

Gender Stereotypes and their Impact on Political Candidates

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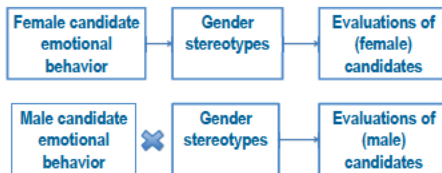
How do gender stereotypes impact the success of female political candidates?

Introduction

- Conventional wisdom postulates that gender stereotypes, or widely shared beliefs about the attributes of males and females, disproportionately and adversely affect female political candidates (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993)
- Limited research on whether campaigns, candidate actions, or environments can activate stereotypes
 - Activation of male stereotypes results in preference of male Republican candidate over female Democratic counterpart (Holman et al)
- Female candidates are stereotyped as “too emotional” for political leadership
 - Yet, female emotionality does not adversely influence general evaluations of female candidates (Brooks 2013)
- No evaluations of whether candidate emotionality activates gender stereotypes

Hypotheses

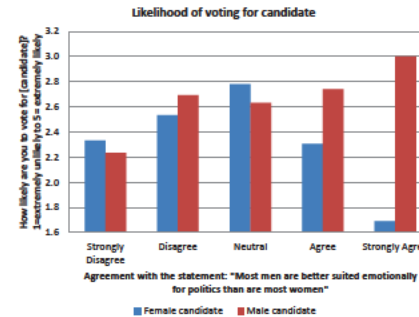
- H₁: Gender stereotypes have an adverse effect on female political candidates as compared to their male counterparts
- H₂: Behavior by female candidates can activate gender stereotypes, which lowers evaluations of female candidates



Data and Methods

- Participants were given an online experiment with two elements
 - A treatment, which was a newspaper description of a political candidate (male or female) with a scenario (personal sadness, legislative sadness, anger or neutral) at random
 - Series of questions regarding gender stereotypes and political candidate support
- Sample size of N=347
- mTurk used to recruit participants. Participants were compensated \$40 for participation
- Sample was balanced across conditions on demographics

Gender Stereotypes and Candidate Support (Hypothesis 1)



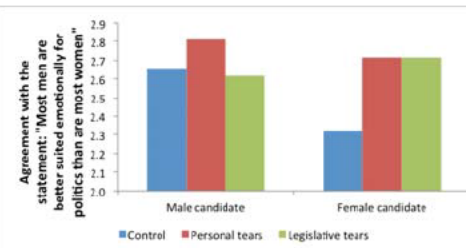
Effect of stereotype on vote is significant for female candidate (0.03) and not for male candidate (0.21)

Candidate Gender, Candidate Emotion and Gender Stereotypes

Conditions of Candidate Emotion

Personal Tears: Candidates were announcing a campaign for Senate while shedding tears about personal and family issues.
Legislative Tears: Candidates were announcing a campaign for senate while shedding tears about legislative frustration they are experiencing as a current member of the House of Representatives
Control: Candidates announced a bid for Senate at a standard press conference with no excessive emotional displays

- Difference between control and personal tears OR legislative tears is statistically significant for female candidate, but not male candidate



“Any woman who understands the problems of running a home will be nearer to understanding the problems of running a country”

-Margaret Thatcher

Results

	Female candidate	Male candidate
	Coefficient	Coefficient
Men are better emotionally suited for politics * tears treatment	-0.42***	0.01
tears treatment	0.30	-0.68
Men are better emotionally suited for politics	0.12	0.12
Constant	3.23	3.23

- The effect of the interaction of the treatment and stereotype on vote was found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), but *only for the female candidate*

Discussion

- Our first hypothesis (H₁) is confirmed by the data.
 - Gender stereotypes reduce vote support for the female candidate presented but not for her male counterpart
- Our second hypothesis (H₂) was also confirmed:
 - Emotional behavior by candidates activates gender stereotypes, but *only for female candidates*
 - These stereotypes decrease vote support
- These findings refute results of previous studies that suggested that gender stereotypes **do not** harm female candidates (Brooks 2013).
- While stereotypes alone may not make a determination about this “double-standard” stereotype activation by exhibition of candidate emotion has a significant effect on female candidate evaluations.

References

- Brooks, Deborah J. 2013. *He Runs, She Runs: Why Gender Stereotypes Do Not Harm Women Candidates*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Holman, Mirya; Merolla, Jennifer; Zechmeister, Elizabeth. 2011. “Terrorist Threat and the Activation of Masculine Stereotypes on Candidate Evaluations”. *Working Paper*.
- Huddy, Leonie, and Nayda Terkildsen. 1993. “Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates.” *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (1): 119-147.