The Gendered Face of Partisan Politics:
Consequences of Intersecting Gender and Partisan Stereotypes for Politician Perception

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

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Historically, women have been at a disadvantage in U.S. politics. Recently, social-cognitive researchers have begun to investigate how gender and partisan stereotypes operate through politician appearance. Here I test the hypothesis that the gendered nature of the two major political parties in the United States manifests itself in the sex-typicality of politician appearance and has consequences for evaluations of female and male politicians. I draw from basic social cognition theory and the prejudice and stereotyping literature to propose a novel approach to understanding the consequences of gender stereotypes for perceptions of politicians (Chapter I). I specify a model documenting how partisan stereotypes and party-based adherence to traditional gender roles impact politician perceptions. The central tenets of this model are
tested in Chapter II, Chapter III, Chapter IV, and Chapter V, and focus on a range of outcomes—trait evaluations, issue competencies, leadership ability, vote choice, and electoral success.

In the study described in Chapter II, I describe how politicians’ gendered appearance impacts trait evaluations. I find that when politicians’ appearance is congruent with their partisan stereotype that they fare better in their evaluations of warmth and competence. Moreover, perceived warmth varies as a function of gendered appearance for counter-stereotypic groups. Thus, gendered appearance impacts assessments of male politicians’ warmth and evaluations of female politicians’ competence.

In the study described in Chapter III, I test whether partisan stereotypes influence perceptions of politicians’ issue competencies. I find evidence that partisan stereotypes drive perceptions of politicians’ issue competencies such that a more feminine appearance compels more favorable evaluations of Democrats’ ability to handle compassion/women’s issues; a more masculine appearance compels more favorable assessments of politicians’ ability to handle economic/military issues.

In the study described in Chapter IV, I describe how politicians’ gendered appearance impacts leadership ability assessments. The pattern of result remains unclear. A feminine-appearance benefits perceptions of female Democrats’ and female and male Republicans’ leadership ability; however, a masculine appearance benefits perceptions male Democrats’ leadership ability. These findings are not in line with my prior research and other published findings regarding gendered appearance and perceptions of leadership ability. Therefore, additional research is warranted to fully understand the influence of gendered appearance on assessments of leadership ability.
In the two studies described in Chapter V, I describe how politicians’ gendered appearance influences hypothetical vote choice decisions and politicians’ electoral success. The results of these two studies show that when asked to indicate candidate support, female Republican candidates who appear more feminine and male Republican candidates who appear slightly less masculine are more likely to be supported. Moreover, these differences in gendered appearance impact the actual electoral success of political candidates for Congress. This set of findings is in line with the gender roles hypothesis that indicates that Republican women in particular will receive more favorable evaluations or will be more likely to be supported in an electoral context.

In conclusion, the theoretical paper and accompanying studies provide a novel psychological demonstration of the intersection of gender and partisan stereotypes and their consequences for political perception. The current research provides a unique perspective through an examination of the gendered appearance of politicians on what appearance-based judgments can tell us about how stereotypes affect politicians’ political success.
The dissertation of Colleen Marie Carpinella is approved.

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Chapter I


Chapter II


Chapter III


Chapter V

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CHAPTER I:

Introduction
“Well, you know, she [Hillary Clinton] looks like Grace Kelly in that picture, but she’s fighting like Muhammad Ali.”

Chris Matthews (2007)

Matthews’ remark reveals two facts about the gendered nature of the current political system—a women’s appearance receives commentary in the mainstream media and a women’s fit for office or lack there of is often governed by her appearance. Recent psychological evidence demonstrates that the masculinity/femininity of politicians’ appearance impacts downstream consequences ranging from party affiliation judgments to the potential of winning a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. That gendered appearance can influence political outcomes is provocative, yet the psychological mechanism underlying such perceptions remains unspecified (Wänke, Samochowiec, & Landwehr, 2012). Here I review two competing hypotheses as to why gendered appearance is consequential for perceptions of female politicians—partisan stereotypes and gender roles. The key determinant in the applicability of each hypothesis is the nature of the judgment being made. Evaluative judgments are governed by partisan stereotypes, whereas categorical decisions are driven by gender roles. I review each pattern in specific then I integrate them theoretically.

**Gender and appearance-based politics**

I present two competing hypotheses concerning how gender and partisan identities inform perceptions of politicians. First, the U.S. bipartisan political system tends to be gendered. Feminine characteristics are readily associated with Democrats and masculine characteristics with Republicans (Hayes, 2011; Winter, 2010). Therefore, the *partisan stereotype hypothesis* predicts that by exuding a feminine-appearance congruent with the feminine stereotype of the Democratic Party, more favorable explicit evaluations of Democrats will be made. Conversely,
Republicans will be evaluated explicitly with more favorability when they exude a masculine-appearance congruent with the masculine stereotype of their party.

Second, parties present different images with regards to gender roles. The Democratic Party is connected with socially liberal policies that aim to diminish gender disparities (e.g., women’s rights, abortion rights); the Republican Party is linked with socially conservative policies that tend to bolster traditional gender roles (e.g., military spending, national defense; Lye & Waldron, 1997; Winter, 2010). The gender roles hypothesis predicts that Republicans will implicitly benefit from a more sex-typical appearance, and the implicit judgments of Democrats will be unrelated to their gendered appearance. Evidence supporting this hypothesis found that Republican women in the U.S. House of Representatives had a more feminine facial shape (e.g., rounder face, lower cheekbones) compared to female Democrats (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a).

Thus, politician gender and party both matter to politician perceptions, but the nature of their influence depends on the type of evaluative judgment that is made. For evaluative judgments, the partisan stereotype hypothesis predicts that partisan stereotypes (i.e., feminine Democrats and masculine Republicans) operate through politicians’ gendered appearance. Conversely, for categorical decisions, the gender roles hypothesis articulates that gender roles function though gendered appearance and moderate the effect of politician party (see Figure 1).

*Figure 1.* Theoretical model of the effect of gendered appearance on evaluative judgments and categorical decisions.
Evaluative Judgments

If the partisan stereotype hypothesis holds, feminine-appearing Democrats and masculine-appearing Republicans will garner more favorable evaluations. However, if the gender roles hypothesis holds, sex-typical Republicans (i.e., feminine women) will be evaluated more favorably. The partisan stereotype hypothesis holds for evaluative judgments of politicians’ trait and issue competencies.

Trait Assessments

Trait evaluations of political candidates are often made in line with gender stereotypes (i.e., women as nurturing and compassionate; men as assertive and aggressive) (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Dolan, 2010; Brown, Heighberger, Shocket, 1993; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Kahn, 1992; Leeper, 1991; Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989; Sanbonmatsu, 2002). In addition, candidate appearance influences competence judgments (Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Olivola & Todorov, 2010). I provide an empirical test of how gendered appearance impacts trait assessments of national-level politicians.
Naïve raters were provided with unfamiliar politician images and were asked to rate them on their warmth and competence. Partisan stereotypes compelled appearance-based trait assessments of female politicians. Perceivers’ competence judgments varied as a function of partisan stereotype congruence (i.e., feminine-appearing Democrats and masculine-appearing Republicans). Female Democrats who appeared feminine and female Republicans who looked relatively more masculine were rated as more competent. Conversely, male Democrats who appeared less masculine were rated as warmer than their more masculine counterparts (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013b).

Appearance-based trait assessments are governed by partisan stereotypes. Because of the gendered nature of the parties, female Democrats in particular are buffered against the disadvantage that women might otherwise have when they appear feminine in the masculine domain of political leadership. Conversely, female Republicans benefited from a more masculine appearance, which reflected their party’s masculine stereotype.

Perceptions of Issue Competency

Female politicians are stereotyped as being better able to handle compassion/women’s issues and male politicians are perceived as better able to handle economic/military issues (Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Kahn, 1992; Leeper, 1991). Importantly, gender stereotypes overlap with partisan stereotypes. Like female politicians, Democrats are perceived to be better at handling compassion/women’s issues. Like male politicians, Republicans are seen as better at handling economic/military issues (Dolan, 2010; Petrocik, 1996). I tested the influence of gendered appearance on perceptions of issue competencies of state-level politicians.
Observers were presented with politician images and were asked to evaluate politicians on a range of policy issues. Appearance-based judgments of unfamiliar Democrat and Republican politicians were facilitated through their partisan stereotypes. Democratic politicians who appeared more feminine were rated higher on their ability to handle stereotypically feminine policy issues (Carpinella & Johnson, under review). Conversely, when politicians exuded a more masculine appearance, they were rated as better able to handle stereotypically masculine policy issues. This effect was present for both Democrat and Republican politicians. Therefore, partisan stereotypes informed appearance-based judgments of politicians’ policy issue expertise.

Evaluative judgments of politicians are driven by partisan stereotypes. That is, the relationship between feminine characteristics/Democrats and masculine characteristics/Republicans influences perceptions of politicians’ trait characteristics and their policy expertise. Democratic women benefit from a more feminine appearance, while Republican women benefit from a more masculine appearance.

**Categorical Decisions**

If the partisan stereotype hypothesis holds, a more feminine appearance will facilitate decisions made about Democrats, while a more masculine appearance will facilitate decisions concerning Republicans. However, the gender roles hypothesis specifies that more sex-typical Republicans will be more likely to be categorized correctly and receive a vote. The gender roles hypothesis holds for categorical decisions.

**Party Affiliation Judgments**

Based solely on photographs, naïve raters can determine the political party affiliation/political ideology of both unfamiliar elected officials (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a; Roberts, Griffin, McOwan, & Johnston, 2011; Rule & Ambady, 2010; Samochowiec, Wänke, &
I tested whether party judgments are driven by gendered appearance in a sample of national-level politicians.

Participants were presented with politician images and asked to identify the party of each politician. Female politicians who appeared more feminine were more likely to be detected as Republicans; those who appeared less feminine were more likely to be detected as Democrats (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a). Therefore, when naïve perceivers are asked to judge the party affiliation of unfamiliar politicians, they use gendered appearance to accurately render party affiliation judgments. A more feminine appearance facilitates Republican categorizations while a less feminine appearance compels Democrat categorizations. Therefore, party categorizations are driven by the Republican Party’s adherence to traditional gender roles that reward women for a more feminine appearance.

**Hypothetical Vote Choice**

When provided with winner and loser candidate images pairs, participants accurately cast their hypothetical vote for the majority of the winning candidates (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Carpinella, Hehman, Freeman, & Johnson, invited resubmission; Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). Given that perceptions of competence are tethered to gendered appearance, I tested whether candidate vote choice decisions were driven by gendered appearance in a sample of national-level candidates.

Perceivers were presented with image pairs of winners and losers and were asked to select which candidate they would support solely based on the candidates’ appearance. Female Republican candidates who appeared more feminine and male Republicans who appeared less masculine were more likely to be selected in the vote choice task. Among Democrats, less
feminine female candidates and more masculine male candidates were more likely to receive a hypothetical vote (Carpinella, Hehman, Freeman, & Johnson, invited resubmission).

Categorical decisions about politicians are driven by gender roles. That is, women are more likely to be categorized as Republican and selected in a vote choice task if they appear more sex-typical (i.e., more feminine). This mandate reflects the traditional gender roles advocated by the Republican Party. Additional research is required to determine why male Republicans benefited from a less sex-typical (i.e., less masculine) appearance.

**Political Outcomes**

**Electoral Success**

There is a robust literature providing evidence that a politician’s facial appearance informs evaluations (e.g., competence), which in turn impact electoral success (Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). Politicians judged to be more competent (i.e., facial competence) were more likely to win their elections (for a review see Hall, Goren, Chaiken, & Todorov, 2009). However, the evidence as to whether competence judgments predicted electoral success for both women and men varies. Some researchers found that facial competence was equally predictive for the electoral success of men as it was for women (Olivola & Todorov, 2010). However, others found that facial competence only predicted electoral success for female politicians (Chiao, Bowman, & Gil, 2008; Poutvaara, Jordahl, & Berggren, 2009). I investigated whether gendered appearance was equally predictive of the electoral success of national-level male and female candidates.

Using candidates from congressional and gubernatorial races, my colleagues and I found that gendered appearance only predicted the electoral success of Republican politicians; more feminine women and less masculine men were more likely to win their respective elections
Legislative Success

Little empirical work has investigated the role of appearance-based cues in legislative success. Some preliminary evidence supports the gender role hypothesis and shows that politicians’ legislative success may also be associated with the gendered nature of their appearance. More specifically, female Republican candidates who appeared more feminine raised more money for their districts and were assigned to more prestigious committees (Johnson, Carpinella, & Shrode, in preparation).

Politicians’ electoral and legislative successes are also driven by gender roles. Republican women fare better when they appear more feminine; Democrat women do not obtain the same benefits from a feminine appearance. This reflects the traditional gender roles advocated by the Republican Party. Additional research is required to determine why male Republicans benefited in their electoral success from a less sex-typical (i.e., less masculine) appearance.

Discussion

This review examines how partisan stereotypes and partisan gender stereotypes are conveyed through politician appearance and ultimately impact political success. I report here that a) perceivers form meaningful impressions of politicians based solely on facial cues, b) politicians exhibit systematic differences in gendered facial appearance, and c) factors that relate to political success are themselves highly gendered. I provide evidence that impressions of politicians are functionally tethered to gendered cues that have been shown to vary systematically as a function of political party. These evaluations are especially consequential for female politicians who remain underrepresented in American politics.
Overview of Current Research

The aim of the dissertation is to establish the conditions under which the partisan stereotype and gender roles hypotheses influence a range of consequential judgments about politicians. The purpose of these studies is to examine how and gender and partisan manifest in politicians’ appearance and inform judgments from naïve raters about their leadership ability, policy competency, and electoral viability.

Chapter II presents an empirical study where the influence of gendered appearance on evaluative trait judgments is investigated. Chapter III tests the role of gendered appearance in perceptions of politicians’ issue competency. Chapter IV examines the role of gendered appearance in perceptions of leadership ability. Finally, Chapter V tests how gendered appearance impacts candidate selection and candidate electoral success.

Over a wide range of evaluative judgments and categorical decisions, I show that the implications of politicians’ gendered appearance are far-reaching. The study findings presented here have the potential to inform voting behavior and politician impression formation especially in low-information electoral contexts where candidate images have the most impact.
CHAPTER II:

The Role of Sex-Typicality on Trait Assessments of Politicians
Abstract

Here I test the association between gendered facial cues and trait evaluations of warmth and competence for members of the 111th U.S. House of Representatives. I related perceived competence/warmth to objective measurements of politicians’ Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. Among female politicians, facial femininity was associated with higher competence ratings for Democrats/Liberals, but with lower competence ratings for Republicans/Conservatives. Judgments of female politicians’ warmth did not vary with facial femininity. Among male politicians, facial masculinity was associated with lower warmth ratings for Liberals but had no effect for Conservatives. Judgments of male politicians’ competence did not vary with facial masculinity. Thus, facial cues impacted perceptions on the dimension that ran counter to gender stereotypes—competence for women, warmth for men. These findings suggest that appearance-based cues interact with partisan stereotypes to bias perceptions of politicians. Implications for electoral politics are discussed.

Keywords: person perception, impression formation, gender, political candidates, political psychology, social perception
The advent of televised political advertisements brought with it an era in which the physical appearance of politicians is heavily scrutinized by constituents. Today, physical appearance is recognized to be so crucial for electoral success that candidates routinely spend thousands of dollars to employ stylists and image consultants (Gabriel, 2011). There is some indication that these expenditures are a necessary component of modern politics insofar as the relation between appearance and voter choice is well established. From appearance alone, perceivers evaluate the politicians’ traits such as competence, warmth, and leadership skill (Johns & Shepard, 2007; Olivola & Todorov, 2010). Such trait assessments predict voters’ preferences (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011), and especially among uninformed or non-partisan constituents, they predict actual vote choice (Johns & Shepard, 2007; Lenz & Lawson, 2011).

In spite of these observations, little is known about the precise cues that compel the consequential perceptions of politicians that may ultimately impact vote choice. There is some indication; however, that these impressions may be functionally tethered to gendered cues that have been shown to vary systematically as a function of political ideology. Here I test the possibility that systematic variations in gendered facial cues relate to perceptions of politicians’ competence and warmth. I focus my efforts only on successfully elected politicians to characterize the specific characteristics that are associated with political success in an ecologically valid population, members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

**The Gendered Nature of Politics and Politicians**

I predicted that perceptions of politician’s competence and warmth would vary as a function of both gendered cues and political party. This prediction was informed by previous research showing that a) perceivers form meaningful impressions of politicians based solely on facial cues, b) politicians exhibit systematic differences in gendered facial appearance, and c)
factors that relate to electoral success (i.e., perceptions of competence and warmth) are themselves highly gendered (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001).

Observers form stable and reliable impressions of politicians based solely on facial cues. For example, observers are adept not only at labeling Democrats/Liberals and Republicans/Conservatives (Rule & Ambady, 2010; Samochowiec, Wänke, & Fiedler, 2010), but also at distinguishing between political winners and losers (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). Such judgments appear to be based on perceptions of competence that are informed by visual cues (Olivola & Todorov, 2010). Moreover, such appearance-based trait inferences predict electoral outcomes (Rule, Ambady, Adams, Ozono, Nakashima, Yoshikawa, & Watabe, 2010).

Some of the accuracy that perceivers achieve in judgments that are informed exclusively by minimal facial cues appears to be related to systematic differences in politicians’ gendered facial characteristics. Carpinella & Johnson (2013), for example, assessed differences in the gender-typicality of Congressional Representatives’ face shape. They found that Congresswomen were objectively more feminine than Congressmen were masculine, but that the extremity of this effect varied by political ideology. The faces of conservative women, in particular, were more gender-typical than any other group. Importantly, these differences in gendered appearance impacted observers’ judgments of the politicians’ political party affiliation. Participants were more likely to provide Republican categorizations for feminine women, a tendency that mirrored the observed differences between female Republicans and Democrats’ facial characteristics, thereby promoting accuracy. Therefore, the Objective Facial Sex-Typicality of politicians influences judgments of political party affiliation even when this information is not explicitly provided to observers.
Importantly, some of the early impressions that relate to electoral success, namely perceptions of competence and warmth, are also highly gendered in nature. Competence, for example, is regarded as a desirable and agentic characteristic (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). Overall, men are presumed to be competent but lack warmth; women are presumed to be warm, but lack competence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). These stereotyped perceptions also guide judgments of politicians. One simulated election study found that although perceptions of competence were strongly associated with hypothetical votes for both men and women, men were perceived as more competent than women, on average, a finding that is consistent with gender stereotypes (Chiao, Bowman, & Gill, 2008). Interestingly, however, men who appeared approachable, but women who appeared attractive, received an electoral advantage. This suggests that although political evaluations might stem from normative expectations about the characteristics stereotypically associated with men and women, in part, they might also favor well-rounded candidates that also exhibit counter-normative characteristics. This possibility is bolstered by research indicating that political evaluations are more heavily influenced by perceptions of a counter-stereotypical characteristic. In one study, for example, male political candidates were evaluated more favorably as perceived warmth increased; female candidates were evaluated more favorably as perceived competence increased (Johns & Shepard, 2007). Thus, evaluative judgments of politicians appear to fluctuate in response to counter-normative traits (i.e., warmth for men, competence for women).

