. How favorable or unfavorable do you feel toward the candidate? (Extremely Unfavorable = 1, Extremely Favorable = 7)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Q2. How good of a job do you think that the candidate would probably do with the following...

A) Be an effective U.S. Senator (A poor job = 1, An excellent job = 7)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

B) Be an effective U.S. President about 10 years from now (A poor job = 1, An excellent job = 7)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

How well do you think the following phrases describe the candidate?

(1 = Not well at all; 7 = Extremely well)

Q3 Strong leadership	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q4 Honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Q5	Someone you would probably enjoy talking to	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Please rate the candidate on the following characteristics:

Q6A	Emotional (1) or Unemotional (7)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q6B	Angry (1) or Calm (7)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q6C	Caring (1) or Uncaring (7)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q6D	Acts inappropriately (1) or Acts appropriately (7)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q6E	Weak (1) or Strong (7)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q7. How prepared do you think the candidate would be to deal with the following policy issues if elected?

(1=not at all prepared; 7=extremely prepared)

Q7A.	Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q7B.	Economy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q7C.	Defense	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q7D.	Poverty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q8. Do you think the behavior of the candidate in the article can probably best be explained by (1) the personal characteristics of the candidate or (7) the difficulty of the situation?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Q9. How would you characterize the emotion displayed by the candidate in the article? (choose **one**):

1. Compassion	2. Caring	3. Frustration
4. Calm	5. Enthusiasm	6. Anger
7. Joy	8. Sadness	9. Disappointment
10. Determination	11. I did not detect any emotion	

Q10. Your gender: 1. Male 2. Female

Q11. Your age: _____

Q12. How many times have you cried in the past week?

1. None 2. One to two times 3. Three times or more

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