Collectively, these findings suggest that the observed differences in politicians’ gendered appearance may also be tethered to evaluative judgments. The extant literature suggests a few distinct possibilities. Based on existing gender stereotypes for warmth and competence (Fiske et al., 2002), one straightforward prediction is that gendered facial cues will relate directly to
evaluations such that masculine cues will convey competence, and feminine cues with convey warmth for both male and female politicians. This basic pattern may differ, however, for men and women, such that gendered cues relate to a counter-normative dimension. If correct, this implies that, on average, gendered cues may impact perceptions of women’s competence, but men’s warmth. Finally, given baseline partisan differences in the extremity of gendered cues across political party, these patterns may be moderated by political ideology, revealing important constraints and boundary conditions on these basic patterns.

I tested these possibilities in a sample of politicians who were successfully elected to the 111th U.S. House of Representatives. Given their electoral success, I reasoned that analyzing the relation between gendered cues and political ideology would provide descriptive insights into how gendered cues provide meaningful foundation for electoral success. Thus, insofar as elected politicians exemplify characteristics that are valued by their respective constituencies.

Method

I report how I determined the sample size, all data exclusions, and all measures in this study.

Participants

Eighty Internet users (25 men, 55 women; 31 Democrats, 29 Independents, 16 Republicans, 4 unreported) received 50 cents in exchange for participating in an online study, offered through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and administered by Qualtrics.

Materials

Stimuli included photographs of 68 the 434 members of the 111th United States House of Representatives (17 each female Democrats, male Democrats, female Republicans, and male
Republicans). Photographs were downloaded from each politician’s website, coded for sex (female/male) and political party (Democrat/Republican), and standardized for size (450 by 450 pixels). Each politician’s face was measured for the degree gender-typical face shape (masculine cues in men; feminine cues in women) using the procedures described in Carpinella and Johnson (2013). These measures were coded such that positive values denoted sex-typical characteristics (i.e., masculine men and feminine women); negative values denoted sex-atypical characteristics (i.e., feminine men and masculine women).

Importantly, the sex-typicality of the randomly selected politicians from each of the four categories did not differ from the overall sex-typicality of their respective categories.

Finally, each congressman’s political ideology (i.e., the degree of conservatism or liberalism) was quantified using DW-NOMINATE scores (hereafter, NOMINATE), providing a continuous and sensitive index of political ideology based on the nature and frequency of roll call votes (Poole & Rosenthal, 1991).

Procedure

Note that only 17 female Republicans served in the 111th U.S. House of Representatives. Therefore, photos for this group included all members.

Photographs were imported individually into FaceGen Modeler using the Photo Fit Tool (Blanz & Vetter, 1999), and the sex-typicality of each face was measured using the Gender Morph tool. The degree of sex-typicality for each face was then quantified based on anthropometric parameters of the human population (Blanz & Vetter, 2003). Values for Objective Facial Sex-Typicality theoretically ranged from −40 (highly male-typed) to +40 (highly female-typed) and were then converted to a common scale for men and women, indicating their sex-typicality.

I conducted series of one-sample t-test to compare the sex-typicality of each randomly selected subset of politicians to their overall group means. The Objective Facial Sex-Typicality of the selected subsample of female Democrats did not significantly differ from the overall group mean in sex-typicality, $t(16)=1.163, p=.262$. Also, the Objective Facial Sex-Typicality of the selected subsample of male Democrats and male Republicans did not significantly differ reliably from their overall group means, $t(16)=-2.056, p=.056; t(16)=.502, p=.623$. Thus, these images were representative of the larger population from which they were drawn.
Participants judged the warmth and competence of the Congressional photographs. Judgments were rendered using 9-point scales anchored by “extremely cold” and “extremely warm” and by “extremely incompetent” and “extremely competent.” The order of warmth and competence measures was counterbalanced across participants. Following the judgment trials, participants reported their political party affiliation (Democrat, Republican, or Independent) and sex. The images were not labeled with the politician party and participants were not asked to identify the political party or ideology of any of the politicians whose images were included. If participants reported recognizing a politician, their evaluations were excluded from the analyses.

Results

Analytic Strategy

I obtained regression estimates using generalized estimating equations to accurately model the within-subject design in which multiple judgments were nested under participant (Fitzmaurice, Laird, & Ware, 2004). Politician Sex and Political Party were effect coded (Female=-.5, Male=.5; Democrat=-.5, Republican=.5), and facial gender typicality was centered at 0 (indicating neither gender typical nor atypical). NOMINATE scores contain a natural centered value of 0 (indicating neither conservative nor liberal voting record). I report unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and Wald Z values for each parameter. I initially included participants’ self-reported political party affiliation, age, and sex as factors in each analysis. These perceiver characteristics did not reach significance alone or in combination with other variables, so they will receive no further mention.

Perceived Warmth

I first tested the possibility that perceived warmth would vary as a function of a politician’s sex, gendered appearance, and political ideology by regressing Perceived Warmth
onto Politician Sex, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, NOMINATE Score, and all interactions.

Overall, participants judged male politicians as significantly less warm than female politicians, $B=-0.2839, SE=0.0762, z=-3.72, p=.0002$; sex-typical politicians as significantly less warm than their atypical counterparts, $B=-0.0138, SE=0.0031, z=-4.41, p<.0001$; and Conservatives as slightly, but not significantly more warm than Liberals, $B=0.084, SE=0.0484, z=1.74, p=0.0827$.

More importantly, the three way interaction was significant, $B=0.0243, SE=0.0093, z=2.61, p=.0089$ (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Warmth ratings as a function of Politician NOMINATE score, Politician Sex, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality for (a) evaluations of male politicians and (b) evaluations of female politicians. Estimates were calculated at 1 SD above and below 0, thus indicating sex-typed and cross sex-typed facial appearances.

To decompose this interaction, I conducted tests of simple slopes separately for male and female politicians. Among female politicians, the Sex-Typicality by NOMINATE score interaction was not significant, simple $B=-.0108, SE=.0077, z=-1.39, p=.1641$. However, among male politicians, the interaction was significant, simple interaction $B=.0135, SE=.0060, z=2.27, p=.0231$.

Participants’ judgments of male Conservatives did not vary significantly by Sex-Typicality, ($EMs=5.48$ and 5.23, estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively), $B=-.0099$, $p=.4836$. However, among female politicians, the interaction was significant, simple interaction $B=.0135, SE=.0060, z=2.27, p=.0231$. Participants’ judgments of male Conservatives did not vary significantly by Sex-Typicality, ($EMs=5.48$ and 5.23, estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively), $B=-.0099$, $p=.4836$.
SE=.0062, z=-1.61, p=.1076. However, participants judged male Liberals who appeared less sex-typical (i.e., more feminine) as significantly warmer than their more sex-typical counterparts, (EMs=5.50 and 5.14, estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively), $B=-.0261$, $SE=.0060$, $z=-4.35$, $p<.0001$.

In an analogous analysis that included Politician Party instead of NOMINATE score, the three way interaction was only marginally significant, $B=.0186$, $SE=.0108$, $z=1.72$, $p=.0846$. I therefore did not decompose this analysis further.

**Perceived Competence**

Next I tested my prediction that perceptions of competence would vary as a function of a politician’s sex, gendered appearance, and political ideology. To test this, I regressed Perceived Competence onto NOMINATE Score, Politician Sex, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality and all interactions. Overall, participants judged male politicians as only slightly, but not significantly more competent than female politicians, $B=0.0501$, $SE=0.0736$, $z=0.68$, $p=.496$; sex-typical politicians as slightly less competent than their atypical counterparts, $B=-0.0062$, $SE=0.0027$, $z=-2.28$, $p=0.0229$; and Conservatives as more competent than Liberals, $B=0.2011$, $SE=0.0475$, $z=4.23$, $p<.0001$.

More importantly, the three way interaction was significant, $B=.0490$, $SE=.0092$, $z=5.32$, $p<.0001$ (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2.* Competence ratings as a function of Politician NOMINATE Score, Politician Sex, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality for (a) evaluations of male politicians and (b) evaluations of female politicians. Estimates were calculated at 1 SD above and below 0, thus indicating Conservative and Liberal politicians.
To decompose this interaction, I conducted tests of simple slopes separately for male and female politicians. Among female politicians, the interaction between Objective Facial Sex-Typicality and NOMINATE score was significant, simple $B=-.0440$, $SE=.0078$, $z=-5.65$, $p<.0001$. Participants judged female Conservatives who appeared less sex-typical (i.e., less feminine) as significantly more competent, ($EMs=6.25$ and $5.74$, estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively), $B=-.0436$, $SE=.0081$, $z=-5.39$, $p<.0001$, but judged female Liberals who appeared more sex-typical as more competent, ($EMs=5.34$ and $5.64$, estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively), $B=.0090$, $SE=.0038$, $z=2.37$, $p=.0178$. Among male politicians, the interaction was not significant, simple $B=.0051$, $SE=.0068$, $z=.75$, $p=+.4552$.

These results were replicated using Politician Party in place of NOMINATE Score. Again, participants judged male politicians as only slightly, but not significantly more competent than female politicians, $B=0.07$, $SE=0.07$, $z=0.94$, $p=.34$; sex-typical politicians as slightly less competent than their atypical counterparts, $B=-0.0055$, $SE=0.0028$, $z=-2.00$, $p=0.0459$; and Republicans as more competent than Democrats, $B=0.1894$, $SE=0.0501$, $z=3.78$, $p=.0002$.

As before, the predicted three way interaction was significant, $B=.0457$, $SE=.0111$, $z=4.13$, $p<.0001$. Among female politicians, the interaction between Sex-Typicality and
Politician Party was significant, simple $B=-.0446$, $SE=.0088$, $z=-5.06$, $p<.0001$. This occurred because participants judged female Republicans who appeared less sex-typical (i.e., more masculine) as more competent, ($EMs=6.23$ and 5.73, estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively), $B=-.0317$, $SE=.0070$, $z=-4.55$, $p<.0001$, but judged female Democrats who appeared more sex-typical (i.e., more feminine) as more competent, ($EMs=5.43$ and 5.64, estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean, respectively), $B=.0129$, $SE=.0042$, $z=3.05$, $p=.0023$. Among male politicians, the interaction between Sex-Typicality and Politician Party was not significant, simple $B=.0010$, $SE=.0078$, $z=.13$, $p=.8934$.

Thus, female politicians’ competence was evaluated based on their sex-typicality. When Democrats/Liberals appeared more feminine they were rated as more competent; when Republicans/Conservatives appeared more masculine they were rated more competent. Evaluations of male politicians’ competence did not vary by sex-typicality.

**General Discussion**

I found that the Objective Facial Sex-Typicality of politicians influenced trait evaluations. Among male politicians, Liberals were rated as warmer when they appeared less masculine. An analogous effect was not obtained for male Conservatives. Among female politicians, Liberals were rated as more competent when they appeared more feminine, but Conservatives were rated more competent when they appeared less feminine. Collectively, these results highlight the nuanced manner by which Objective Facial Sex-Typicality differently informs trait evaluations, and it reveals patterns that are typical of successfully elected politicians.

Overall, gendered facial cues exerted the greatest influence on judgments that were stereotypically counter-normative for a politician’s sex. Specifically, the perceived competence
of women, but the perceived warmth of men was most tightly coupled to gendered cues. This finding extends past research by demonstrating that the tendency for trait judgments to be compelled by stereotype inconsistent characteristics also occurs for visual appearance cues. Thus, as others have found (Chiao et al., 2008), these findings suggest that politicians may benefit by exhibiting counter-normative characteristics.

The finding that perceptions of men’s warmth and women’s competence were further moderated by political ideology/party could have occurred for at least two reasons. First, it may have occurred due to baseline differences in the extremity of sex-typed facial cues. For instance, the tendency for Republican/conservative women to be highly sex-typical may backfire insofar as femininity is not associated with competence. Indeed, I observed that among this group, women were deemed more competent when they were less sex typical. The opposite was true for Democrat/liberal women, again possibly reflecting a sensitivity to the, on average, lower sex-typicality. Alternately, it is possible that the observers spontaneously inferred each politician’s political affiliation/political ideology from their facial appearance. If correct, perceivers may have used this inference as a foundation to judge each politician’s “fit” with existing political stereotypes and based their judgments of warmth and competence on those expectations. Although the current data cannot differentiate between these two possibilities, I favor the group norms alternative for its parsimony.

The strategy to focus exclusively on successfully elected politicians was deliberate. This approach affords the opportunity to infer which characteristics are typical in U.S. legislators and thus provides insights into the characteristics that the constituencies that put them into office deemed desirable. Because a majority of the population casts their votes along party lines (Miller & Shanks, 1996), these findings can also be used to derive testable predictions about the
characteristics that may differentially compel votes from liberal and conservative voters, although doing so would require further study. This methodological decision is not without costs, however. For example, I did not directly manipulate targets’ political party affiliation, and this makes it impossible for us to specify directional causality. Additionally, because participants did not explicitly identify the political party of each target, it is impossible for us to determine whether participants may have used implicit party categorizations as a foundation for their evaluations. Thus, my methods leave some questions as to the causal relations underlying these effects. Additional research is necessary to determine how accuracy in party affiliation judgments may interact with Objective Facial Sex-Typicality to causally influence trait evaluations.

Nevertheless, these results provide an important next step toward understanding how visual cues impact political perceptions of politicians’ warmth and competence, and they have practical implications for understanding voting behavior. The tendency for voters to use appearance-based heuristics to evaluate political candidates is common among uninformed voters and/or non-partisan voters to (Lenz & Lawson, 2011), yet it also extends to other groups as well (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). When this occurs, voters may be susceptible to biases that stem from superficial aspects of appearance. Precisely what characteristics compel or constrain such biases remains an important question for future research.

Finally, I contend that these results shed light on the existing gender imbalances in politics. Currently, women hold only 17.7% of the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives (CAWP, 2013). Such a daunting asymmetry may discourage women from seeking elected office. Some evidence suggests that this reluctance breaks along gender-stereotyped lines. Specifically, women are less likely to run for higher offices that are stereotyped as masculine (e.g., state
executive offices; Fox & Oxley, 2003). If the perceived competence of female Republicans is undermined by their femininity, they may be reluctant to seek office at all. If correct, such barriers may require concerted recruitment efforts to increase representation among this segment of candidate hopefuls.

**Conclusion**

Appearance-based cues impact perceivers’ impressions of politicians especially with regard to their leadership capabilities. This study is the first of its kind to show that gender and partisan stereotypes are activated from politician appearance alone, and intersect to bias perceptions of politicians’ warmth and competence. This notion has implications for political campaigns in which politician appearance may influence electoral success.
CHAPTER III:

Gendered Appearance and Party Affiliation Communicate Policy Expertise

Abstract

Assessments of politicians’ issue competencies have tremendous political consequences. Such assessments tend to reflect stereotyped expectations that fall along party and gender lines. Democrats and female politicians tend to be viewed as better able to handle
compassion/women’s issues; Republicans and male politicians, in contrast, tend to be viewed as more competent at handling economic/military issues. I tested how gendered facial appearance cues inform judgments of policy issue expertise. Observers evaluated politicians’ competency for compassion/women’s issues and economic issues. Judgments revealed that policy perceptions were most favorable when partisan and gendered information were in accord. Democrats and feminine politicians were rated as better equipped to handle compassion/women’s issues. Conversely, masculine politicians (both Democrats and Republicans) were rated as better able to handle economic/military policy issues. Therefore, partisan stereotyped expectations informed appearance-based judgments of politicians’ policy issue expertise. Implications for politicians’ electoral success are discussed.

Kathleen Blanco competed against Bobby Jindal in the 2003 Louisiana gubernatorial race. Kathleen commanded extensive experience with economic policy; Bobby, in contrast, proved remarkably adept at handling education and health care policy. Despite pronounced differences in policy expertise, campaign coverage was decidedly gendered. Rather than highlighting each candidate’s actual policy expertise, reports instead focused on policy
experience that aligned with traditional gender roles. Kathleen received more coverage of her ability to handle education and healthcare policy (i.e., compassion issues), while Bobby received more coverage of his ability to handle economic policy (Major & Coleman, 2008). Thus, media reports revealed politically focused gender stereotypes, even though doing so was contraindicated by the policy experience of the candidates.

The 2003 Louisiana gubernatorial race is not an outlier. Of the most pernicious manifestations of gender stereotyping in U.S. politics are the assumptions that female politicians are experts on compassion/women's issues (e.g., education and healthcare policy; Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986) and that male politicians are better equipped to handle economic/military issues (e.g., budget deficit and national defense policy; Alexander & Andersen, 1991; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Kahn, 1992; Leeper, 1991; Petrocik, 1996; Sapiro, 1981). Indeed, a cross-national comparison of the media coverage of male and female candidates in Canada, Australia, and the United States corroborated this notion. News coverage in all three countries focused on the economic and foreign policy platform of male candidates, but on the social policy platform of female candidates (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008).

Appearance-based cues have the potential to influence perceptions of candidates’ issue competencies, particularly in the U.S. where campaigns tend to be candidate- instead of issue-oriented (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008). Voters often utilize candidate appearance in forming their impressions of candidates’ political leanings and issue expertise. Trait perceptions that are informed by minimal information impact not only the evaluation of candidates, but also vote choices (Bishin, Stevens, & Wilson, 2006; Fridkin & Kenney, 2011; Hayes, 2005; 2011). Importantly, these decisions can be reached based on scant visual information. Voters, especially non-partisan or those who lack pertinent information, form impressions of politicians based
merely on their appearance, and such “snap judgments” impact voting behavior (Johns & Shephard, 2007; Lawson, Lenz, Baker, & Myers, 2010; Lenz & Lawson, 2011). In spite of these well-established impacts, how appearance cues impact perceptions of a politician’s policy expertise remains unknown. The current research tests how politicians’ gendered appearance (i.e., masculinity/femininity) and partisan identity combine to affect perceptions of issue competency.

**Gender, party, and issue competency**

It is unsurprising that elected officials’ political ideology relates to their policy advocacy, a notion that is supported by even a cursory examination of the roll call voting of politicians at the state and national levels of government. More surprisingly, politicians’ gender and party identification interact to inform observers’ perceptions of their ideology and issue competency. Below I summarize the differences in the ideology and policy advocacy for men and women and provide evidence that perceptions of politicians’ issue competency vary as a function of their gender and political party.

First, politicians’ actual ideology and issue advocacy differ as a function of their gender identification. In the U.S., female voters, candidates, and elected officials are more likely to identify as Democrats and to endorse liberal policy stances compared to their male counterparts (Carey Niemi, & Powell, 1998; Frankovic, 1977; Poggione, 2004; Welch, 1985). Furthermore, female politicians’ legislative efforts tend to support women’s issues (e.g., reproductive rights) more than do male politicians’ efforts (Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2009; Dolan, 1997; Hogan, 2008; 2010; Poggione, 2004; Swers, 1998; 2001; Thomas & Welch 1991; Thomas & Wilcox, 1998). Finally, female politicians are also more likely to emphasize education and healthcare
policy issues, relative to their male counterparts (Dodson & Carroll, 1991; Rapoport, Stone, & Abramowitz, 1990; Thomas & Welch, 1991; Welch, 1985).

Politicians’ actual ideology and issue advocacy also differ as a function of their partisan identification. For instance, female and male Democrats exhibit equal support for women’s policy issues. Among Republicans, in contrast, women’s support for such policy issues outstrips men’s support by a sizeable margin (Swers, 1998; 2001). Thus, only among Republicans do women exhibit gender-specific policy advocacy, endorsing more liberal policy stances than their same-party male counterparts. Support for economic issues shows a similar gender-specific pattern. Specifically, Republican women tend to endorse slightly more conservative policies than do men. Male Democrats, in contrast, exhibit more conservative economic stances than do female Democrats (Hogan, 2008; 2010). Thus, although political ideology has clear implications for policy support, the effect is either attenuated or accentuated as a function of a politician’s gender.

Second, observers’ impressions of politicians’ ideology and policy advocacy are tethered to gender identification. For example, female candidates tend to be perceived not only as more liberal than male candidates (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; King & Matland, 2003; Koch, 2000; 2002; McDermott, 1997; 1998), but also as more liberal than their voting records indicate (Koch, 2000, 2002; McDermott, 1997; 1998). Similarly, female candidates are routinely judged to be more competent with compassion/women’s policy issues; male candidates are judged to be adept handling economic/military policy issues (Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Brown, Heighberger, & Shocket, 1993; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a; Kahn, 1992; Koch, 1997; Leeper, 1991; Petrocik, 1996; Sapiro, 1981).
Politicians’ party identification also influences observers’ judgments of their ideology and policy advocacy. In a study in which both party identification and gender were salient to observers, female Democrats were judged to be more liberal than male Democrats, but no gender differences in perceived ideology were observed for Republican candidates (Dolan, 2004). This finding suggests that the tendency to perceive female candidates as liberal may be attenuated by the inclusion of information about party identification.

Moreover, gender-based perceptions of issue competency show considerable overlap with partisan stereotypes. Policy domains for which women are deemed as more competent are also associated with the Democratic Party; policy domains for which men are deemed more competent, in contrast, are linked to the Republican Party (Petrocik, 1996; Winter, 2010). As such, Democrats are typically judged as better at handling compassion/women’s issues, and Republicans are judged as more capable at dealing with economic/military issues (Dolan, 2010; Hamill, Lodge, & Blake, 1985; Huddy & Capelos, 2002; Petrocik, 1996; Rahn, 1993). The conspicuous overlap between gender and party stereotype content may therefore be implicated in perceptions of politicians’ issue expertise. I propose that gender stereotypes are communicated through politicians’ appearance and that they combine with their partisan identification to impact perceptions of their policy competency.

**Appearance-based politician perception**

A sizable literature supports the possibility that a politician’s appearance may shape how gender and partisan stereotypes impact assessments of politicians’ issue competencies. Vote decisions in U.S. politics are often influenced by politician’s appearance (Lawson, Lenz, Baker, & Myers, 2010; Lenz & Lawson, 2011). Interestingly, such influence is perhaps most apparent when decisions are devoid of meaningful political context. In numerous laboratory studies, for
example, participants have demonstrated a remarkable ability to distinguish political winners from losers based solely on facial photographs of political candidates (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Carpinella, Hehman, Freeman, & Johnson, invited resubmission; Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). Furthermore, other research has shown that from a mere glimpse of a politician’s photograph, perceivers can discern the political party affiliation/ideology of politicians (Bull & Hawkes, 1982; Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a; Jahoda, 1954; Olivola, Sussman, Tsetsos, Kang, & Todorov, 2012; Roberts, Griffin, McOwan, & Johnston, 2011; Rule & Ambady, 2010; Samochowiec, Wänke, & Fiedler, 2010). Therefore, a politician’s facial appearance compels meaningful social judgments that are also politically consequential.

Prior research tested how a politician’s appearance impacted gender and partisan stereotyped trait evaluations of Congressional representatives. Specifically, Carpinella and Johnson (2013b) asked observers to judge the warmth and competence of politicians, based strictly on photographs. Consistent with gender stereotypes, female politicians were evaluated as warmer than male politicians, but male politicians were rated as more competent than female politicians. Interestingly, facial appearance informed judgments along the counter-stereotypical dimension—impacting the perceived competence of women, but the perceived warmth of men. Moreover, this tendency was most pronounced when a politician’s physical appearance was congruent with their partisan stereotypes (i.e., feminine-appearing Democrats and masculine-appearing Republicans). Among female politicians, observers rated more feminine Democrats but less feminine Republicans to be more competent. Among male politicians, observers rated less masculine Democrats as warmer than their more masculine counterparts (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013b).
These findings reveal that partisan stereotypes influence evaluations of politicians. Female Democrats are evaluated as more competent when they appear feminine, and female Republicans are evaluated more competent when they appear more masculine. Roughly the opposite occurs for evaluations of men. Thus, the impact of appearance on global evaluations of politicians is clear. While statistically related to electoral outcomes (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005), global evaluations of warmth and competence alone may be less potent than evaluations of party-specific political competencies. Whether appearance cues also impact consequential assessments of policy competencies remains unclear. The current research aims to test this possibility.

**Overview of current research**

There is robust evidence that gender and partisan stereotypes influence the perception of politicians’ ideology and issue competencies. Moreover, politicians who portray feminine attributes are judged as better equipped to handle compassion policy; politicians who portray masculine attributes, in contrast, are judged as better able to handle military policy (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a). I hypothesized that politicians’ physical appearance may confer stereotype-congruent benefits as observers evaluate their competencies for political issues. I hypothesized that Democratic/feminine-appearing politicians would be seen as skilled in compassion/women’s issues and that Republican/masculine-appearing politicians would be viewed as proficient with economic/military issues. Moreover, I predicted that politicians would benefit from exhibiting a gendered appearance that was congruent with their partisan stereotypes (i.e., feminine-appearing Democrats and masculine-appearing Republicans), regardless of their gender. Specifically, I predicted that relatively feminine Democrats would be rated as better able to handle compassion/women’s issues (e.g., reducing the wage gap between men and women or assisting
the poor) and that relatively masculine Republicans would be rated as better able to handle economic/military issues (e.g., dealing with the deficit or leaders in business and industry). To test these predictions, I asked observers to evaluate the political competencies of politicians, based only on party identification and facial photographs.

Method

Participants

Eighty-one undergraduate students (57 women; 43% Asian, 2% Black, 17% Hispanic, 33% White, and 5% Multiracial; 44% Democrat, 12% Independent, 17% Republican, 27% no party affiliation) participated for course credit.

Stimuli

Stimuli included a randomly selected subset of photographs of 91 of the 133 Representatives from the 2013 Minnesota State Legislature (17 female Republicans, 23 female Democrats, 25 male Republicans, and 26 male Democrats). In 2013, Minnesota boasted the fourth highest percentage of women in leadership positions (Senate and House combined; CAWP, 2013) with a total of 33.8% of female elected officials at the state level. At that time, female representation was higher only in Vermont, Colorado, and Arizona, yet none of these provided an ideal stimulus set. For instance, facial photographs of Vermont’s state legislature members were unavailable through their government webpage. Images of Colorado and Arizona legislature members were available, but were insufficient in size and quality. Importantly, I sought to use images from each politicians’ official government website so that the image poses and self-presentational aspects would remain consistent across all of the images included in the sample. Given these considerations, the Minnesota State Legislature was most optimal.
Photographs were downloaded from the Minnesota State Legislature website, converted to grayscale, and cropped to depict each politician’s internal facial features (i.e., removal of hair and image backgrounds).

**Measures**

Measures included objective measurements of the sex-typicality of candidates’ face and subjective gender-typicality ratings from a norming group of observers. Ratings of candidates’ attractiveness were also obtained although they are irrelevant to the current study.

**Objective Facial Sex-Typicality.** Each politician image was measured for the degree of sex-typical facial shape. Photographs were uploaded into a commercialized software program and their sex-typicality was quantified based on anthropometric parameters (Blanz & Vetter, 1999; 2003). Examples of facial features quantified as feminine were large eyes and prominent cheekbones; large jawbones and thinner cheeks were measured as masculine facial features. Objective Facial Sex-Typicality values in the sample ranged from -40 (highly masculine) to +26 (highly feminine). Importantly, the Objective Facial Sex-Typicality of the randomly selected legislators did not differ from the overall Objective Facial Sex-Typicality of the full sample of Minnesota State Representatives (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics).  

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4 This algorithm is based on the three-dimensional facial scans of hundreds of men and women. Once imported into the program, a target’s facial shape is compared against the FaceGen population parameters. Thus, this algorithm quantified each politician’s facial structure based on the photograph. Subsequently, the optimization algorithm estimated where each face fell within the distribution of the program’s normative facial scans. Therefore, by uploading the images into FaceGen, I was able to obtain quantitative measurements of the sex-typicality (masculine/feminine) of each politician’s facial shape.

5 I conducted series of one-sample t-tests to compare the sex-typicality of each randomly selected subset of politicians to their overall group means. The Objective Facial Sex-Typicality of the selected subsample of female Democrats did not significantly differ from the overall group mean in sex-typicality, $t(22)=-.61$, $p=.55$. Also, the Objective Facial Sex-Typicality of the selected subsample of male Democrats and male Republicans did not significantly differ reliably from
Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality. Normed ratings of politicians’ gender-typicality were obtained from a separate group of observers. Raters included 67 undergraduate students (54 women; 46% Asian, 28% White, 12% Hispanic, 10% Multiracial, 4% Black; 62% Democrat, 8% Independent; 17% Republican, 13% no party affiliation) who provided judgments of each politician. This norming group was used to obtain consensus judgments of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality (see e.g., Freeman, Johnson, Ambady, & Rule, 2010). Raters judged gender-typicality using a scale that varied from 1=Very Masculine to 9= Very Feminine. Ratings of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality were centered at the scale midpoint. Negative values denoted a masculine appearance, and positive values indicated a feminine appearance. Therefore, for each politician image, I computed the average rating of gender-typicality.

Procedure

Participants were instructed that they would be viewing and providing judgments about a series of politician photographs. Participants were randomly assigned to view either the Democrat or Republican politicians first, the order of which was counterbalanced between participants. Within each subset, photographs were fully randomized within participant.
Importantly, politicians’ political party affiliation was indicated to participants. I elected to include party affiliation labels to most closely mirror how observers actually contemplate the policy expertise of politicians in actual election contests. Specifically, in actual electoral races, the political party affiliation of each candidate is clearly labeled. Additionally, providing this information allowed us to test how appearance moderates evaluations of policy competency as a function of political party. I did not reveal to participants the origin of the photographs, but rather merely indicated that each photograph depicted an actual politician from the U.S. Participants also remained naïve to my study hypotheses and were not directed to view the photographs in any particular way when making their judgments of the politicians’ policy expertise.

Participants judged each politician for competence to handle 10 policy issues adapted from Huddy and Terkildsen (1993a). These items included compassion/women’s issues (i.e., child care, assisting the poor, improving the welfare of children, solving problems of the aged, reducing the wage gap between men and women, and the controversy over abortion) and economic/military issues (i.e., a military or police crisis, reducing the local, state or national budget deficit, dealing with leaders in business or industry, and the savings and loan crisis). Participants provided each assessment on a 7 point scale, anchored by 1=Not at all well and 7=Very well. After providing competency ratings, participants viewed each politician again, this time they indicated whether they recognized each politician. No participant reported recognizing any of the politicians depicted in the sample.

**Measures of individual differences.** Participants also completed questionnaires that I used to test moderation of the effects of politician party and sex-typical appearance on assessments of policy competencies.
**Gender Attitudes.** Gender role orientation attitudes were measured using the Gender-Specific System Justification (GSJ) scale (Jost & Kay, 2005). The GSJ scale includes 8 items that measure the tendency to legitimize gender inequality. Participants responded to a 9 point scale, anchored by 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 9 = *Strongly Agree*.

**Demographic measures.** Participants completed several demographic questions, including their gender, race, age, partisan identification, educational level, country of origin, geographic location, and hometown zip code.

**Results**

**Analytic Strategy**

I constructed generalized estimating equations (GEE) to model multiple policy perception judgments nested within each participant (Fitzmaurice, Laird, & Ware, 2004). I report unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and Wald Z values for each parameter. Politician Gender was coded 1 = female, 2 = male, and Politician Party was coded 1 = Democrat, 2 = Republican. I initially computed each analysis including a factor to represent participant gender, partisan identification, and gender role orientation. These variables did not qualify any of the effects described herein, so they were dropped from my analyses. I did not anticipate that Politician Gender would qualify my effects. Therefore, I focus primarily on the two-way interactions between Politician Party and Facial Sex/Gender-Typicality. That said, analyses describing effects of Politician Gender are reported in the Supplementary Materials.

**Compassion/Women’s Issues**

I predicted that assessments of politicians’ competency for compassion/women’s issues would vary as a function of their party affiliation and gendered appearance. More specifically, I hypothesized that feminine-appearing Democrats would be rated as the most competent to handle
compassion/women’s issues policies. To test my prediction, I regressed Policy Competency onto Politician Party, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, and their interaction. Overall, Democrats and feminine-appearing politicians were rated higher on their compassion/women’s issues competency, $B_s= -.29$ and $0.02$, $SE_s= 0.02$ and $0.002$, $z_s= -12.30$ and $10.20$, $p_s<.0001$.

As predicted, the interaction between Politician Party and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant, $B= -.01$, $SE= .002$, $z= -6.42$, $p<.0001$ (see Figure 1a).

*Figure 1a.* The effect of Politician Party and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality on perceptions of Compassion/Women’s Issues Competency. The bars depict 95% confidence intervals for the effect of Politician Party.

To determine the nature of this interaction, I tested the simple slopes separately for Democrats and Republicans. Democrats who appeared more feminine were rated higher on their ability to handle compassion/women’s issues, simple $B= .02$, $SE= .002$, $z= 10.20$, $p<.0001$. Among Republican politicians, the effect of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was not significant, simple $B= .002$, $SE= .002$, $z= 1.57$, $p=.12$.

Next, I aimed to replicate my results with Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality in place of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. I regressed Policy Competency onto Politician Party,
Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality, and their interaction. Again, Democrats and feminine-appearing politicians were rated as more competent on compassion/women’s issues, \(Bs=-.24\) and \(.17, SEs=.02\) and \(.007, zs=-10.88\) and \(24.32, ps<.0001\). Importantly, the interaction between Politician Party and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality was significant, \(B=-.03, SE=.01, z=-2.64, p=.01\) (see Figure 1b). Democrats and Republicans who were judged to be more feminine were rated higher on their ability to handle compassion/women’s issues, simple \(Bs=.17\) and \(.15, SEs=.007\) and \(.007, zs=24.32\) and \(19.75, ps<.0001\).

*Figure 1b.* The effect of Politician Party and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality on perceptions of Compassion/Women’s Issues Competency. The bars depict 95% confidence intervals for the effect of Politician Party.

Therefore, Democrats were rated higher on their ability to handle compassion/women’s. Also, politicians who appeared more feminine were rated higher on their policy competency. As predicted, this effect was most pronounced for feminine-appearing Democrat politicians.

**Economic/Military Issues**

I hypothesized that masculine-appearing Republicans would be rated as the most competent to handle economic/military issues. To test my prediction, I regressed Policy
Competency onto Politician Party, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, and their interaction. Politicians who were more masculine in their appearance were rated higher on their competency to handle economic/military issues, $B=-.01$, $SE=.002$, $z=-7.17$, $p<.0001$. However, there was no reliable difference between the perception of Democrats’ and Republicans’ ability to handle economic/military issues, $B=.04$, $SE=.03$, $z=1.45$, $p=.15$.

Importantly, the interaction between Politician Party and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant, $B=.01$, $SE=.002$, $z=5.49$, $p<.0001$ (see Figure 2a).

**Figure 2a.** The effect of Politician Party and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality on perceptions of Economic/Military Issue Competency. The bars depict 95% confidence intervals for the effect of Politician Party.

To determine the nature of this interaction, I tested the simple slopes separately for Democrats and Republicans. Democrats who appeared more masculine were rated higher on their ability to handle economic/military issues, simple $B=-.01$, $SE=.002$, $z=-7.17$, $p<.0001$. However, the effect of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was not significant for Republicans, simple $B=.001$, $SE=.002$, $z=.33$, $p=.74$. 
Next, I used Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality in place of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality in my analyses. I regressed Policy Competency onto Politician Party, Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality, and their interaction. Again, politicians who were judged to be more masculine were rated higher on their competency to handle economic/military issues, $B = -.14$, $SE = .008$, $z = -17.43$, $p < .0001$. There was no difference between the perception of Democrats’ and Republicans’ ability to handle economic/military issues, $B = .01$, $SE = .02$, $z = .46$, $p = .64$.

Importantly, the interaction between Politician Party and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality was significant, $B = .06$, $SE = .01$, $z = 5.51$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 2b).

*Figure 2b.* The effect of Politician Party and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality on perceptions of Economic/Military Issue Competency. The bars depict 95% confidence intervals for the effect of Politician Party.

Democrats and Republicans who were judged to be more masculine were rated higher on their ability to handle economic/military issues, simple $Bs = -.14$ and -.08, $SEs = .01$ and .008, $zs = -17.43$ and -9.18, $ps < .0001$.

There were no overall differences in the competency of masculine Democrats and Republicans to handle economic/military issues. Politicians who appeared more masculine were
rated higher on their competency to handle economic/military issues. However, this effect was most pronounced for masculine-appearing Democrats not for masculine-appearing Republicans as I had predicted.

**General Discussion**

I found that politicians’ gendered appearance impacts judgments of their competency to handle specific policy issues. Democrats benefitted from a more feminine appearance in perceptions of their ability to handle compassion/women’s issues. Republicans benefitted from a more masculine appearance in judgments of their economic/military issue competency.

Democrats and more feminine-appearing politicians were rated higher on their policy competency for compassion/women’s issues. Additionally, feminine Democrats, in particular, were perceived as more competent to handle compassion/women’s issues. This finding persisted for both Objective Facial Sex-Typicality and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality. Republicans who appeared more feminine in terms of their gender-typicality were also rated higher on their ability to handle compassion/women’s issues, although this tendency was smaller in magnitude. Therefore, these effects for gendered appearance revealed both partisan and gender stereotypes, showing the most pronounced impact of appearance cues for the assessments of Democrats’ competence handling compassion/women’s issues.

Both Democrats and Republicans who were more masculine in their appearance were rated as more competent on economic/military issues. Interestingly, ratings economic/military issues competency did not differ by political party. Instead, Democrats who appeared more masculine in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality were rated higher on their ability to handle economic/military issues. Republicans who appeared more masculine in subjective gender-typicality were perceived as more competent on
economic/military issues. The effect of gendered appearance was again most pronounced for judgments of Democrats’ issue competency.

The current research extends past findings into a visual domain. Previously, researchers found that gender stereotypes influenced perceptions of politicians, even when political party affiliation was salient (Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009). Warm and expressive candidates were judged to be better at handling compassion/women’s issues, and instrumental candidates were judged to be better able to handle economic/military issues (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993a). This prior research used vignette descriptions that characterized female and male politicians in terms of feminine versus masculine characteristics. Here, I extended these prior observations to include a politician’s gendered appearance as potent cue through which politically relevant gender stereotypes operate.

I found the most consistent and strongest effects occurred for judgments of Democratic politicians. Given the higher number of Democrats elected to the Minnesota State Legislature, it may have been the case that the overlap between compassion/Democrat issue competencies was particularly potent in these electoral races. Minnesota is a Democratic-leaning state; therefore, Democrat-appearing Republicans may have fared better in Democratic districts (Olivola, Sussman, Tsetsos, Kang, & Todorov, 2012). Conversely, it may be the case that legislative bodies with a greater proportion of elected Republicans would show stronger appearance-based impacts for Republican politicians. Testing this possibility will allow researchers to determine whether these effects are contingent on the partisan identification of the pertinent constituencies.

Furthermore, state legislative offices are typically stereotyped as feminine, overall. This occurs because state office positions often focus legislation on policy issues that are stereotypically associated with female politicians (e.g., education; Fox & Oxley, 2003; Huddy &
Terkildsen, 1993b; Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989). In one study, for instance, researchers examined candidate preference for local and legislative offices. They found that candidates who were perceived to be better able to handle compassion/women’s issues were more likely to be preferred for local/legislative office positions. Conversely, when candidate preferences for national and executive offices were examined, candidates who were perceived to be better able to handle economic/military issues were more likely to be preferred (Dolan, 1997; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993b). This raises the intriguing possibility that elected executive offices may show distinct patterns, depending on the office in question. Specifically, the effect of gendered appearance on issue competency may favor a more masculine appearance among politicians who are elected to masculine stereotyped offices (e.g., Attorney General or Tax Commissioner) but favor a more feminine appearance among politicians who are elected to feminine stereotyped offices (e.g., Superintendent of Education and State University Regent; Fox & Oxley, 2003).

**Issue competencies and electoral success**

Politicians for whom gender and partisan expectations are at odds (i.e., female Republicans) may arouse mistaken impressions among constituents. Specifically, to the extent that one’s gender and partisan-based expectations specify conflicting or incongruent competencies, a politician may ultimately pay the price on both ends, being evaluated as less competent in both compassion/women’s and economic/military policy domains. Some empirical evidence supports this possibility. By extension, it may be the case that the complement is also true—that when stereotyped expectations conflict, perceived competencies suffer concomitantly. If correct, observers’ impressions may lack consensus for assessments of policy expertise of politicians. It may also be the case that either the politician’s gender or partisan identification may take precedence in observers’ judgments of their policy advocacy. Based on extant findings,
the information conveyed to voters through politician appearance is likely to be complex and remains an important focus for future research.

Perceptions of politicians’ ideological leanings and policy competencies have the potential to impact the electoral success of political candidates. A Democrat candidate may be advantaged by perceptions of her ideology as liberal in a primary race where her constituency tends to be more liberal. However, she may be disadvantaged in a general election where she needs to appeal more broadly to voters across the ideological spectrum. Conversely, a Republican candidate may be advantaged by perceptions of her ideology in a general election, but may be discounted as too liberal by her conservative base in a primary race (Koch, 2002).

Indeed, in a primary race, a female Republican’s gender signaled to voters that she was more liberal than her male counterpart, and therefore she lost support among Republican voters (King & Matland, 2003). Similarly, research on appearance-based cues found that candidates benefited from a more stereotypically Republican appearance in conservative districts, although this effect was not present for candidates in liberal districts (Olivola, Sussman, Tsetsos, Kang, & Todorov, 2012). Therefore, gender and partisan stereotypes affect perceptions of candidate ideology can help or hinder electoral success depending on the party of voting constituents.

In conclusion, I found that appearance-based judgments of unfamiliar Democrat and Republican politicians were facilitated through their partisan stereotypes. Democratic politicians who appeared more feminine were rated higher on their ability to handle stereotypically compassion/women’s issues. Conversely, when politicians exuded a more masculine appearance, they were rated as better able to handle stereotypically economic/military issues. This effect was present for both Democrat and Republican politicians. Therefore, partisan stereotypes informed appearance-based judgments of politicians’ policy issue expertise. These findings shed important
light on the ways in which a politician’s appearance impacts politically relevant decision-making.

Appendix

Compassion/Women’s Issues

Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. I tested whether the interaction between Politician Party and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant for both male and female politicians. The interaction remained significant for female and male politicians, $B_s=-.007$ and $.009$, $SE_s=.003$ and $.003$, $z_s=-2.24$ and $3.05$, $p_s=.03$ and $.002$. Among female politicians, the simple effect was significant for Democrat politicians, simple $B=.009$, $SE=.002$, $z=3.88$, $p<.0001$. 

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Feminine female Democrats were rated as better able to handle compassion issues. The simple effect was not significant for female Republicans, simple $B=.002, SE=.002, z=.92, p=.36$.

Among the male politicians, the effect was significant for Republican politicians, simple $B=.005, SE=.002, z=2.49, p=.01$. Male Republicans benefited from a more feminine appearance. Conversely, the effect was in the opposite direction though it was only marginally significant for male Democrats, simple $B=-.004, SE=.002, z=-1.92, p=.06$. Male Democrats who appeared less feminine were rated higher on their ability to handle compassion policies.

**Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality.** I tested whether the interaction between Politician Party and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality was significant for male and female politicians. The interaction was no longer significant for female and but remained significant for male politicians, $Bs=-.07$ and $.14, SEs=.05 and .05, $zs=-1.30$ and -.95, $ps=.20$ and .004. Among male politicians, the simple effect was significant for Democrat politicians, simple $B=.12, SE=.03, z=4.14, p<.0001$. Feminine-appearing male Democrats were rated as more competent on feminine issues. The simple effect was not significant for male Republicans, simple $B=-.02, SE=.04, z=-.61, p=.54$.

**Economic/ Military Issues**

**Objective Facial Sex-Typicality.** I tested whether the interaction between Politician Party and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant for male and female politicians. The interaction was significant for female and male politicians, $Bs=-.007$ and $.01, SEs=.003 and .003, $zs=-2.61$ and $2.87, ps=.03$ and .004. Among female politicians, the simple effect was significant for Democrat politicians, simple $B=.006, SE=.002, z=2.54, p=.01$. Surprisingly, feminine-appearing female Democrats were rated as more competent on economic/military issues. The
simple effect was not significant for female Republicans, simple $B=-.01, SE=.02, z=-.42, p=.67$.

Among male politicians, the simple effect was significant for Democrat politicians, simple $B=-.01, SE=.03, z=-3.33, p=.001$. Masculine-appearing male Democrats were rated as more competent on economic/military issues. The simple effect was not significant for male Republicans, simple $B=.01, SE=.02, z=.41, p=.68$.

**Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality.** I tested whether the interaction between Politician Party and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality was significant for male and female politicians. The interaction was not significant for female or male politicians, $Bs=.02$ and $.05, SEs=.06 and $.06, zs=.30$ and $.93, ps=.77$ and $.36$. 
CHAPTER IV:

The Impact of Political Party and Sex-Typicality on Leadership Ability

Abstract

In the current study, I investigated the influence of politicians’ gendered appearance on perceptions of their leadership ability. Naïve observers were presented with politician photographs and were asked to judge the politicians’ on their leadership ability. I assessed leadership evaluations falling into four broad categories—empathy, integrity, competence, and management. I hypothesized that feminine-appearing Democrats and masculine-appearing Republicans would be rated higher on their
leadership ability. Unexpectedly, male and female Republicans benefited from a more feminine appearance in judgments of their leadership ability. Female Democrats who appeared more feminine were also rated as stronger leaders; however, male Democrats who appeared more masculine were rated as stronger leaders. Additional research is necessary to explore why the psychological processes underlying judgments of overall leadership ability may differ from those governing warmth/competence judgments and assessments of policy competencies.

“She [Claire McCaskill] was very aggressive at the debate, which was quite different than it was when she ran against Jim Talent…she had a confidence and was much more ladylike (in 2006), but in the debate on Friday she came out swinging…”

Todd Akin (2012)

These comments made about Claire McCaskill during her senatorial campaign reflect the high level of scrutiny that women politicians face. Female candidates face a dual mandate wherein they need to act tough and exemplify masculine traits such as assertiveness and competence associated with national political leadership. However, they also receive backlash if they transgress traditional gender roles prescribing them communal traits.
Social science researchers have a long history of investigating the prescriptive gender stereotypes or the ways in which women are supposed to act (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, more recently, the impact of gender stereotypes on perceptions of politicians has been called into question (Dolan, 2014; Hayes, 2011; Huddy & Capelos, 2002; Bauer, 2013; Sanbonmatsu & Dolan, 2009). Given the presence of political party affiliation information, what role do gender stereotypes play in trait evaluations of politicians? I argue here that gender stereotypes manifest in the visual appearance of politicians and in conjunction with partisan identification facilitate trait evaluations of politicians.

**Gender and trait evaluations**

Evaluations of female candidates are made in line with traditional gender stereotypes (i.e., women as nurturing, warm, and compassionate); evaluations of male candidates also reflect gender stereotypes (i.e., assertive, tough, and aggressive) (Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Brown, Heighberger, Shocket, 1993; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Kahn, 1992; Lawless, 2004; Leeper, 1991). Furthermore, female candidates are often evaluated more negatively than male candidates (Banducci, Karp, Thrasher, & Rallings, 2008).

Alternatively, researchers have also found that given all of the progress that has been made towards women’s equality, politician gender makes little difference in trait evaluations. Hayes (2011) found that partisan stereotypes influenced trait evaluations more than did politician gender. When researchers examined voting returns, the partisan identification and policy stances of the candidate mattered much more than candidate gender (Thompson & Steckenrider, 1997). Dolan (2014) used panel survey data to show that abstract gender stereotypes had very little impact on the application of gender stereotypes to specific candidates. Moreover, survey research on individuals’ willingness to vote for female candidates has consistently shown that when
women run they do as well as men (Fox & Lawless, 2004). These different findings stem in part from the isolation of gender as one candidate characteristic in an experimental context that is not possible in a real-world election.

Therefore, evidence is mixed as to whether gender stereotypes impact evaluations of political candidates and elected officials. The extent to which a candidate’s gender influences trait evaluations or her ability to win an electoral office often depends on election or candidate-specific characteristics (i.e., level of available information about the candidates, candidate qualifications). Moreover, different methodologies reach different conclusions about the role of gender because in an experimental context, candidate gender is often one of only a few defining characteristics, whereas in an actual election there are additional factors other than candidate gender which impact candidate support.

**Sex-Typicality and politician leadership ability**

One of the focal cognitive heuristics that is regularly used in political decision-making is candidate appearance. Based on photographs, naïve raters can decipher the political party affiliation of both unfamiliar elected officials and college students (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a; Rule & Ambady, 2010). Moreover, perceivers can identify the political attitudes of unknown politicians (Samochowiec, Wänke, & Fiedler, 2010). Furthermore, candidate appearance provides information about personality traits such as competence (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005), threat (Mattes, Spezio, Kim, Todorov, Adolphs, & Alvarez, 2010), and attractiveness (Poutvaara, Jordahl, & Berggren, 2009). In turn, both actual and perceived partisan affiliation and personality traits evoke the use of social stereotypes (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). Yet the visual cues that support such perceptions have often gone unexplored (Wänke, Samochowiec, & Landwehr, 2012).
Prior research extended the role of gendered appearance to trait evaluations. Researchers found that the gendered appearance of politicians’ images influenced evaluations of warmth and competence. Female Democrats who were more feminine in their appearance were rated as more competent. Conversely, female Republicans who were relatively more masculine in their appearance were rated as more competent. Among male politicians, Democrats who appeared more feminine were rated as warmer. There was no significant effect for male conservatives (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013b).

When politicians’ gendered appearance confirmed their party stereotypes, they were evaluated more favorably. Gaining insight into the impact of candidates’ gendered appearance may especially influence the impression formation processes for women candidates. Due to the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes, female candidates receive disproportionately more news coverage about their appearance than do male candidates (Kahn, 1996). Thus, the physical appearance of women candidates may matter more for voter’s assessments of their leadership abilities. Yet, it remains unclear whether a feminine appearance may, in some circumstances influence perceptions of politicians’ leadership ability when it is in line with their partisan image.

In summary, facial cues are consequential in the political domain. Facial cues influence perceptions of warmth and competence. Importantly, there is preliminary evidence that these cues are gendered in nature. The sex-typicality of female politicians’ facial appearance drives evaluations of warmth and competence differently for politicians belonging to different parties. More research is warranted to investigate how these cues may influence judgments of politicians’ leadership ability.

Overview of current research
The aim of the current research is to test whether when a politician’s party identification is congruent with the sex-typicality of his or her appearance, he or she is evaluated more favorably. For example, because of the gendered nature of the parties, Democrats who are more feminine in their appearance should be buffered against the gender backlash feminine individuals would typically receive. Conversely, masculine-appearing Republicans should fare better in evaluations of their leadership ability. More specifically, I hypothesized that feminine-appearing Democrats and masculine-appearing Republicans would be rated higher on their leadership ability. However, when examining feminine-stereotyped leadership traits separately, I predicted that I would get a main effect of gendered appearance such that ratings of empathy and integrity would be higher for feminine-appearing politicians regardless of their party affiliation. Similarly, when examining male-stereotyped leadership traits (i.e., competence and management), I hypothesized that there would be an overall main effect of gendered appearance such that politicians who looked masculine would receive a boost in their leadership evaluations.

Method

Participants

Ninety-seven (27 men, 70 women; 36 Asian, 3 Black, 16 Hispanic, 37 White, and 5 Biracial) undergraduate students at the University of California, Los Angeles participated for course credit. Of the 97 participants, 14 identified as Strong Democrats, 16 as Weak Democrats, 19 Independents leaning Democratic, 8 Independents, 6 Independents leaning Republican, 6 Weak Republicans, 4 Strong Republicans, and 24 “Don’t Know” or “Have Not Given it Much Thought.”

Stimuli
Stimuli included a subset of photographs of 91 of the 133 Representatives from the 2013 Minnesota State Legislature (17 female Republicans, 23 female Democrats, 25 male Republicans, and 26 male Democrats). Minnesota State Representatives were used because in 2013 Minnesota had the fourth highest percentage of women in leadership positions at the state level, and had large standardized images available of all of the Representatives. Politician photographs were downloaded from the Minnesota State Legislature website, converted to grayscale, and cropped to only reveal each politician’s internal facial features (i.e., removal of hair and image backgrounds).

**Measures**

Measures included the sex-typicality of candidates’ appearance and gender-typicality ratings. Ratings of candidates’ attractiveness were also obtained.

**Objective Facial Sex-Typicality.** Politician images were uploaded into commercialized software and were each measured for their degree of sex-typical facial shape based on anthropometric parameters (Blanz & Vetter, 1999; 2003; see Chapter 2 for a more in-depth description of the measurement process). Objective Facial Sex-Typicality values ranged from 0 (highly masculine) to 80 (highly feminine). I converted this to a common metric for men and women, so that negative values would indicate a sex-atypical appearance (i.e., feminine men and masculine women) and positive values would denote a sex-typical appearance (i.e., masculine men and feminine women). With this conversion, therefore, values of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality ranged from -40 (highly sex-atypical) to +40 (highly sex-typical).

**Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality.** Normed ratings of politicians’ gender-typicality were obtained. This norming group was used to obtain consensus judgments of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality (see e.g., Freeman, Johnson, Ambady, & Rule, 2010). Raters included 67
undergraduate students (54 women; 46% Asian, 28% White, 12% Hispanic, 10% Multiracial, 3% Black; 60% Democrat, 7% Independent; 16% Republican, 12% no party affiliation). Raters judged gender-typicality using a scale that varied from 1=Very Masculine to 9= Very Feminine. I computed the average perception of gender-typicality for each politician. Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality values were converted to a common metric for men and women; negative values indicated a sex-atypical appearance and positive values indicated a sex-typical appearance.

Procedure

Participants viewed the series of politician photographs. They were randomly assigned to view Democrat or Republican politicians first. The order of the politicians was counterbalanced between participants and randomized within participant. Politicians’ political party affiliation was indicated to participants in order to simulate an election context where politicians’ party affiliation information would be readily available. Participants remained naïve to my study hypotheses and were not directed to view the photographs in any particular way when making their trait evaluations.

Participants were asked to rate the politicians on 4 management characteristics (commands respect, inspiring, leader, gets things done), 3 empathy characteristics (compassionate, really cares, in touch), 3 integrity characteristics (moral, decent, honest), and 3 competence characteristics (intelligent, hardworking, knowledgeable) (Schneider & Bos, 2011). The order of the leadership characteristics was counterbalanced across participants. Two of the characteristics—gets things done and honest—were reverse-coded).
**Measures of individual differences.** Individual differences were measured to assess their moderation of the effect of politician party label and sex-typicality in appearance on perceptions of candidates’ leadership capabilities.

**Gender Attitudes.** Gender role orientation attitudes were measured using the Gender-Specific System Justification (GSJ) scale (Jost & Kay, 2005). The GSJ measures the tendency to legitimize gender inequality. Participants responded to the 8-item scale using 9-point ratings (1=strongly agree to 9= strongly disagree).

**Demographic measures.** Participants completed several demographic questions concerning their gender, race, age, partisan identification, educational level, country of origin, geographic location, and hometown zip code.

**Results**

**Analytic Strategy**

In order to model multiple trait evaluations within each participant, I constructed generalized estimating equations (Fitzmaurice, Laird, & Ware, 2004). I report unstandardized regression coefficients (B) and Wald Z values for each parameter. Politician Gender was coded 1=female, 2=male and Politician Party was coded 1=Democrat, 2=Republican.

**Leadership ability composites.** Using all 13 leadership characteristics I created an overall composite score to capture each politicians’ overall perceived leadership ability. The scale was reliable, $\alpha=.91$. There were four separate composite scales for the four dimensions of leadership ability—empathy, integrity, competence, and leadership ability. The subscales for perceived empathy, integrity, and management were highly reliable, $\alpha$s=.83, .78, and .88. The subscale for competence was moderately reliable, $\alpha=.43$.

**Objective Facial Sex-Typicality and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality**
I analyzed politician Objective Facial Sex-Typicality using a 2 (Politician Sex) by 2 (Politician Party) ANOVA. Overall, men were more sex-typical than women (i.e., men were more masculine than women were feminine), $F(1, 84)=4.59, p=.04$; and Democrats were marginally more sex-typical than Republicans, $F(1, 84)=3.63, p=.06$. The interaction between Politician Sex and Politician Party was not significant, $F(1, 84)=.40, p=.53$.

I also analyzed politician Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality using a 2 (Politician Sex) by 2 (Politician Party) ANOVA. Overall, women were more gender-typical than men (i.e., women were more feminine than men were masculine), $F(1, 84)=5.86, p=.02$. Politicians did not vary in their gender-typicality as a function of their Political Party, $F(1, 84)=32.84, p=.10$. However, the interaction between Politician Sex and Politician Party was significant, $F(1, 84)=3.88, p=.05$. Female Republicans were perceived as more feminine than female Democrats, simple $B=.47, SE=.19, t=2.43, p=.02$. However, the effect of gender-typicality was not significant for male politicians, simple $B=-.04, SE=.17, t=-.22, p=.83$.

**Overall Leadership Ability**

Given the partisan stereotypes associated with the two-major U.S. political parties, I hypothesized that Democrats would be rated as stronger leaders when they appeared more feminine and Republicans would benefit from a more masculine appearance in line with their partisan stereotype. I did not have specific predictions for the men and women in each party, but I included the three-way interaction to determine if partisan stereotypes were functioning differently for male and female politicians. Therefore, to test my prediction, I regressed Leadership Ability onto Politician Party, Politician Gender, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, and all interactions. Female politicians and politicians who appeared more sex-typical were perceived
as stronger leaders, \( B_s = -.28 \) and \(.01\), \( SE_s = .03 \) and \(.002\), \( z_s = -9.36 \) and \(5.32\), \( ps < .0001\). Leadership Ability did not vary as a function of Politician Party, \( B = .02, SE = .03, z = .60, p = .55\).

Importantly, the three-way interaction between Politician Party, Politician Gender, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant, \( \chi^2(7) = 461.62, p < .0001 \) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Perceptions of leadership ability as a function of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, Politician Gender, and Politician Party.

To determine the nature of this interaction, I tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republicans, the Candidate Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was significant, \( B = -.02, SE = .003, z = -6.92, p < .0001\). Among female Republicans, each unit increase in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., more feminine) corresponded to an increase in their rating on leadership ability, simple \( B = .008, SE = .002, z = 4.25, p < .0001\). Conversely, among male Republicans, each unit decrease in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., less masculine) made them more likely to be seen as strong leaders, simple \( B = -.009, SE = .002, z = -5.66, p < .0001\).
Among Democratic politicians, the Politician Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was marginally significant, $B=-.005$, $SE=.003$, $z=-1.78$, $p=.075$. Among female Democrats, each unit increase in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., more feminine) corresponded to an increase in their rating on leadership ability, simple $B=.01$, $SE=.002$, $z=5.32$, $p<.0001$. Among male Democrats, each unit increase in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., more masculine) corresponded to an increase in their rating on leadership ability, simple $B=.005$, $SE=.002$, $z=2.76$, $p=.01$.

Therefore, contradictory to my initial predictions, both male and female Republicans benefitted from a more feminine appearance, while female Democrats who appeared feminine were rated as stronger leaders whereas male Democrats who appeared masculine were viewed as stronger leaders.

**Empathy.** I hypothesized that both Democrats and Republicans would be seen as more empathetic if they appeared more feminine. Therefore, to test my prediction, I regressed Empathy onto Politician Party, Politician Gender, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, and all interactions. Assessments of politician’s Empathy varied as a function of Politician Party, Politician Gender and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, $Bs=-.10$, -.41, and .01, $SEs=.04$, .04, and .002, $zs=-2.61$, -10.39, and 4.34, $p=.009$ and $ps<.0001$. Democratic, female, and more sex-typical politicians were rated higher on their empathy.

Importantly, the three-way interaction between Politician Party, Politician Gender, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant, $X^2(7)=558.79$, $p<.0001$. To determine the nature of this interaction, I tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republicans, the Politician Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was significant, $B=-.02$, $SE=.003$, $z=-6.76$, $p<.0001$. Among female Republicans, each unit increase
in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., more feminine) corresponded to a increase in their rating on empathy, simple $B=.01$, $SE=.003$, $z=4.61$, $p<.0001$. Conversely, among male Republicans, each unit decrease in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., less masculine) made them more likely to be rated as high on empathy, simple $B=-.01$, $SE=.002$, $z=-5.00$, $p<.0001$.

Among Democratic politicians, the Politician Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was marginally significant, $B=-.007$, $SE=.004$, $z=-1.83$, $p=.067$. Among female Democrats, each unit increase in politician’s Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., more feminine) corresponded to a increase in their rating on empathy, simple $B=.01$, $SE=.002$, $z=4.34$, $p<.0001$. Among male Democrats, each unit increase in politician’s Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., more masculine) corresponded to an increase in their rating on empathy, simple $B=.005$, $SE=.003$, $z=1.72$, $p=.085$.

In line with my initial prediction, when female Democrats, and both female and male Republicans appeared feminine they were rated higher on their empathy. Contrary to my predictions, male Democrats benefitted from a more masculine appearance.

**Integrity.** Again I hypothesized that both Democrats and Republicans would be rated higher on their integrity if they appeared feminine. To test my prediction, I regressed Integrity onto Politician Party, Politician Gender, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, and all interactions. Assessments of politician’s Integrity varied as a function of Politician Party, Politician Gender and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, $Bs=-.09$, -.48, and .01, $SEs=.04$, .04, and .002, $zs=-2.54$, -12.95, and 4.85, $p=.01$ and $ps<.0001$. Democratic, female, and more sex-typical politicians were rated higher on their integrity.

Importantly, the three-way interaction between Politician Party, Politician Gender, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant, $X^2(7)=548.95$, $p<.0001$. To determine the nature
of this interaction, I tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republicans, the Politician Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was significant, \( B=-.02, SE=.003, z=-5.56, p<.0001 \). Among female Republicans, each unit increase in politician’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., more feminine) corresponded to a increase in their rating on integrity, simple \( B=.008, SE=.002, z=3.51, p<.0001 \). Conversely, among male Republicans, each unit decrease in politician’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., less masculine) made them more likely to be rated as high on integrity, simple \( B=-.009, SE=.002, z=-4.44, p<.0001 \). Among Democratic politicians, the Candidate Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was not significant, \( B=-.005, SE=.004, z=-1.32, p=.19 \).

Contrary to my initial hypothesis, the gendered appearance of Democratic politicians did not influence perceptions of their integrity. However, when both male and female Republicans appeared more feminine they were rated higher on their integrity.

**Competence.** I hypothesized that Republican politicians would be rated as more competent when they exuded a masculine appearance, and Democrat politicians would be seen as more competent when they appeared more feminine. To test my prediction, I regressed Integrity onto Politician Party, Politician Gender, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, and all interactions. Republicans and politicians who appeared more sex-typical were also seen as having more competence, \( Bs=.37, \) and \(.005, SEs=.03, \) and \(.002, zs=12.37, \) and \(2.38, ps<.0001\) and \(.02.\) Competence judgments did not vary as a function of Politician Gender, \( B=.03, SE=.03, \) \(z=.87, p=.38.\)

Importantly, the three-way interaction between Politician Party, Politician Gender, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant, \( \chi^2(7)=235.33, p<.0001 \). To determine the nature of this interaction, I tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats.
Republicans, the Politician Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was significant, $B= -.02, SE=.003, z=-6.15, p<.0001$. Among female Republicans, each unit increase in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., more feminine) corresponded to an increase in their rating on competence, simple $B= .006, SE=.002, z=3.17, p=.002$. Conversely, among male Republicans, each unit decrease in politician’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., less masculine) made them more likely to be seen as competent, simple $B=-.009, SE=.002, z=-5.73, p<.0001$. Among Democratic politicians, the Candidate Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was not significant, $B=-.003, SE=.003, z=-.99, p=.32$.

Contrary to my initial hypotheses, Republican politicians were seen as more competent when they appeared more feminine, and Democrat politicians’ ratings of competence did not vary as a function of their gendered appearance.

**Management.** Again I hypothesized that Republican politicians would be rated as more better managers when they exuded a masculine appearance, and Democrat politicians would be seen as better managers when they appeared more feminine. To test my prediction, I regressed Management onto Politician Party, Politician Gender, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, and all interactions. Female and sex-typical politicians were rated higher on their management, $B$s=-.22, and .01, $SE$s=.04, and .002, $z$s=-5.94, and 4.93, $p$s<.0001. Management judgments did not vary as a function of Politician Party, $B=-.05, SE=.04, z=-1.45, p=.15$.

Importantly, the three-way interaction between Politician Party, Politician Gender, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant, $X^2(7)=189.27, p<.0001$. To determine the nature of this interaction, I tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republicans, the Politician Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was significant, $B=-.01, SE=.003, z=-4.07, p<.0001$. Among female Republicans, each unit increase
in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., more feminine) corresponded to a increase in their rating on management, simple $B=.006, SE=.002, z=2.39, p=.02$. Conversely, among male Republicans, each unit decrease in Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., less masculine) made them more likely to be seen as managers, simple $B=-.007, SE=.002, z=-3.45, p=.001$. Among Democratic politicians, the Candidate Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was not significant, $B=-.003, SE=.004, z=-.98, p=.33$.

Contrary to my initial hypothesis, Republican politicians were rated higher on their leadership ability when they appeared more feminine, and Democrat politicians’ ratings of competence did not vary as a function of their gendered appearance.

**General Discussion**

Assessments of politicians’ leadership ability varied as a function of a Politician Gender, Political Party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. Among Republicans, more sex-typical female politicians (i.e., more feminine) and less sex-typical male politicians (i.e., less masculine) were rated higher on their leadership ability. Among Democrats, more sex-typical female politicians (i.e., more feminine) and more sex-typical male politicians (i.e., more masculine) were more likely to be seen as stronger leaders overall.

On feminine-stereotyped leadership characteristics, most politicians benefited from a more feminine appearance. Female Democrats and male and female Republicans were rated higher on their empathy and integrity when they appeared more feminine. Surprisingly, when male Democrats appeared more sex-typical (i.e., more masculine) they were rated higher on their empathy and integrity. On masculine-stereotyped leadership characteristics the pattern of results was less clear. Unexpectedly, female and male Republicans were rated as more competent and
better managers when they appeared more feminine, while Democrats’ gendered appearance was unrelated to their evaluations on stereotypically masculine traits.

These data are non-definitive regarding the initial hypotheses and at points seem to provide inconsistent information. It may be the case that participants were asked to make so many judgments that they got into a response set frame of mind rather than providing differentiated responses. Therefore, it is possible that overly burdened participants were using a heuristic wherein feminine is equated with “good” which is also consistent with a halo effect wherein the more attractive candidates would be perceived as better leaders. These findings are at odds with all of my previously published work and prior work in the literature. Additional research is required to parse out why there is a benefit to appearing feminine here.

The current study remains novel due to the approach used to study trait evaluations. I parsed stereotypically feminine and masculine leadership ability traits to determine if there was a separate appearance-based impact on these trait evaluations. Unexpectedly, I found that a feminine appearance benefited both female Democrats and female Republicans. This finding goes against prior research that has shown that a masculine appearance corresponds with higher leadership ratings. In the gender stereotyping literature, for both men and women, evaluations tend to be more favorable (e.g., higher leadership competence) when politicians exhibit a more masculine physical appearance (Sczesny, Spreemann, & Stahlberg, 2006). Due to the unexpected nature of the findings, future research is warranted to determine what aspects of state-level politicians or the participant sample may have influenced my results.

**Election characteristics and candidate perceptions**

One contextual variable that may have impacted my results is the level of office that the politicians are elected for. The levels of office candidates seek influences impression formation
of politicians. Gubernatorial and other state-level positions are seen as more female-stereotyped offices, whereas, senatorial positions and the office of the presidency are viewed as more masculine-stereotyped offices (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993b). Therefore, masculine-typed characteristics are more desirable at higher levels of office. This may also explain why I see an effect wherein female and Democratic politicians are rated higher in their leadership ability overall at the state-level. Also, the gender breakdown is such that there are many more women politicians at the state compared to the national level of government. In the current study I included state-level Representatives. These politicians may have less of a sex-typed appearance because they do not undergo the extensive vetting process that politicians at the national-level do. However, additional research is necessary to systematically test whether politicians’ sex-typicality varies as a function of the level of government they serve at.

There is some evidence to suggest that female candidates may perform better at the state than at the federal level. Female candidates are perceived as better able to handle healthcare and education policy issues than male candidates (Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993b; Sapiro, 1982). These feminized policy issues are often more central issues at the state level (Tidmarch, Hyman, & Sorkin, 1984). Therefore, women candidates may perform better when the stereotype of their policy abilities aligns with the campaign issues and context, which may be more likely to occur at the state level. So being a woman does seem to provide a slight benefit in state legislative elections. However the vote advantage is marginal and the overall increase in the probability of winning the election is small (Hogan, 2010). Therefore, one reason why a feminine-appearance may have been so beneficial in this context may have been because feminine issue competency is preferred in this particular political role. Additional
research should further examine whether preferred issue competency is impacted by gendered appearance.

Recent work by Schneider and Bos (2014) examined the stereotype content of female politicians. They found that the expectations for female politicians did not overlap with the stereotype content for females or politicians. This suggests that voters do not necessarily have a well-formed prototype of an American female politician from which to draw on to form impressions of other female politicians. Therefore, it may also be the case that leadership ability evaluations were not especially stereotyped in the current study. If participants did not have a specific stereotype to draw from when making their evaluations, that may explain why the effect of gendered appearance was so inconsistent for the difference groups of politicians.
CHAPTER V:

Consequences of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality for Vote Choice

Abstract

Facial cues are consequential for voters’ behavior at the polls. Yet the facial cues that compel vote choice remain under-examined. We predicted that vote choice judgments rely, in part, on the sex-typicality of facial cues (i.e., the degree of facial masculinity and femininity) that vary as a function of candidate gender and partisan identification. Stimuli included image pairs of winners and runner-ups in the elections for the 111th U.S. House of Representatives. In Study 1, we found that female Republican candidates who appeared relatively more feminine and male
Republican candidates who looked relatively less masculine in their appearance were more likely to win their election. Democratic candidates’ electoral success was not related to their sex-typicality. In Study 2, we found that relatively masculine-appearing Democrats and feminine-appearing Republicans were more likely to be selected in a hypothetical vote choice task. Implications for U.S. partisan politics are discussed.

Keywords: politician perception, social categorization, gender, political psychology

Given the abundance of candidate images on television and in online sources, physical appearance is increasingly consequential for candidates’ electoral success. Candidates frequently spend thousands of dollars on image consultants (Gabriel, 2011) in order to portray themselves positively. These expenditures are a natural aspect of modern politics due to the association between candidate appearance and voter behavior. Indeed, vote decisions within the U.S. electorate are often governed by superficial cues such as appearance (Hall, Goren, Chaiken, & Todorov, 2009; Olivola & Todorov, 2010b). Analyzing how voters use appearance-based cues is
crucial to understanding success in political leadership, generally, and women’s success, specifically, due women’s underrepresentation in U.S. politics. Here we examined how gendered facial appearance relates to voting behavior in both past elections and within the laboratory.

**Appearance-based politics**

From merely a brief glimpse of a politician, observers form spontaneous impressions that predict several consequential political outcomes (Hall et al., 2009; Olivola & Todorov, 2010b). Often, these political decisions exploit physical characteristics that are apparent in facial photographs. For example, individuals are more likely to vote for candidates who look more similar to themselves (Bailenson, Iyengar, Yee, & Collins, 2008). Furthermore, the processing of facial cues can facilitate accurate evaluations on several dimensions. For instance, naïve observers are surprisingly adept at discerning the political party affiliation of others, including both unfamiliar elected officials and college students (Bull & Hawkes, 1982; Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a; Jahoda, 1954; Olivola & Todorov, 2010a; Olivola, Sussman, Tsetsos, Kang, & Todorov, 2012; Roberts et al., 2011; Rule & Ambady, 2010; Samochowiec, Wänke, & Fiedler, 2010). In addition, observers are also proficient at differentiating political winners from losers when presented with pairs of political candidates (Buckley, Collins, & Reidy, 2007; Olivola, Sussman, Tsetsos, Kang, & Todorov, 2012; Olivola & Todorov, 2010b; Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005; Sussman, Petkova, & Todorov, 2013). Thus, considerable evidence supports the notion that minimal information from a politician’s face can inform accurate perceptions that are politically consequential.

Given this robust tendency for observers to form impressions of politicians based solely on facial photographs, it should come as no surprise that the specific facial cues that inform these judgments have been heavily scrutinized. On this point, two main factors have emerged as viable
predictors of early impressions of candidates, as well as candidates’ ultimate electoral success—facial competence and attractiveness.

Facial competence—generally measured as ratings of perceived competence among observers—is one key factor that relates to electoral success. In general, politicians whose faces are rated as competent enjoy more favorable election outcomes. In U.S. gubernatorial and congressional elections, for example, judgments of facial competence predict up to 72% of the variance in vote shares (Ballew & Todorov, 2007). Politicians who are judged to appear more competent are also more likely to win their elections (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Armstrong, Green, Jones, & Wright, 2010; Atkinson, Enos, & Hill, 2009; Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Olivola & Todorov, 2010b; Todorov et al., 2005). This relationship appears to be widespread, predicting electoral outcomes in Australia, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, and the U.K. (Antonakis & Dalgas; Banducci, Karp, Thrasher, & Rallings, 2008; Berggren, Jordahl, & Poutvaara, 2010; Buckley et al., 2007, Castelli, Carraro, Ghitti, & Pastore, 2009; Lawson & Lenz, 2007; Little, Burriss, Jones, & Roberts, 2007; Poutvaara, Jordahl, & Berggren, 2009; Rule, Ambady, Adams, Ozono, Nakashima, Yoshikawa, & Watabe, 2010; Sussman, Petkova, & Todorov, 2013). Thus, perceived facial competence is one means by which visual cues predict political outcomes.

Facial attractiveness—generally measured as evaluative judgments of physical attraction—is a second key factor that relates to electoral success. Attractive candidates tend to elicit favorable impressions, and they are presumed to be successful; unattractive candidates do not enjoy these benefits (Banducci et al., 2008; Berggren, Jordahl, Poutvaara, 2010; Budesheim & DePaola, 1994). Importantly, attractiveness also relates to electoral success directly. Indeed, for elections that occurred in Australia, Finland, Germany, and the U.K., attractive candidates
were more likely to emerge victorious, and their attractiveness predicted their margin of victory (Banducci et al., 2008; Berggren et al., 2010; King & Leigh, 2006; Klein & Rosar, 2005; Leigh & Susilo, 2009; Rosar, Klein, & Beckers, 2008).

Collectively, therefore, facial competence and attractiveness exert a robust impact on observers’ impressions of politicians and also on actual election outcomes. Recent work specified a two-component structure regarding the influence of facial competence on electoral success. First, facial competence mediated the effect of candidate attractiveness on electoral success. Second, facial competence predicted electoral success over and above the effect of candidate attractiveness (Laustsen, 2013). Therefore, facial competence does not merely reflect candidate attractiveness, and remains independently consequential for political success.

Some evidence supports the notion that these factors may impact political outcomes differently for men and women because these characteristics tend to be somewhat gendered in nature. Competence, for example, is generally regarded as a masculine trait (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), and this perception also extends to judgments of facial competence. Specifically, perceived facial competence tends to be higher for faces that are male (Chiao, Bowman, & Gill, 2008; Johns & Shepard, 2007) or that exhibit highly prototypically masculine characteristics (Olivola & Todorov, 2010b), although this relation also varies by political party affiliation (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013b). Perceived attractiveness, in contrast, tends to be highly gender-specific (Rhodes, 2006). Among women, feminine characteristics are deemed attractive; among men, masculine characteristics are perceived as attractive for natural photographs, but not for digitally manipulated images (e.g., Perrett et al., 1998; Rhodes, Hickford, & Jeffery, 2000). Thus, under normal conditions, perceptions of men’s competence and attractiveness may both be cued by masculine characteristics. Perceptions of women may be
more nuanced, such that competence is cued by masculine characteristics, but attractiveness is cued by feminine characteristics.

The gender-specific relations between facial cues and judgments of competence and attractiveness may help to explain differences in how these factors relate to electoral outcomes of men and women. Among men, facial competence reliably predicts electoral success (Chiao et al., 2008; Olivola & Todorov, 2010b; Poutvaara et al., 2009), and low levels of competence cannot be overcome by appearing attractive (Mattes, Spezio, Kim, Todorov, Adolphs, & Alvarez, 2010). Among women, however, findings are more equivocal. Olivola and Todorov (2010b) found that facial competence predicted electoral success equally well for female candidates who ran against men and for male candidates who ran against other men. Other work, however, found that facial competence predicted electoral success for men, but not women (Chiao et al., 2008; Poutvaara et al., 2009). Thus, the impact of facial cues on women’s electoral outcomes remains somewhat unclear, perhaps in part because the cues to women’s competence and attractiveness are contraindicated. To appear competent, women must appear masculine, but to appear attractive, they must appear feminine.

**The gendered nature of U.S. politics**

Political party-based associations are closely tethered to gender. For instance, recent research showed that female politicians were assumed to be Democrats more often compared to male politicians (Olivola et al., 2012). Additionally, the gender-specific patterns that tether perceived competence and attractiveness to electoral success raise the intriguing possibility that the very gendered cues that inform perceptions of competence and attractiveness may also relate directly to the electoral success of men and women. This possibility seems tenable based on the
evidence described above. When considered alongside evidence that the U.S. political system is itself highly gendered, it seems highly likely.

The gendered nature of U.S. politics is evident in both policies and politicians’ appearance. For instance, the two major parties uphold distinct values that vary with respect to gender roles. The Democratic Party advocates for socially liberal policies that aim to diminish gender disparities (e.g., women’s rights, abortion rights); the Republican Party, in contrast, supports socially conservative policies that tend to bolster traditional gender roles (e.g., military spending, national defense, traditional marriage; Winter, 2010). These general values manifest in prescriptive guidelines for appropriate actions. Republicans, in particular, urge adherence to traditional gender roles, and this differentially impacts expectations for women (Lye & Waldron, 1997). Consequently, Republican women who appear feminine offer an image that is congenial to their party’s platform.

Additionally, the two major parties appear differentially gendered, as well. Specifically, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality (i.e., masculinity in men; femininity in women) varies as a function of political party and informs observers’ judgments of politicians’ party affiliation. In a quasi-experimental study, we observed systematic differences in the gendered facial characteristics of members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Based on Objective Facial Sex-Typicality measurements, conservative women had a more feminine facial shape (e.g., rounder face, higher cheekbones, larger eyes) than did liberal women (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a), but an analogous effect was not as robust among men. These differences impacted observers’ judgments of politicians’ political party affiliation. Sex-typical women were more likely to be categorized as Republican, a propensity that reflected the observed differences between female Republicans and Democrats’ facial characteristics. Sex-typical men, in contrast were less likely
to be categorized as Republican. These differences in facial cues appear to be differentially valued, depending on the current political context. During wartime, for instance, masculine faces tend to be preferred; during relative peace, in contrast, feminine faces tend to be preferred (Little et al., 2007; Roberts, 2007; Spisak, Dekker, Krüger, & Van Vugt, 2012).

Based on existing evidence, the U.S. political system appears inherently gendered, and this manifests in each party’s political platform and in the facial characteristics of Congressional representatives. These findings further support the possibility that gendered facial cues will independently impact electoral success separate from their relationship with Facial Competence.

**Overview of Current Research**

Taken together, these observations provide a provocative link between gendered appearance and electoral success. Specifically, observers use Objective Facial Sex-Typicality to differentiate Democrats from Republicans, and it relates to perceptions of competence, one key factor that predicts electoral success. The direct relation between gendered facial cues and electoral success remains untested, but our own research provides some support for this possibility. Specifically, we found that implicit/subjective impressions of gender related to electoral outcomes. Successful female Republicans showed stronger associations with the category female, but unsuccessful female Republicans showed stronger associations with the category male (Hehman, Carpinella, Johnson, Leitner, & Freeman, in press). These findings provide suggestive evidence that Objective Facial Sex-Typicality may relate to electoral success.

The current studies test the possibility that the same sex-typical facial cues implicated in party identification and perceptions of competence may also influence vote choice. Thus, here we examined whether politicians’ gendered facial characteristics relate to congressional candidates’ actual electoral success and laboratory participants’ preferences in a hypothetical
vote choice task. We tested whether the sex-typicality of candidates’ faces predicts voters’ selection of candidates.

Given the gender role orientations of the two parties, we predicted that among Republican candidates, women and men would benefit from a more sex-typical appearance. This predicted pattern was plausible theoretically. However, prior work has shown that the sex-typicality of facial appearance is more influential for judgments of women than men for judgments of political party affiliation (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a) and perceptions of facial competence (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013b). Because the Democratic Party is not associated with prescriptions to adhere to traditional gender roles, we predicted Democrats’ electoral success would not be related to the sex-typicality.

In two studies, we tested the relation between Objective Facial Sex-Typicality and electoral success, separately for actual electoral outcomes (Study 1) and for a hypothetical vote choice made by naïve laboratory participants (Study 2).

**Study 1**

In Study 1, we tested how Electoral Outcome (i.e., whether a candidate won an election) varied as a function of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, Candidate Gender, and Candidate Party. We hypothesized that among Republican candidates, women and men would benefit from a more sex-typical appearance. Among Democrat candidates, we predicted that candidate electoral success would not be related to the sex-typicality of candidate appearance.

**Method**

**Target Population.** Targets included both winning and runner-up candidates for the 111th U.S. House of Representatives. Winners included 435 members of Congress (75 women, 360 men)—259 Democrats (58 women, 201 men) and 176 Republicans (17 women, 159 men).
Runner-ups included 406 individuals (68 women, 338 men)—165 Democrats (39 women, 126 men) and 216 Republicans (24 women, 192 men). For races in which candidates ran unopposed \((n=29)\) and those involving non-major party candidates \((n=25; 5 \text{ women, } 20 \text{ men})\), politicians were not included. Our sample included 698 incumbents, 40 challengers, and 62 open-seats.

**Measures.** Measures included measurements for each candidate’s Objective Facial Sex-Typicality and observer’s ratings of each candidate’s Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality, competence, and attractiveness (see Table 1 in Supplementary Materials for descriptive statistics).

**Objective Facial Sex-Typicality.** We downloaded each candidate’s photograph from their government website or Wikipedia. Each politician’s face was measured for its degree of sex-typical face shape (masculine cues in men; feminine cues in women). Politician photographs were imported into FaceGen Modeler using the Photo Fit Tool and the sex-typicality of each face was measured using the Gender Morph tool (Blanz & Vetter, 1999). Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was quantified based on anthropometric parameters of the human population with reference to a database of hundreds of three-dimensional face scans of men and women (Blanz & Vetter, 2003; see Figure 1). This single index represented a linear combination of hundreds of facial characteristics that reliably differentiate the faces of men and women (e.g., eyebrow arch, jaw structure, eye shape, eye distance; see Blanz & Vetter, 1999).  

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6 The laser facial scans are based on 200 young adults (100 male, 110 female) between 18 and 45 years old. These scans resulted in over 70,000 vertices pertaining to the structure of the face and over 100 shape principle components derived from the entire dataset of facial scans (Blanz & Vetter, 1999). The geometry of the face is indexed by a shape-vector that is ultimately quantified in an optimization algorithm. This algorithm as it has been created can then be applied to quantify the facial structure of new images. Therefore, I utilized the Photo Fit component to upload a jpeg file of each candidate’s photograph. I placed the proper facial markers around the face, and then the program algorithm automatically estimated the three-dimensional shape each face resulting in model coefficients that are then stored within the FaceGen program (Blanz &
Figure 1. Original politician images were uploaded into the FaceGen program and quantified for their Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. The average femininity face here is based on the winners in the sample. The Objective Facial Sex-Typicality measurement for the less sex-typical face was -7 or slightly masculine, and the measurement for the more sex-typical face was +20 denoting a highly sex-typical facial structure.

Values of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality ranged from 0 (highly masculine) to 80 (highly feminine). We converted this to a common metric for men and women, reflecting the level of sex-typical facial cues. First, we centered the values by subtracting the scale midpoint. Then, for the men, we reversed the sign. With this conversion, therefore, theoretical values of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality ranged from -40 (highly sex-atypical) to +40 (highly sex-typical). Positive values indicated sex-typical characteristics (i.e., masculine men and feminine women); negative

Vetter, 2003). These model coefficients essentially estimate where based on the optimization algorithm a particular image of a person falls within the distribution of the facial scans of individuals. By uploading each face into FaceGen and utilizing the optimization algorithm program, I was able to obtain a quantitative measurement of how sex-typical (masculine/feminine) each candidate’s facial shape was.
values indicated sex-atypical characteristics (i.e., feminine men and masculine women). We excluded races in which either image from the pair was insufficient in quality for use with our software \( (n=73) \), resulting in a total of 308 electoral races.

**Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality.** We obtained subjective ratings of candidates’ Facial Gender-Typicality. Using a common technique to obtain consensus judgments of subjective impressions, we collected data from a norming group (see e.g., Freeman, Johnson, Ambady, & Rule, 2010). Raters included 48 undergraduate students (38 women; 54% Asian, 30% White, 6% Hispanic, 6% Biracial, 4% Black; 56% Democrat, 10% Independent; 17% Republican, 13% no party affiliation) who provided judgments of each politician.

Observers judged Facial Gender-Typicality using a scale that varied from 1=Very Masculine to 9= Very Feminine. By subtracting the scale midpoint and reversing the sign for judgments of men, we converted these gender-typicality assessments into a common metric for men and women. Theoretical values of Facial Gender-Typicality ranged from -4 (highly sex-atypical) to +4 (highly sex-typical). As with the sex-typicality scores, negative values indicated a gender-atypical appearance and positive values denoted a gender-typical appearance. For each image, we computed the average perception of gender-typicality.

**Competence Judgments.** We also obtained judgments of candidates’ facial competence using the same norming group and procedures described above. Observers rated candidates’ facial competence on a scale ranging from 1=Not at all Competent to 9= Very Competent. For each image, we computed the average perception of competence.

**Attractiveness Judgments.** Finally, we obtained judgments of candidates’ attractiveness. A separate group of 57 Amazon Mechanical Turk users (29 women; 14% Asian, 71% White, 4% Hispanic, 11% Black; 42% Democrat, 31% Independent; 27% Republican) judged each
candidate’s attractiveness using a scale that ranged from 1 = Not at all Attractive to 9 = Very Attractive. For each image, we computed the average perception of attractiveness.

**Results**

**Analytic Strategy.** We tested our hypotheses using logistic regressions with cluster-specific robust standard errors to account for data dependencies within electoral race (Rodgers, 1993). For models with dichotomous outcomes, we constructed logistic regression models using Stata and we employed Maximum-Likelihood estimation, which is the default for estimating fixed effects for binary outcomes.

For models with continuous outcomes, we constructed GEE models (Fitzmaurice, Laird, & Ware, 2004) which employed Reduced Maximum Likelihood (REML) estimation, the default for estimating fixed effects for continuous outcomes. For both types of models, we report unstandardized regression coefficients and their related significance tests. Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Election Outcome were all dummy coded variables, with female, Democrat and lost election as the reference groups. We used standard model construction for fully factorial models and hereafter use standard regression vernacular to describe effects. We initially computed each analysis including a factor to represent the gender composition of the race (i.e., male-male versus male-female race). The gender composition of the race did not qualify any of the effects described herein, so it was dropped from our analyses.

**Electoral Outcome.** We predicted that Electoral Outcomes would vary as a function of Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. More specifically, we hypothesized that among Republican candidates, women and men would benefit from a more sex-typical appearance. Among Democrat candidates, we predicted that candidate electoral success would not be related to the sex-typicality of candidate appearance.
We regressed Electoral Outcome onto Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, first independently, and then including all interactions. Electoral Outcome did not vary as a function of Candidate Gender, $B=-.08$, $SE=.19$, $z=-.41$, $p=.68$, OR=.93. However, candidates who appeared less sex-typical were 3% more likely to win their election, $B=-.03$, $SE=.01$, $z=-3.64$, $p<.0001$, OR=.97, and election winners were 44% more likely to be Democrats, $B=-.58$, $SE=.20$, $z=-2.86$, $p=.004$, OR=.56.

Importantly, the three-way interaction between Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was significant, $\chi^2(7)=52.92$, $p<.0001$ (see Figure 2).

*Figure 2.* Predicted probability of Electoral Success as a function of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, Candidate Gender, and Candidate Party.
To determine the nature of this interaction, we tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republican candidates, the Candidate Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was significant, \( B=-.30, SE=.08, z=-3.83, p<.0001 \). Among female Republicans, each unit increase in candidate’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., relatively more feminine) corresponded to a 3% increase in the probability that they would win their election, simple \( B=.03, SE=.06, z=5.65, p<.0001, OR=1.03 \). Therefore, the most feminine Republican was 93% more likely to win relative to the least feminine Republican. Conversely, among male Republicans, each unit decrease in candidate’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., relatively less masculine) was associated with a 2% increase in the probability that they would win their election, simple \( B=-.02, SE=.003, z=-8.65, p<.0001, OR=.98 \). The least masculine Republican was 104% more likely to win relative to the most masculine Republican.

Among Democratic candidates, the Candidate Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was marginally significant, \( B=.05, SE=.03, z=1.79, p=.07 \). However, the simple slopes were not significant for female or male candidates, simple \( Bs=-.001 \) and \( .004, SEs=.01 \) and \( .004, zs=-1.32 \) and \( 1.23, ps=.19 \) and \( .22, ORs=.99 \) and \( 1.0 \), respectively.

We tested the robustness of this effect in multiple ways. First, to ensure that our effects were not driven by characteristics of the politician or the electoral race, we recomputed the original regression model, this time while controlling for additional variables that represented politician characteristics (Facial Competence, Attractiveness, Age, and Race) and election characteristics (Incumbency Status, District Partisanship). The inclusion of these control
variables did not impact the relationship between Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, Candidate Gender, and Candidate Party, and Election Outcome (see Table 2 in Supplementary Materials). We also analyzed each candidate’s Margin of Victory. These analyses did not replicate our prior finding for this alternative outcome (see Supplementary Materials). Finally, we conducted a conceptually similar set of analyses in which we substituted ratings of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality for Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. These two measures are imperfectly correlated \((r=.13)\); nevertheless, for the sake of completeness we opted to include both measures (see Supplementary Materials).

**Discussion**

Taken together, while Objective Facial Sex-Typicality did not significantly predict the Electoral Outcomes of Democratic candidates; it did predict outcomes for Republican candidates. A more feminine appearance was associated with greater electoral success for women, and a less masculine appearance was associated with greater electoral success for men. As hypothesized, therefore, these results indicate that appearance-based effects may be more pronounced for Republican candidates.

Surprisingly, male Republican winners appeared less sex-typical than their losing counterparts. While not initially hypothesized, this effect is consistent with prior work that found Republican men to be somewhat gender atypical (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013a), and we revisit these issues in our General Discussion.

One strength of Study 1 was its ability to reliably predict electoral outcomes that occurred in actual races. Of course, actual votes are likely to rely on considerably more information than merely facial photographs. In spite of this, our models accounted for electoral outcomes even after controlling for pertinent characteristics related to each politician and to the race, more
generally. As such, these findings reveal a strong relation showing that gendered facial characteristics predict the aggregate choice of the constituents who actually cast votes. In Study 2, we augment these observations to test whether gendered cues relate to observers’ immediate preferences in a hypothetical vote paradigm.

**Study 2**

While Study 1 provided evidence using an externally valid criterion (i.e., actual votes), there are tremendous benefits afforded by corroborating these effects in a more tightly controlled laboratory study. In Study 2, a laboratory approach allowed us to explore in greater depth the vote choice of candidates based solely on their facial characteristics without the influence of other socio-political variables that often drive political outcomes. We tested how candidates’ gendered appearance influences participants’ choices in a hypothetical vote task.

We again predicted that Vote Choice would vary as a function of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, Candidate Gender, and Candidate Party. Based on the results of Study 1, we hypothesized that participants’ hypothetical votes would be more likely to favor more feminine-appearing female Republican candidates and less masculine-appearing male Republican candidates, thus replicating the patterns of electoral success observed in Study 1.

**Method**

**Participants.** Seventy-three UCLA undergraduate students (21 men, 46 women, 6 unreported) participated in exchange for course credit. Self-reported political party identification varied, but was skewed toward Democrat (12 strong Democrats, 9 weak Democrats, 14 Independents leaning Democrat, 2 Independents, 8 Independents leaning Republican, 3 weak Republicans, 2 Strong Republicans, 1 other, 15 No Party Affiliation, and 7 non-responses).
Given this imbalance (i.e., only 6.9% of the sample population identified as weak or strong Republicans), we refrained from examining perceiver effects.

**Stimuli.** Facial stimuli consisted of all of the photographs of the members of the 111th United States House of Representatives and their runner-ups from Study 1. Photographs were standardized for size (400 x 400 pixels), converted to gray scale, and devoid of backgrounds, which were digitally deleted. For each electoral contest, the placement of each candidate’s image was counterbalanced such that half of the pairings depicted the Democratic candidate on the right and the other half depicted the Democratic candidate on the left.

**Procedure.** Participants viewed each pair of images, presented in random order, and provided a “hypothetical vote” using computer keys labeled “Left Image” and “Right Image.” Each trial consisted of a fixation cross (500 ms), followed by a randomly selected image pair that appeared until a judgment was rendered.

**Results**

**Analytic Strategy.** We constructed generalized estimating equations (GEE) in order to model multiple hypothetical votes nested within each participant (Fitzmaurice et al., 2004). We report unstandardized regression coefficients ($B$) and Wald $Z$ values for each parameter. Vote choice in the hypothetical vote choice task was dummy coded with candidate not selected as the reference group. Candidate Gender and Candidate Party were dummy coded the same way they were in Study 1. We initially computed each analysis including control variables for Participant Gender and Participant Party. Participant Gender and Participant Party did not qualify any of the effects described herein, so they were dropped from our analyses (see Supplementary Materials for these analyses).
**Hypothetical vote choice.** We predicted that participants’ Vote Choice would vary as a function of Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. More specifically, we hypothesized that among Republican candidates, women would benefit from a more sex-typical appearance and men would benefit from a less sex-typical appearance. Among Democrat candidates, we did not predict that candidate electoral success would be related to the sex-typicality of candidate appearance.

To test these predictions, we regressed Vote Choice onto Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, first separately and then including all interactions. Overall, perceivers were 9% more likely to select female candidates, $B=-.09$, $SE=.02$, $z=-3.71$, $p<.0001$, OR=.91, and 43% more likely to choose Democrat candidates, $B=-.56$, $SE=.02$, $z=-29.64$, $p<.0001$, OR=.57. Perceivers were also 1% more likely to choose candidates who appeared less sex-typical, $B=-.004$, $SE=.001$, $z=-3.93$, $p<.0001$, OR=.99.

More importantly, however, we predicted that vote choice would vary as a function of the interaction between these factors. To test our focal prediction, we regressed Vote Choice onto Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and all interactions. As predicted, the three-way interaction was significant, $X^2(7) = 757.51$, $p<.0001$ (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Predicted probability of Hypothetical Vote Choice as a function of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, Candidate Gender, and Candidate Party.
To determine the nature of this interaction, we tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republican candidates, the Candidate Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was significant, $B=-.03, SE=.007, z=-3.90, p<.0001$. Replicating the findings in Study 1, among female Republicans, each unit increase in candidate’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., more feminine) corresponded to a .4% greater likelihood of being chosen by participants, simple $B=.004, SE=.002, z=2.07, p=.04, OR=1.004$. Therefore, the most feminine Republican was 2.4% more likely to receive support relative to the least feminine Republican candidate. Among male Republicans, each unit decrease in a candidate’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., less masculine) was associated with a 1% increase in likelihood of being selected, simple $B=-.003, SE=.004, z=-8.23, p<.0001, OR=.99$. Therefore, the least masculine Republican was 15.6% more likely to be selected compared to the most masculine Republican candidate.

Among Democratic candidates, the Candidate Gender by Objective Facial Sex-Typicality interaction was also significant, $B=.02, SE=.004, z=6.22, p<.0001$. Among female Democrats, each unit decrease in a candidate’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., less feminine) corresponded to a 1%
greater likelihood of being chosen by participants, simple $B=-.003$, $SE=.0007$, $z=-4.38$, $p<.0001$, OR=.99. Therefore, the least feminine Democrat was 12.9% more likely to be selected relative to the most feminine Democrat. Among male Democrats, each unit increase in a candidate’s Sex-Typicality (i.e., more masculine) corresponded to a .2% greater likelihood of being chosen by participants, simple $B=.002$, $SE=.0004$, $z=4.91$, $p<.0001$, OR=1.002. Therefore, the most masculine Democrat was 8.6% more likely to be selected relative to the least masculine Democrat. With hypothetical vote choice measures repeated within each participant, this analysis had more power than the analysis in Study 1.

We tested the strength of this effect by computing the original regression model while controlling for the same politician and election characteristics as in Study 1. The inclusion of these control variables did not impact the relationship between Objective Facial Sex- Typicality, Candidate Gender, and Candidate Party, and Vote Choice (see Table 3 in Supplementary Materials). Additionally, we tested the robustness of this effect by substituting ratings of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality for Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. The inclusion of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality led to a similar pattern of results that we discuss in full in the Supplemental Materials.

Discussion

Once again, we found that gendered facial cues predicted the likelihood that a Republican would be chosen in a hypothetical vote, such that more feminine women, but less masculine men tended to be favored. Additionally, and in contrast to Study 1 in which no effects were found for Democratic candidates, we found that among Democrats, less feminine women but more masculine men were preferred. This effect may seem at odds with the results of Study 1, but we suspect it is not as divergent as it may appear. First, whereas in Study 1 we predicted the binary
election outcomes for each candidate, in Study 2 we predicted the vote choices of individual observers, thus affording greater precision and power. Second, although the analogous effect did not reach conventional levels of significance, the effect did reveal a non-significant trend in the same direction. Finally, the control afforded by a laboratory setting is likely to have eliminated the impact of extraneous factors that influenced the actual elections (e.g., politician platforms, political orientation of voters, etc.).

**General Discussion**

In two studies that probed both politicians’ actual electoral success and participants’ hypothetical vote choices, we found that political success varied as a function of a politician’s sex, political party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. In Study 1, we found that Objective Facial Sex-Typicality predicted actual electoral success. Among Republicans, more sex-typical female candidates and less sex-typical male candidates were more likely to win their elections. Among Democrats, electoral success did not vary as a function of Candidate Gender and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. In Study 2, we corroborated these effects for observers’ hypothetical vote choices. Among Republicans, effects replicated from Study 1. Among Democrats, less sex-typical female candidates and more sex-typical male candidates were more likely to receive a hypothetical vote.

Our finding that the gendered cues of Democrats related to hypothetical votes (Study 2), but not actual votes (Study 1) may seem somewhat surprising. We suspect that this difference is due, at least in part, to characteristics of the observers that we recruited in Study 2. These participants skewed markedly toward the liberal end of the political continuum. This possibility is consistent with our own prior work. Specifically, we have argued elsewhere that one reason why female Republicans may be more facially feminine is because the conservative
constituencies that elected them value such characteristics. Indeed, we found that in conservative districts, less feminine women tend not to be chosen (Hehman, Carpinella, Johnson, Leitner, & Freeman, in press). Therefore, in an election context, conservatives seem to rely heavily on facial information whereas liberals might modify their decisions based on other aspects of the race. If correct, it may be that our liberal-leaning participants were more readily relying on facial cues in the lab (Study 2) than they would be in a real-world context (Study 1).

These findings highlight an important role for the gendered appearance of politicians in their electoral success, particularly for Republican candidates. This critical importance is likely to have greater implications for female Republicans, leading to unique challenges. Specifically, the party platform, general stereotypes of the party, and a mandate for political competence each aligns closely with masculine ideals (e.g., Winter, 2010). At the same time, however, the Republican Party also highly values adherence to traditional gender roles (Lye & Waldron, 1997). Republican women, therefore, face a conundrum in which they must simultaneously appear conservative, but also feminine. Some women may overcome this contradiction by advocating their party ideals while simultaneously appearing physically feminine; others may be deemed a poor “fit” within the political establishment and fail to advance entirely.

Importantly, the literature on gender and competence has provided mixed evidence as to whether facial competence predicts electoral success for both men and women. We found that facial competence predicted electoral success for male but not female candidates. This finding aligns with prior work which also found that electoral success was predicted by facial competence for men, but not women (Chiao et al., 2008; Poutvaara et al., 2009). However, our results contradict work by Olivola and Todorov (2010b) finding that facial competence predicted electoral success equally well for male and female candidates. Our focus was on the U.S. House
of Representatives, while Olivola and Todorov (2010b) included Senate, House, and gubernatorial elections. Therefore, this discrepancy in findings may be due to the different target populations investigated, however, additional research is necessary to empirically test this claim.

Surprisingly, we found that gendered facial cues predicted vote choices for male Republican candidates in an unexpected way. Contrary to expectations, we did not find that a highly masculine appearance benefited male Republicans. In fact, we observed the opposite pattern. Male Republicans who were lower in sex-typical were more likely to be elected by their constituencies and chosen in the hypothetical vote. This finding is intriguing, and we suspect that it occurred for several reasons. First, we observed less variance in male, relative to female sex–ttypicality. Thus, although the less sex-typical Republicans were more likely to win, in general, these men were less extreme in their sex-typicality than their female counterparts. Second, it is possible that adopting characteristics associated with the other party conferred tangible benefits for both male Democrats and Republicans, a phenomenon known as trait trespassing (Hayes, 2005). Male Republicans may have benefitted from a less sex-typical appearance despite their party’s adherence to traditional gender roles; male Democrats may have benefitted from a more sex-typical appearance even though their party supports policies that are stereotyped as feminine in nature, because these cues signal breadth. Similarly, Democrats running in more conservative areas earned more votes when they appeared more stereotypically Republican (Olivola et al., 2012). Therefore, it may be that male politicians benefit from trespassing onto the opposite party’s characteristics, here based on their appearance.

Interestingly, these findings seem to contradict some prior research. Both men and women were perceived as stronger leaders when they exhibited a more masculine appearance (Sczesny, Spreemann, & Stahlberg, 2006) or when they had lower pitched voices (Klofstad,
Anderson, & Peters, 2012). A few methodological differences may help to differentiate these effects from our own. First, these effects tend to be especially pronounced among male perceivers (Anderson & Klofstad, 2012). Second, these studies did not invoke any political context and made no reference to political ideology. Consequently, it may be that leadership in general is associated with masculinity, but that political leadership is more sensitive to the gender-linked values of each party.

Relatedly, it is important to note that the social context in which judgments occur determines how gendered facial cues impact judgments such as voting behavior. Prior work, for example, found that masculine-appearing faces were preferred during wartime, but that feminine-appearing faces were preferred during peacetime (Little, Burriss, Jones, & Roberts, 2007; Spisak, Dekker, Krüger, Van Vugt, 2012). Thus, the effects reported herein are likely to fluctuate along with temporal shifts in the political climate. While certainly beyond the scope of this investigation, this possibility offers a fruitful avenue for future research.

The results reported herein provide convergent evidence regarding the role sex-typicality of candidates’ appearance and voters’ preferences. In particular, they corroborate our own findings where we found similar effects for photographs contestants in Senate and gubernatorial electoral contests (Hehman, Carpinella, Johnson, Leitner, & Freeman, in press). Given this marked level of convergence, these results appear to be robust across different levels of office. Nevertheless, gendered cues may differentially impact election outcomes, depending on the type of race. The impact of gendered appearance may be even more pronounced in primary elections that serve to weed out unfit candidates. If correct, these studies may actually underestimate the potency of gendered appearance-based cues. As such, appearance-based impacts may be more consequential in highly publicized and close electoral races.
Implications of candidates gendered appearance for electoral success

Although our findings support the notion that appearance-based cues may sway elections, it is important to note that these impacts are most likely to operate in constituents who are not invested in or informed about an election outcome. Indeed, non-partisan or uninformed voters are most likely to utilize appearance-based heuristics in their decision-making process (Johns & Shepard, 2007). For example, Lenz and Lawson (2011) found that attractive and competent candidates compelled greater support based on their television exposure, but only among voters who were low in political knowledge. Though these results suggest that uninformed voters may be more prone to using superficial cues such as candidate appearance to inform their voting decisions, it remains essential to examine which voters are most prone to utilize candidates’ sex-typicality in their decision-making.

Appendix

Study 1 Results
Preliminary Analyses. Based on prior findings, we predicted that candidate Objective Facial Sex-Typicality would vary as a function of Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Electoral Outcome. To test this, we regressed Objective Facial Sex-Typicality onto Candidate Sex, Candidate Party, Electoral Outcome, first independently, and then including all interactions. Overall, female candidates appeared more sex-typical than their male counterparts, $B=-3.76$, $SE=.86$, $z=-4.39$, $p<.0001$. Candidate’s Objective Facial Sex-Typicality did not vary as a function of Candidate Party, $B=-.55$, $SE=.65$, $z=-.86$, $p=.39$, $OR=.58$. It did, however, vary as a function of Electoral Outcome, $B=-2.46$, $SE=.64$, $z=-3.84$, $p<.0001$, $OR=.09$. Election winners appeared significantly less sex-typical than their losing counterparts (see Table 1 for the descriptive statistics).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Judgment Type</th>
<th>Female Democrats</th>
<th>Female Republicans</th>
<th>Male Democrats</th>
<th>Male Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex-Typicality</td>
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<td>6.87</td>
<td>(7.43)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(.98 )</td>
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<td>(1.29)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Competence</td>
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<td>6.13</td>
<td>(.54 )</td>
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<td>Attractiveness</td>
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<td>(1.02)</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>(1.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Importantly, the three way interaction was significant, $X^2(7)=85.64$, $p<.0001$. To determine the nature of this interaction, we tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republican candidates, the Candidate Sex by Electoral Outcome interaction was significant, simple $B=-14.90$, $SE=3.14$, $z=-4.74$, $p<.0001$. Among female Republicans, winners were more likely to appear sex-typical (i.e., relatively more feminine), simple $B=8.08$, $SE=3.00$, $z=2.69$, $p=.007$. However, among male Republicans, winners were less likely to appear sex-typical (i.e., relatively less masculine), simple $B=-6.83$, $SE=.94$, $z=-7.26$, $p<.0001$. 

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Among Democratic candidates, the Candidate Sex by Electoral Outcome interaction was marginally significant, $B=3.94$, $SE=2.03$, $z=1.94$, $p=.052$. In spite of this marginally significant interaction, the simple slopes revealed that Objective Facial Sex-Typicality was not significantly related to Electoral Outcome or Candidate Sex, simple $Bs=-2.64$ and $1.30$, $SEs=1.76$ and $1.02$, $zs=-1.50$ and $1.28$, $ps=.13$ and $.21$, respectively. Therefore, among Republican candidates, female winners appeared significantly more feminine than female losers; male winners appeared less masculine than male losers. These effects were not obtained for Democratic candidates.

**Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality.** We conducted our focal analyses with Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality in place of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. Specifically, we regressed Election Outcome onto Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality, first independently, and then including all interactions. Election Outcome did not vary as a function of Candidate Gender or Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality, $Bs=-.08$ and -.27, $SEs=.19$ and .17, $zs=-.41$ and -1.59, $ps=.68$ and .11, ORs=.93 and .77. Democratic candidates were more likely to win their elections, $B=-.58$, $SE=.20$, $z=-2.86$, $p=.004$, OR=.56.

As observed in our analyses that involved Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, the three way interaction was significant, $X^2(7)=51.14$, $p<.0001$. To determine the nature of this interaction, we tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republican candidates, the Candidate Gender by Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality interaction was significant, $B=-2.98$, $SE=.59$, $z=-5.05$, $p<.0001$. Among female Republicans, each unit increase in a candidate’s Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality made them 38% more likely to win their election, simple $B=.32$, $SE=.09$, $z=3.43$, $p<.0001$, OR=1.38. Conversely, among male Republicans, each unit decrease in a candidate’s Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality made them 29% more likely to win their election, simple $B=-.34$, $SE=.05$, $z=-6.35$, $p<.0001$, OR=.71.
Among Democratic candidates, the Candidate Gender by Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality interaction was also significant, $B=-1.01$, $SE=.34$, $z=-2.98$, $p=.003$. Among male Democrats, each unit decrease in a candidate’s Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality made them 16% more likely to win their election, $B=-.18$, $SE=.06$, $z=-3.03$, $p=.002$, OR=.84. The effect of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality on election outcome was not significant for female Democrats, $B=.06$, $SE=.05$, $z=1.19$, $p=.23$, OR=1.06.

We obtained a similar pattern of results using Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality in place of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. The effect replicated for both female and male Republican candidates. Contrary to the results with Sex-Typicality, however, the effect of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality was significant among Democratic candidates; however, only male Democrats benefited from a less gender-typical appearance. While it is not surprising that we would obtain a similar pattern of results for conceptually analogous measures of gendered appearance, there are several reasons why that may have not been the case.

First, Objective Facial Sex-Typicality measurements are likely to be more precise as they are not subject to extraneous non-facial information and idiosyncratic expectations and beliefs as ratings of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality are. Measurements of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality only take into account the structural features of the face, whereas, ratings of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality are likely to rely on additional visual information. Thus, even though the backgrounds of the photographs were removed, facial cues such as facial texture (e.g., makeup or facial hair) or non-facial cues (e.g., hairstyle or jewelry) could have influence ratings of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality. Trait evaluations of candidates’ threat and competence were shown to predict candidate selection even when candidate faces were removed leaving only non-facial information present (Spezio, Loesch, Gosselin, Mattes, & Alvarez,
Therefore, we may expect that differences in the pattern of results between the measurement and ratings of gendered appearance reflect the operationalization of gendered appearance. The ratings of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality may capture more information about the targets’ gendered appearance and may therefore predict more variance in election outcomes.

Second, voters in an election scenario would have access to more than just the candidates’ facial structure—they would be privy to the full candidate images. Therefore, using only information about candidate facial structure is a more conservative test of our hypotheses and in doing so we may actually underestimate the effect of gendered appearance on candidates’ electoral success. The effect of gendered appearance is stronger for Republican candidates, which is why we are able to detect it using both measures of gendered appearance, but we are only able to detect an effect for Democratic candidates using Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality.

**Effect of perceived competence.** We sought to replicate prior work showing that perceptions of facial competence predicted electoral success. We regressed Election Outcome onto Competence Judgments. As expected, we found that candidates who were rated as more competent were also more likely to win their elections, $B=.64, SE=.13, z=4.87, p<.0001$, OR=1.90. Next, to test whether the effect of Competence Judgments on Electoral Outcome differed for male and female politicians, we regressed Electoral Outcome onto Competence Judgments, Candidate Gender, and their interaction. Importantly, the interaction between Competence Judgments and Candidate Gender was significant, $B=1.45, SE=.41, z=3.51, p<.0001$. Among male politicians, each unit increase in a candidate’s Competence made them 26% more likely to win their election, simple $B=.23, SE=.03, z=7.08, p<.0001$, OR=1.26.
However, the effect was not significant for female politicians, simple $B=-.11, SE=.09, z=-1.31, p=.19, OR=.90$.

Because perceived competence has been shown to vary as a function of gendered cues (Carpinella & Johnson, 2013b; Olivola & Todorov, 2010a), we sought to confirm that the relation between Objective Facial Sex-Typicality and electoral success was not merely due to its relation to perceived competence. To accomplish this, in a separate model we tested whether the effects of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality remained robust after controlling for competence judgments. After controlling for competence judgments, the three-way interaction between Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality remained significant and of similar magnitude, $X^2(7)=58.73, p<.0001$. See Table 2 for a complete set of control analyses for Study 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>Three-way Interaction</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$z$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>No Controls (Original Analysis)</td>
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<td>(.09)</td>
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<td>.004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlling for Incumbency Status</td>
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<td>Controlling for District Partisanship</td>
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<td>(.09)</td>
<td>-3.90</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Margin of victory.** This effect did not emerge for the margin of victory. We calculated the difference in the percent of votes each target received relative to their primary opponent (Todorov et al., 2005). For example if a candidate received 55% of the vote and their opponent received 45% of the vote, then the winning candidate received 10% more of the vote. Therefore
the winning candidate was assigned a margin of victory score of +10, whereas his or her opponent received a margin of victory score of -10.

As before, we first examined the independent effect of variables on Margin of Victory, by regressing Margin of Victory separately onto Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. Margin of Victory did not vary as a function of candidate’s Objective Facial Sex-Typicality or Candidate Gender, $B$s=-.08 and -.32, $SE$s=.10 and .97, $z$s=-.81 and -.33, $p$s=.42 and .74, respectively. It did, however, vary as a function of Candidate Party, $B$=-21.37, $SE$=3.33, $z$=-6.42, $p$<.0001. Democrats received a greater portion of the vote share overall.

Our focal prediction was that candidate vote share would vary as a function of Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality. To test this prediction, we regressed Margin of Victory onto Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, Objective Facial-Gender Typicality, and the higher order interactions. As with Electoral Outcome, the three-way interaction was significant, $X^2(7)$=50.66, $p$<.0001. Although the pattern that characterizes this interaction is consistent with the effects described above, tests of the interaction between Candidate Gender and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality failed to reach significance for Republicans and Democrats, respectively, $B$s=-.76 and .44, $SE$s=.58 and .29, $z$s=-1.31 and 1.52, $p$s=.19 and .13. Therefore, candidates did not garner different amounts of the vote share based on their Objective Facial Sex-Typicality.

**Study 2 Results**

**Vote choice accuracy.** First, we tested the overall accuracy of hypothetical votes to replicate previous research. Using standard measures of sensitivity of each participant (Stanislaw & Todorov, 1999), we coded hits as choosing the winning candidate and false alarms as choosing the losing candidate.
Perceivers’ tendency to choose the winning candidate was significantly above chance ($d' = .89$), one-sample $t(71)=35.56$, $p<.0001$, demonstrating sensitivity to cues denoting electoral success. This finding replicates prior work showing that perceivers can accurately distinguish between political winners and losers a level above chance (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Armstrong, Green, Jones, & Wright, 2010; Atkinson, Enos, & Hill, 2009; Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Olivola & Todorov, 2010; Todorov et al., 2005). Here we replicated these findings in a nationally meaningful sample—the 111th U.S. House of Representatives.

Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality. We partially replicated the pattern of results observed for measured Objective Facial Sex-Typicality using subjective ratings of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality. Specifically, we regressed Vote Choice onto Candidate Gender, Candidate Party, and Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality, first independently, and then including all interactions. Female, Democratic, and less gender-typical appearing candidates were more likely to be selected, $B_s=-.09$, -.56, and -.05, $SEs=.02$, .02, and .004, $z_s=-3.71$, -29.64, and -10.65, $ps<.0001$, ORs=.91, .57, and .95.

As observed in our analyses that involved Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, the three way interaction was significant, $X^2(7)=988.66$, $p<.0001$. To determine the nature of this interaction, we tested simple slopes separately for Republicans and Democrats. Among Republican candidates, the Candidate Gender by Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality interaction was significant, $B=-.11$, $SE=.03$, $z=-3.80$, $p<.0001$. Among male Republicans, each unit decrease in a candidate’s Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality made them 2% more likely to be selected as the winning candidate, simple $B=-.02$, $SE=.002$, $z=-7.81$, $p<.0001$, OR=.98. Among female Republicans, the effect of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality was not significant, simple $B=.009$, $SE=.006$, $z=1.39$, $p=.165$, OR=1.01.
Among Democratic candidates, the Candidate Gender by Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality interaction was also significant, $B=.06$, $SE=.03$, $z=2.38$, $p=.017$. Among male Democrats, each unit decrease in a candidate’s Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality made them 2% more likely to be selected as the winning candidate, simple $B=-.02$, $SE=.002$, $z=-8.00$, $p<.0001$, OR=.98. Among female Democrats, each unit decrease in a candidate’s Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality made them 3% more likely to be selected as the winning candidate, simple $B=-.03$, $SE=.006$, $z=-6.18$, $p<.0001$, OR=.97.

With the inclusion of ratings of candidates’ Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality in place of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, we partially replicated our results. We found that a less masculine appearance for male Republicans and a less feminine appearance for female Democrats corresponded to a greater likelihood of being selected in the hypothetical vote choice task. For female Republicans, the effect of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality on Vote Choice was in the anticipated direction, but did not reach statistical significance. Contrary to the results with Objective Facial Sex-Typicality, the effect of Subjective Facial Gender-Typicality was significant among male Democrats; however, they benefited from a less gender-typical appearance.

**Effect of perceived competence.** We sought to replicate prior work showing that perceptions of facial competence predicted hypothetical vote choice. We regressed Election Outcome onto Vote Choice. As expected, we found that candidates who were rated as more competent were also more likely to be selected, $B=.14$, $SE=.02$, $z=8.43$, $p<.0001$, OR=1.15. Next, to test whether the effect of Competence on Vote Choice differed for male and female politicians, we regressed Vote Choice onto Competence Judgments, Candidate Gender, and their interaction. Importantly, the interaction between Competence Judgments and Candidate Gender
was significant, \( B = .10, \ SE = .05, z = 2.22, p = .03 \). Among male politicians, those who were rated more competent were 4% more likely to be selected, simple \( B = .04, \ SE = .005, z = 9.07, p < .0001, \ OR = 1.04 \). However, the effect was not significant for female politicians, simple \( B = .02, \ SE = .01, z = 1.68, p = .09, OR = 1.02 \). See Table 3 for a complete set of control analyses for Study 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control Variables</th>
<th>Three-way Interaction</th>
<th>( B )</th>
<th>( SE )</th>
<th>( z )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
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<td>-5.80</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlling for Participant Gender</td>
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<td>-5.92</td>
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CHAPTER VI:

Summary and Conclusions
The theoretical paper and empirical studies presented here represent a novel approach to the study of gender stereotyping in U.S. politics. Prior research on appearance-based politics has often not considered politician gender. Few studies have disaggregated by politician gender to examine whether appearance-based trait evaluations and vote choice hold for men and women. Furthermore, past work showing that individuals are above chance at identifying political party and selecting a winning candidate did not specify a psychological mechanism underlying these effects. The aim of the current research was to examine the consequences of gendered appearance for politician perception. In this final section, I will briefly summarize each component of this dissertation and then discuss their joint contributions to and implications for the study of politician perception.

CHAPTER II: The Role of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality on Trait Assessments of Politicians

Chapter II tested the influence of gendered appearance on trait evaluative judgments. These explicit evaluations were made in line with the partisan stereotype hypothesis. Among women, feminine Democrats and masculine Republicans were rated as more competent. Among men, feminine Democrats were rated as warmer. Importantly, the influence of gendered appearance was only evident for counter stereotypic traits—competence for women and warmth for men. Politician photographs in this study were not labeled with the politicians’ party affiliation, therefore future research should examine whether the effect is enhanced or attenuated when the party identification labels are provided.

CHAPTER III: Gendered Appearance and Party Affiliation Communicate Policy Expertise

Chapter III explored the association between gendered appearance and perceptions of policy issue competency. Participants were asked to judge issue competencies on the basis of politician photographs. In accordance with the partisan stereotype hypothesis, a feminine appearance facilitated explicit evaluations of politicians’ compassion/women’s issue
competency. Conversely, a masculine appearance compelled evaluations of economic/military issue competency. More specifically, when Democrats looked more feminine they were rated as better able to handle compassion/women’s issues. When all politicians appeared more masculine they were rated as better able to handle economic/military issues. The perceptual differences in policy competency were most pronounced for feminine-appearing Democratic politicians.

CHAPTER IV: The Impact of Party and Objective Facial Sex-Typicality on Leadership Ability

Chapter IV explored the effects of gendered appearance on explicit evaluations of leadership ability. Participants were presented with state-level politician photographs and were asked to rate the politicians on a number of leadership characteristics (i.e., empathy, integrity, competence, and leadership). Unexpectedly, I found that a feminine appearance facilitated leadership ability judgments for Republicans and female Democrats, while a more masculine-appearance benefited perceptions of male Democrats’ leadership ability. This pattern of results does not support either the partisan stereotype or gender roles hypothesis. Additional research is required to understand how perceptions of state-level politicians’ leadership ability are influenced by their gendered appearance.

CHAPTER V: Consequences of Objective Facial Sex-Typicality for Vote Choice

The current research examined how gendered appearance may act as a mechanism through which vote choice occurs. Given that candidate selection is more of an implicit choice or decision about two politicians, I hypothesized that Republican candidates (especially women candidates) would benefit when their appearance was in line with traditional gender roles. I used a sample of national-level candidates to investigate politicians’ electoral success. Evidence supported the gender roles hypothesis. In Study 1, a more feminine appearance corresponded
with an increased likelihood of winning one’s electoral race for female Republicans. Conversely, male Republicans who exhibited a less masculine appearance were more likely to win their race. The gendered appearance of Democrats was unrelated to their electoral success.

In Study 2, I empirically tested how gendered appearance may facilitate candidate support in a hypothetical vote choice task in the laboratory. A more feminine appearance facilitated candidate selection for female Republican candidates. Moreover, male Republicans who appeared less feminine were also more likely to be selected. Surprisingly, female democrats who appeared less feminine and male Democrats who appeared more masculine were more likely to win their race. These studies provide empirical support for gendered appearance as a mechanism through which party-based adherence to gender roles impacts implicit choices about politicians’ electoral viability.

**Broader Implications**

The implications from this work are two-fold. First and foremost, our understanding of the psychology of stereotyping and prejudice is furthered by the studies presented here. The research findings here fit into a broader program of research which aims to form a precise understanding of how the early stages of social perception can inform efforts to overcome long-standing prejudicial biases in interpersonal communication (Johnson & Carpinella, 2012; Johnson, Lick, & Carpinella, under review). Prior research has provided some evidence as to how and why gender and partisan stereotypes influence politician perception.

Much of the prior gender and political psychology literature has focused on how partisan and gender stereotypes interact. One school of thought stemming from the results of survey research has found that the application of gender stereotypes is limited by the salience of partisan stereotypes. More specifically, partisan stereotypes override gender stereotypes (Dolan, 2014;
Dolan & Lynch, 2013; Hayes, 2011; Huddy & Capelos, 2002; King & Matland, 2003; Matland & King, 2002). What matters more is the party affiliation of the politicians and the main differences in candidate support and trait evaluations are party-based differences not gender-based differences. However, experimental researchers have found that gender stereotypes transcend partisan stereotypes (Koch, 2000). The research on appearance-based politics described in this review explains how gender and partisan stereotypes operate via politician appearance.

In an experimental context and using electoral data, the findings here suggest that both gender and partisan stereotypes are consequential for perceptions of politicians and their political success. Importantly, gender and partisan stereotypes are conveyed through the physical appearance of unfamiliar politicians. By conducting the current research, I want to reframe the debate. Instead of focusing on whether gender or partisan stereotypes trump one another, the current research recognizes that both gender and partisan stereotypes affect politician perception. What matters more is the question of what takes the lead role—that is, whether partisan stereotypes are applied as a function of gender or gender roles moderate the effect of politician party. The theoretical model presented here outlines the circumstances under which each identity would be expected to take a more central role. When perceivers make explicit evaluations, partisan stereotypes are applied as a function of gender appearance. However, when observers make implicit choices or decisions about politicians, gender roles drive perceptions of politicians as a function of their political party affiliation.

Second, the research presented here can inform candidates’ campaign strategies. Female Democrat and Republicans face challenges in both primary and general elections. However, I present evidence suggesting that if a female Republican candidate advocates a masculine-
stereotyped policy platform, and she appears feminine, she may mitigate some of the difficulty that she would otherwise face in a primary election.

Party leadership may promote candidates who display physical characteristics that reflect party values. Given that the impact of party stereotypes and gender roles is so insidious that it is reflected in the appearance of our politicians, it is crucial to the study of political psychology and to the health of our democracy to understand how gendered appearance acts as a mechanism through which politician success is conveyed. While more research needs to be done to determine where in the political process these differences in politician appearance originate, it remains that the gendered nature of politician appearance compels largely accurate social judgments, important social evaluations, and highly consequential political outcomes. When explicit evaluations are made, partisan stereotypes impact evaluations of politicians. However when implicit choices/decisions are made about politicians, gender roles influence social judgments and politicians’ actual political success.

One limitation of the current work is that I primarily measure politicians’ facial structure. However, the findings here largely replicate with subjective ratings of gender-typicality in place of objective Facial Sex-Typicality. Therefore, the implications of the work here are primarily for candidate self-presentation that often extends beyond facial appearance (i.e., clothing, jewelry). Additional research should be done to examine how politicians can translate these research findings into successful campaign strategies.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Future research could examine under what circumstances candidate appearance exerts the most influence over candidate selection. For example, when participants are provided with candidates’ policy stances, candidate images, or both policy stances and policy images, are the
issue stances or photographs more influential in candidate preference. In other words, does candidates’ appearance trump the substance of candidates’ campaigns? Moreover, which voters are most swayed by appearance-based cues? Prior work has shown that low-information voters and non-partisans or those without strong partisan views (Johns & Shepard, 2007; Lenz & Lawson, 2011), are most heavily influenced by candidate appearance. However this work could be extended to investigate whether strong partisans pick up on gendered appearance cues.

Conclusion

These studies are the first to document the downstream consequences of politicians’ gendered appearance for perceptions of their policy competency, leadership ability, and electoral viability. Explicit evaluations of politicians are driven by their partisan identification; whereas, implicit choices or decisions made about politicians are compelled by their party’s adherence to traditional gender roles. Initial judgments of politicians made solely on the basis of their photographs have far-reaching implications for their political success.
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